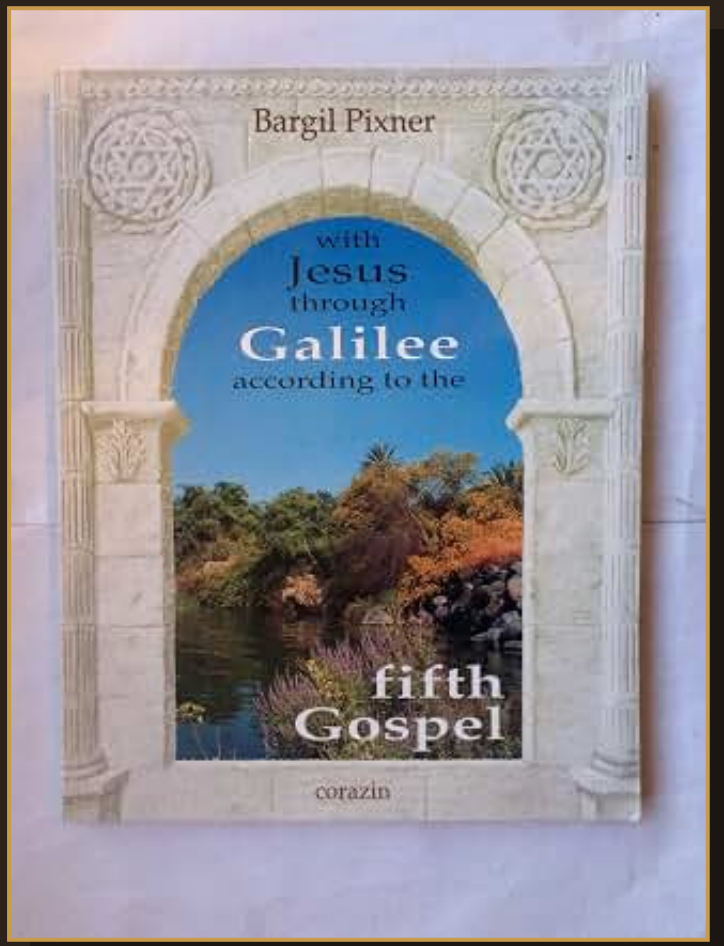
A REFLECTION ON THE LAND OF THE BIBLE

The Holy Land as the *5th Gospel*

BARGIL PIXNER

Corazin Publishing, 1992



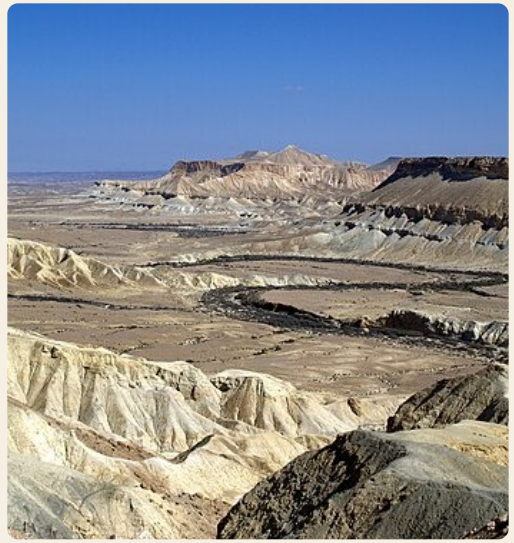
A Presentation by Rev. Msgr. Michael K. Magee
St. Charles Borromeo Seminary

THE HOLY LAND AS THE 5TH GOSPEL

“

Five gospels record the life of Jesus. Four you will find in books and one you will find in the land they call Holy. Read the fifth gospel and the world of the four will open to you.









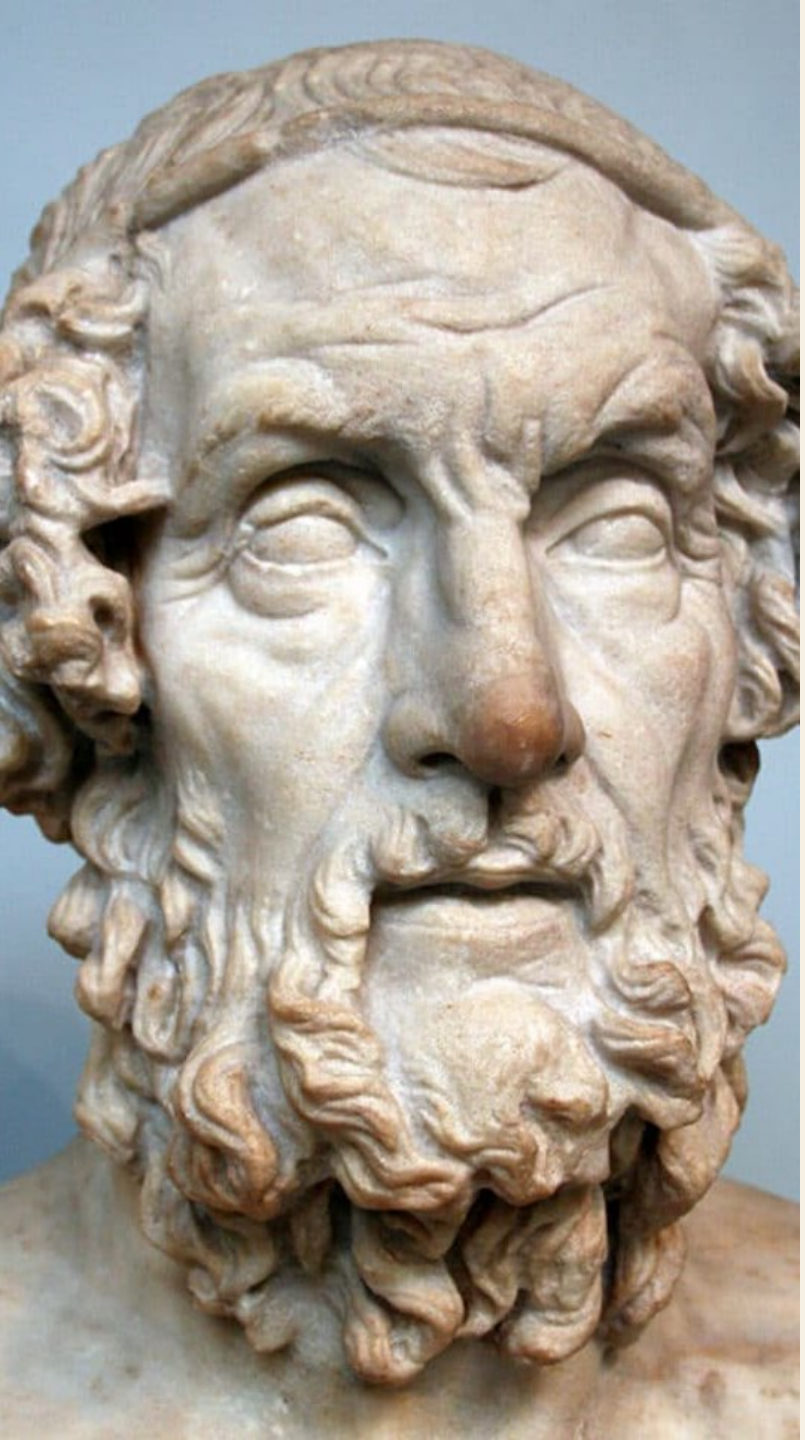
Photos: Unknown authors · CC BY-NC-ND, CC BY-SA



Saint Jerome in Bethlehem

Died September 30, 420

Photo: Unknown author · CC BY-SA-NC

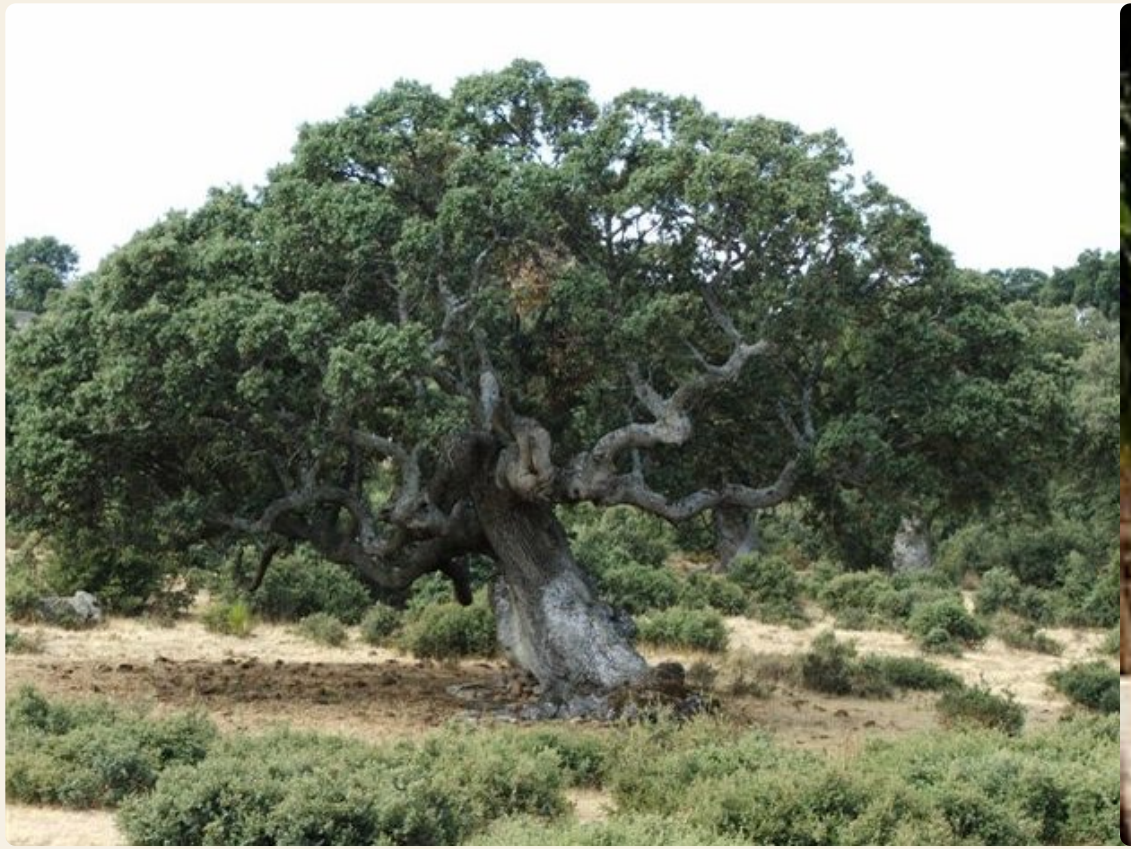






Stories of Greco-Roman mythological gods unfold in a parallel world apart from our own.

Photos: Unknown authors · CC BY-NC-ND, CC BY

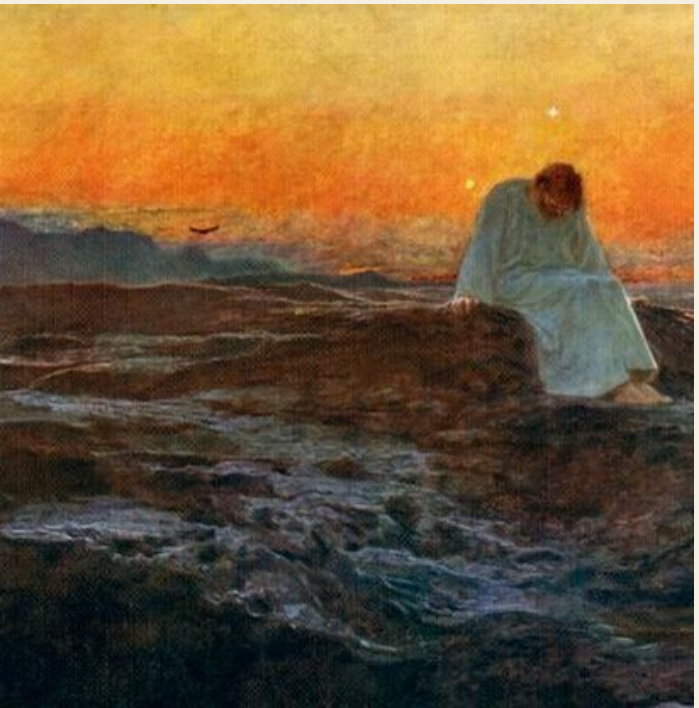


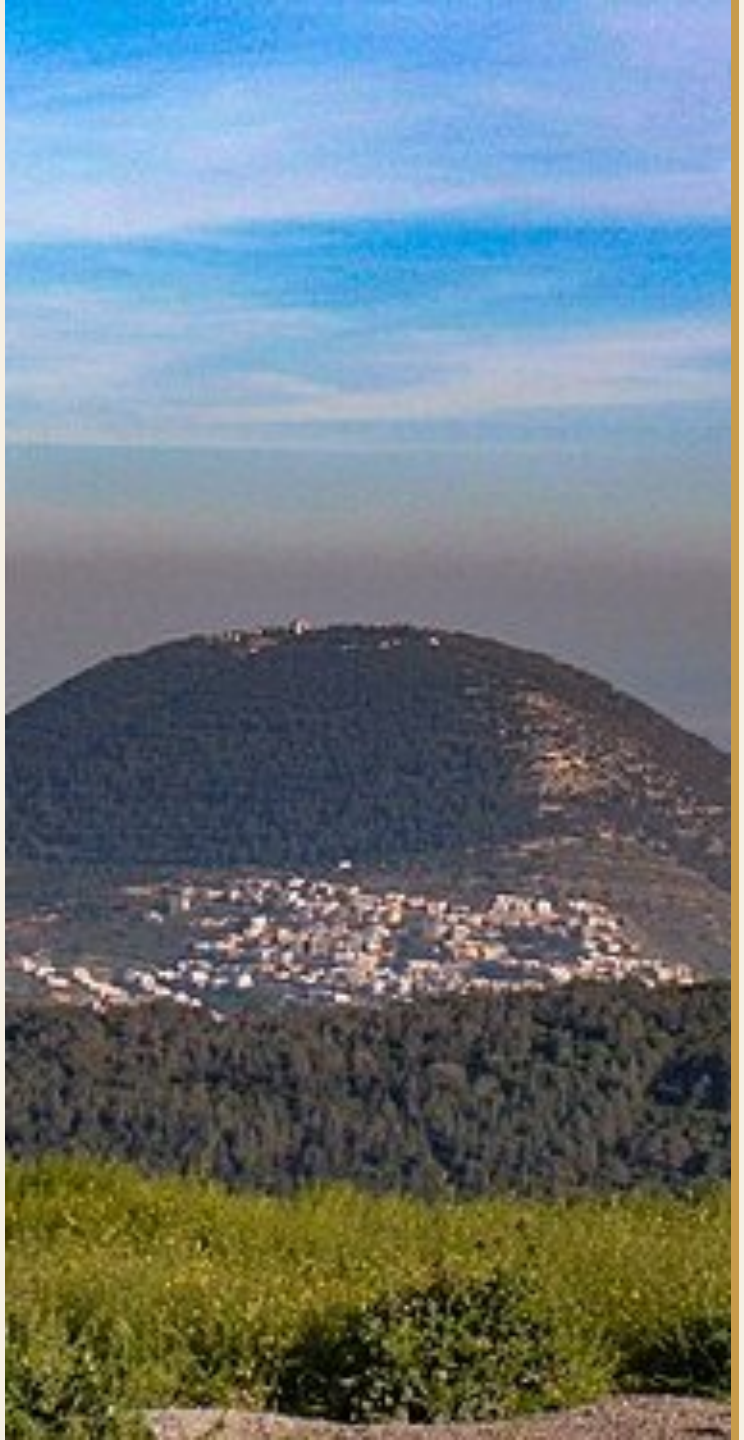


God calls Abraham

Photos: Unknown authors · CC BY-SA-NC, CC BY-SA







Even historically questionable sites can be helpfully evocative of biblical events and realities

Photos: Unknown authors · CC BY-SA-NC, CC BY-SA



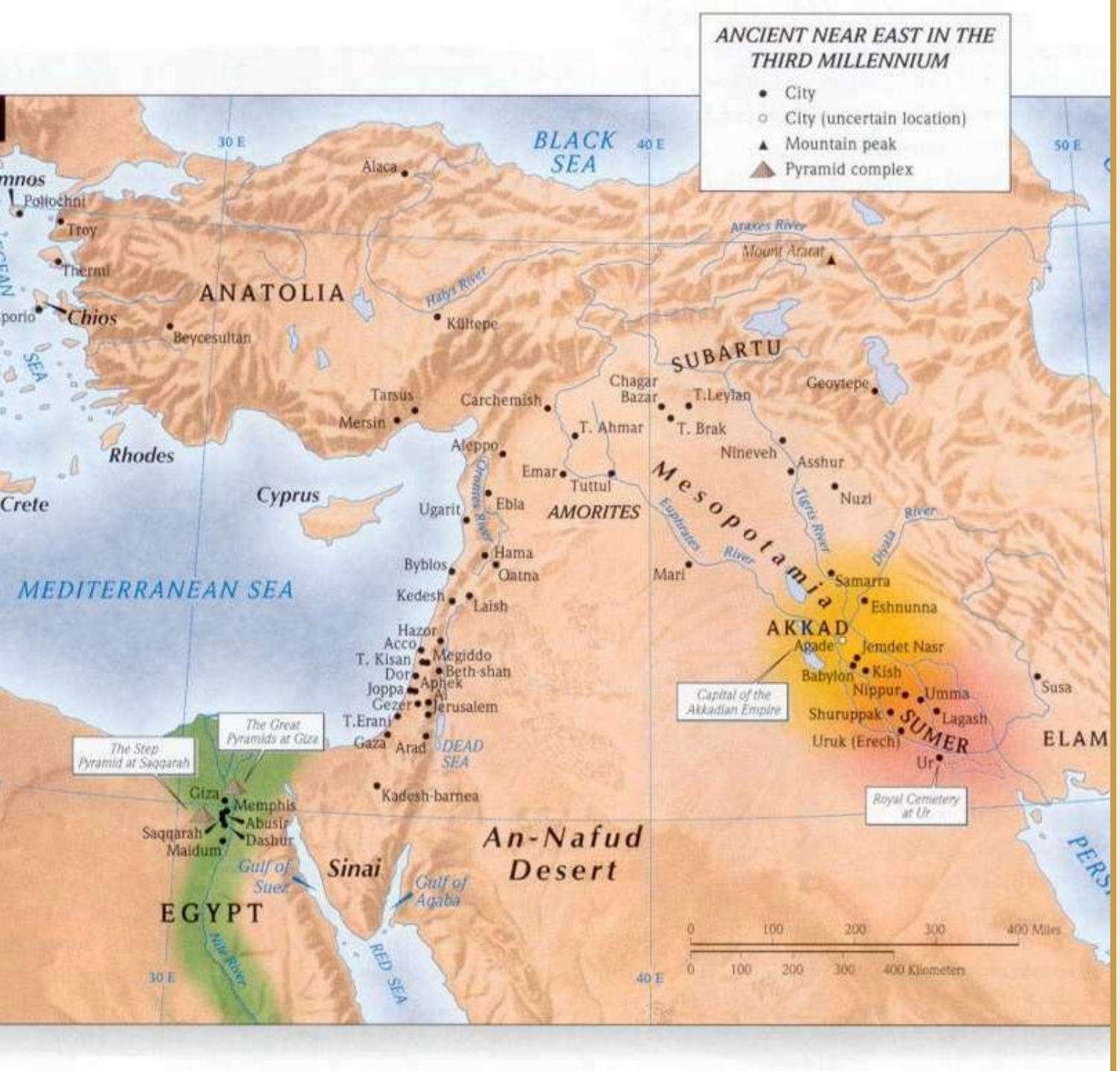






But they are all the more powerful when they can be authenticated.

Photos: Unknown authors · CC BY, CC BY-SA



The Importance of the Land

- First of all, the Holy Land is for us a **spiritual reality**, not a piece of real estate.

ISAIAH 2:2–4

"In days to come, the mountain of the Lord's House will be established as the highest mountain…"

Photo: Unknown author · CC BY-NC-ND



Ezekiel’s vision

CHAPTER 47:1–10

“I saw water flowing out from under the threshold of the Temple toward the east … The water flowed out toward the right side of the Temple to the south of the altar … Wherever it flows, the river teems with every kind of living creature; fish will abound. Where these waters flow they refresh; everything lives where the river goes.”



However, the actual Land as the theater of God's engagement with human beings does matter!

Photo: Unknown author · CC BY-NC-ND

Even its geological history is meaningful!

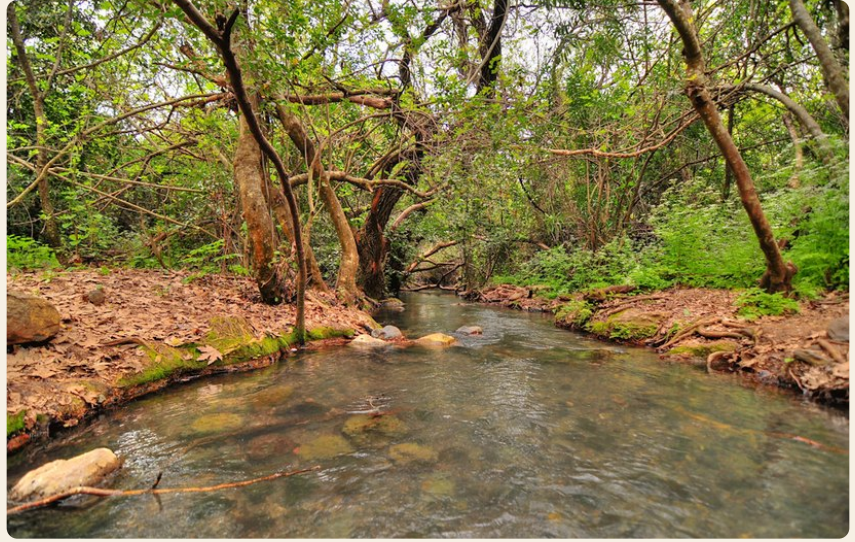


Photo: Unknown author · CC BY



The Jordan Rift: a physical as well as a theological boundary

Photo: Unknown author · CC BY






Amazing Geological and Climatological Variety

Photos: Unknown authors · CC BY-NC, CC BY-SA-NC, CC BY-SA, CC BY



Topography and Geological History

- Volcanic activity in the Pliocene and Pleistocene epochs (5 million – 100,000 years ago).
- Most recent in the Golan Heights around 100,000 years ago.
- “Recent” in geological terms, but long before the biblical period.

Photo: Unknown author · CC BY-SA

Crossroads of Ancient Civilizations

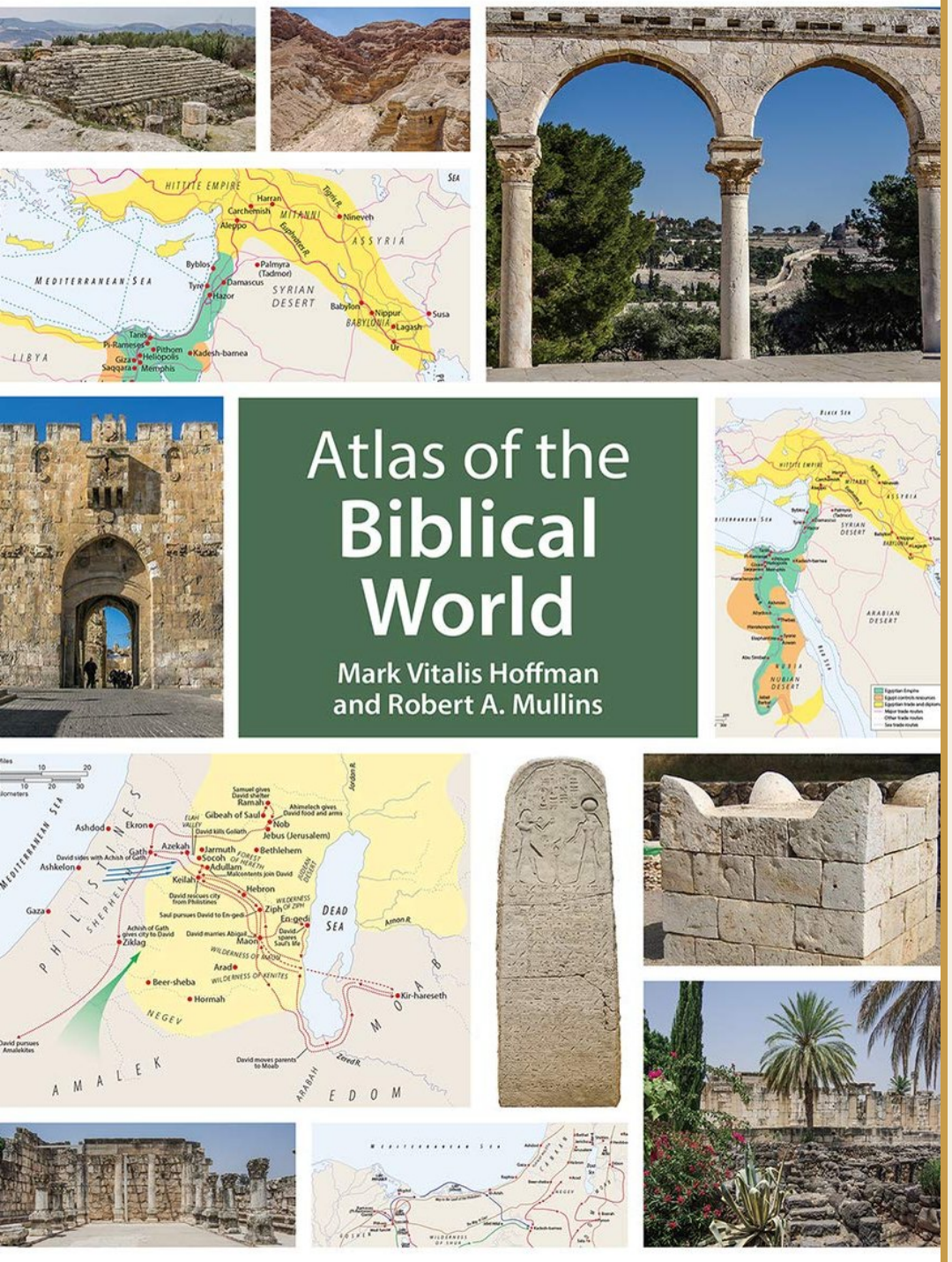


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Israel was never a political or cultural center, but was more important than either.

Photo: Unknown author · CC BY-NC-ND



The “Gospel” in the larger sense begins with the Old Testament

Photo: Unknown author · CC BY-NC-ND

The Call of Abraham



Photo: Unknown author · CC BY-SA-NC



The Exodus

Photo: Unknown author · CC BY-NC-ND











The Plagues of Egypt

Photos: Unknown authors · CC BY-SA-NC, CC BY-SA



Exodus Route

EXODUS 13:17

"God did not lead them by way of the Philistines' land, though this was the nearest; for God said, 'If the people see that they have to fight, they might change their minds and return to Egypt.'"

- Water and vegetation farther south in the Sinai Peninsula.
- Where is the real Sinai?

Photo: Unknown author · CC BY-NC-ND



Quails being caught in Gaza

EXODUS 16

Photo: Unknown author · CC BY-SA-NC



The Fall of Jericho

- Kathleen Kenyon (1950) ruled out habitation and destruction of Jericho around 1400 B.C.
- Bryant Wood (1990) found that she had examined a limited area.
- Pottery indicating occupation before 1200 B.C.
- Destruction around 1400 B.C.
- Double wall that collapsed outward.

Moral: There is always more to find.

Photo: Unknown author · CC BY-NC-ND



Hazor (Joshua 11)

- Powerful city with trade-route connections to Egypt and Mesopotamia.
- Documented in Egyptian and Akkadian archives.
- Destroyed and burned around 1400 B.C.; temples singled out for destruction.
- But who replaced it? On its ruins, a simpler civilization, with flimsy buildings.

Photo: Unknown author · CC BY-SA



Most important for us are NT Sites. But some cautions:

- Christianity has no geographical center, as Jerusalem was for biblical Israel and is to Judaism.
- We can ponder why God's Providence has always allowed Christianity only tenuously to hold onto the Land itself, with its holy sites.

The Word became flesh and pitched His tent among us.

JOHN 1:14

- The Sacred Humanity of Jesus is the definitive “Tent of Meeting.”
- His Body is the new Temple – John 2:21.
- That Temple, destroyed and rebuilt (John 2:19), is no longer subject to the same limitations of time and space as Jesus’ Body during the Public Ministry (cf. Resurrection appearances).
- Still, the Word has become flesh. **Sites, circumstances, places do matter.**



SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

Saint Ignatius Loyola

“Composition of Place”

“The first Prelude is a composition, seeing the place. Here it is to be noted that, in a contemplation or meditation on a visible thing, as for instance Christ our Lord, Who is visible, the composition will be to see with the sight of the imagination the corporeal place where the thing is found which I want to contemplate. I mean the corporeal place, as the Temple or mountain where Jesus Christ or Our Lady is found, according to what I want to contemplate.”

Spiritual Exercises, no. 47; trans. Louis J. Puhl, S.J.



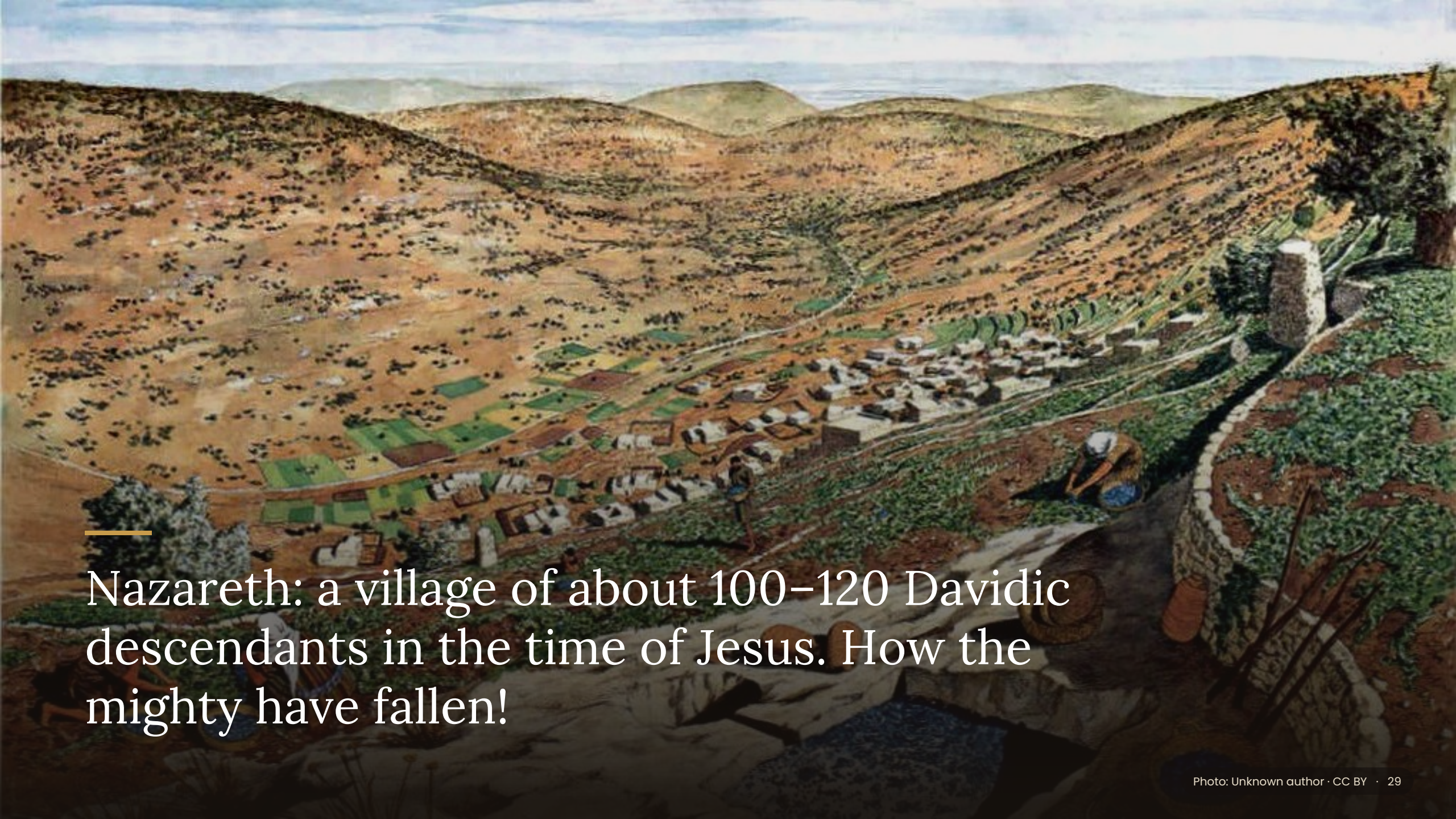
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Saint Ignatius Loyola

- This is directly related to the fact of the Incarnation.
- We do not encounter God merely as an idea, nor His Word as an ideology.
- We encounter Him as a personal God who engages us in conversation in concrete historical circumstances.

Photo: Unknown author · CC BY



Nazareth: a village of about 100–120 Davidic descendants in the time of Jesus. How the mighty have fallen!

Photo: Unknown author · CC BY



Basilica of the Annunciation

ANGELUS DOMINI HIC NUNTIAVIT MARIAE

- Nearby: early synagogue structure, likely used by Jewish Christians.
- Inscription likely from the 2nd century: *Khaire Maria!*

Photo: Unknown author · CC BY-SA



Bethlehem

- 2nd-century records tell of a limestone cave venerated by early Christians as the birthplace of Jesus.
- Later Roman replacement by a pagan site actually preserved the memory of the Christian site.
- Migdal Eder nearby, with shepherds watching over flocks year-round for the daily Temple sacrifices (Alfred Edersheim, *Sketches of Jewish Social Life in the Days of Christ*).

Photo: Unknown author · CC BY-SA

The Sea of Galilee



Photo: Unknown author · CC BY



Capernaum

Stone houses with missing roofs (recall Mark 2:1–12)

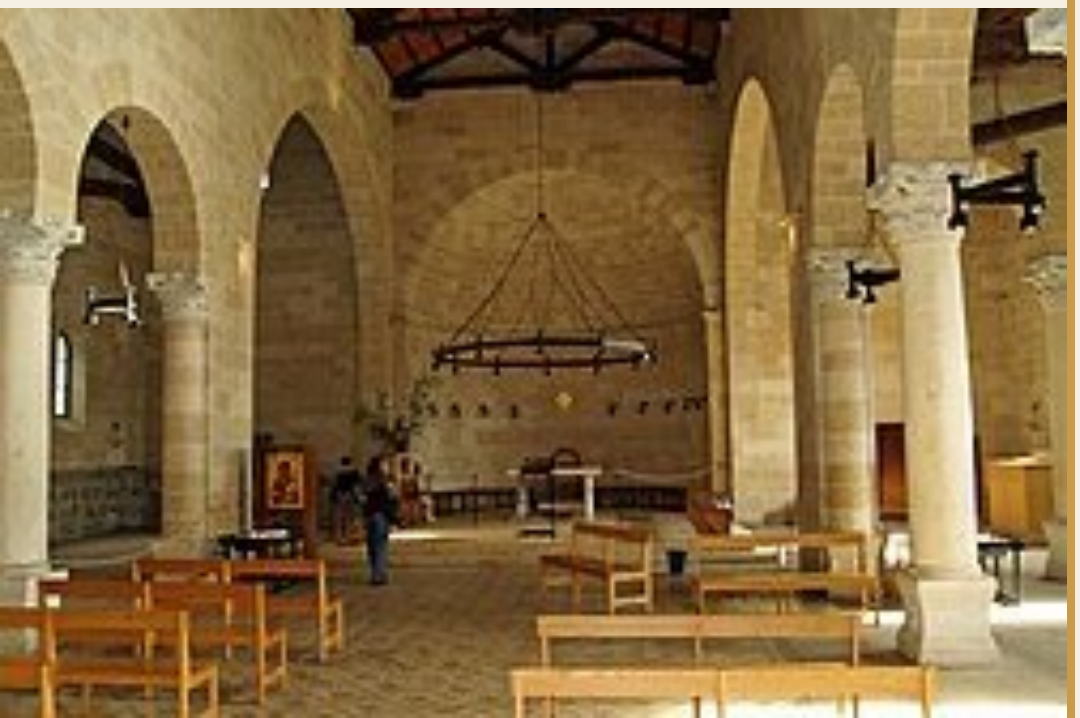
Photo: Unknown author · CC BY-NC-ND



Simon Peter’s House, Capernaum

Photo: Unknown author · CC BY-NC-ND





Tabgha / Heptapegon

- Warm-water springs.
- Area for the fishing by casting nets, described in the Gospels.

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Mount of the Beatitudes





“Eremos” Cave

(not shown)

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Sermon on the Mount / on the Plain



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Scene of the Parable of the Sower

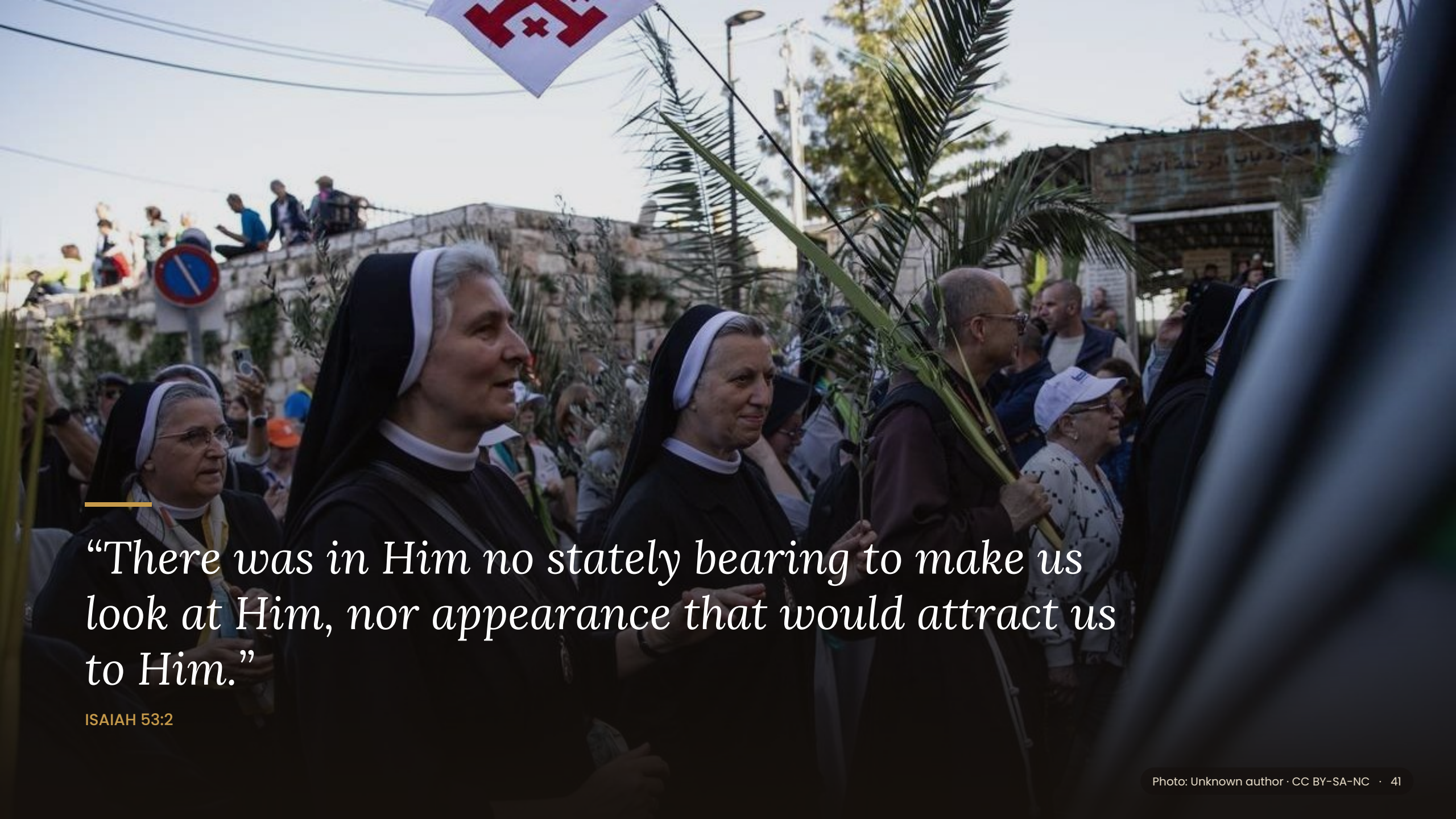
MATTHEW 13:1–23

Photo: Unknown author · CC BY-NC-ND



Jerusalem and the Lord's Passion

Photo: Unknown author · CC BY



“There was in Him no stately bearing to make us look at Him, nor appearance that would attract us to Him.”

ISAIAH 53:2

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“Do this in memory of me.”

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“He went out with His disciples across the Kidron Valley to where there was a garden.”

JOHN 18:1

Steps of Saint Peter in Gallicantu

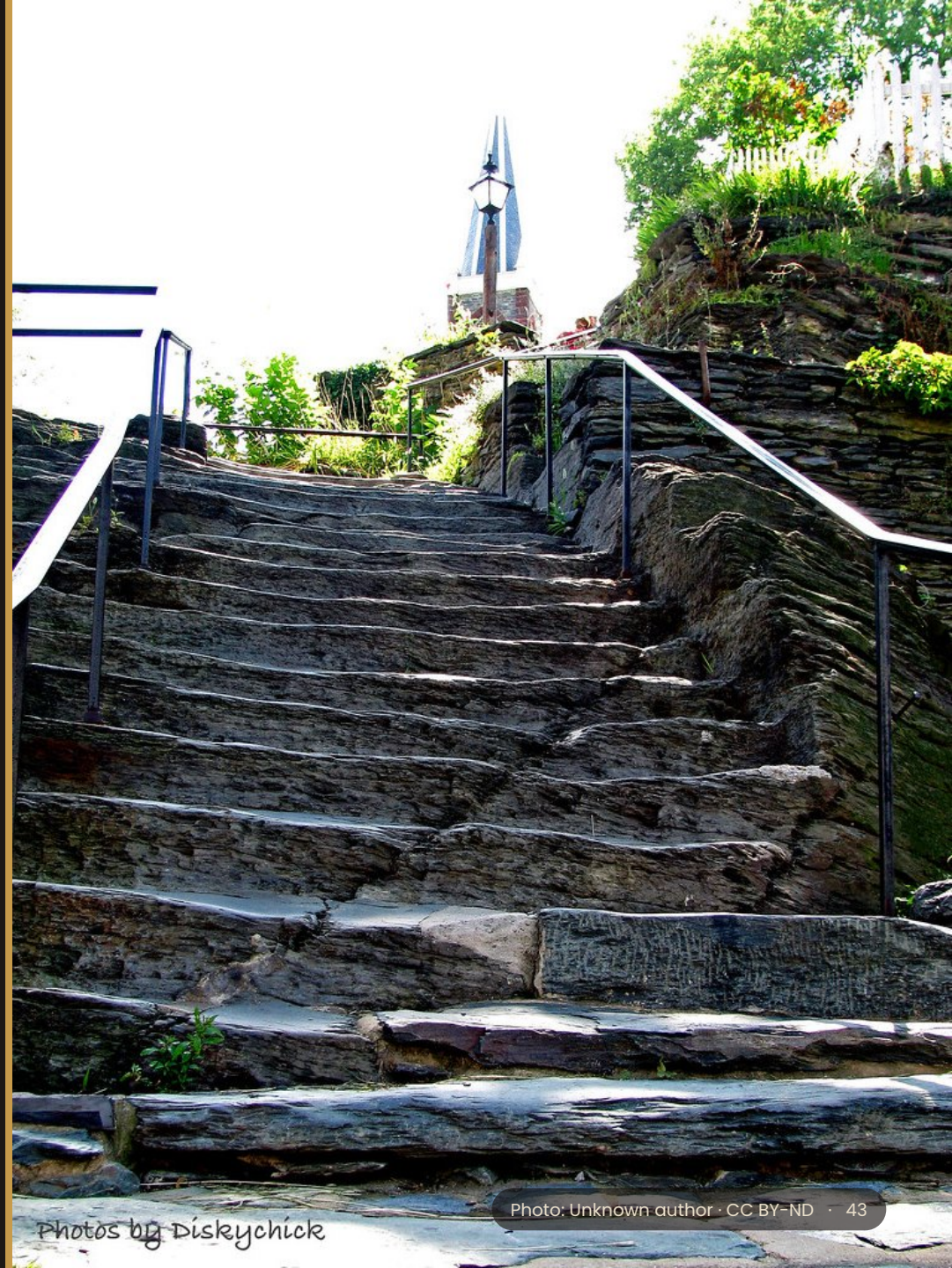


Photo: Unknown author · CC BY-ND · 43



The Garden of Gethsemane

Photo: Unknown author · CC BY

“Judas got a band of soldiers and guards from the chief priests and the Pharisees and went there with lanterns, torches and weapons.”

JOHN 18:3



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