

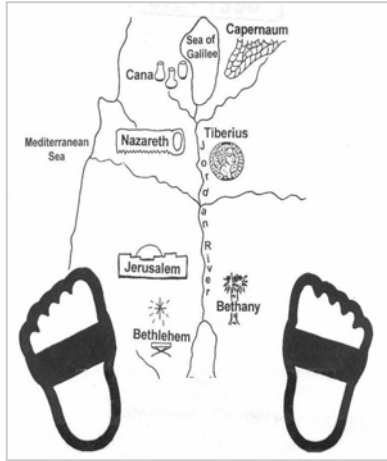
Walk through Lent with Jesus

By Cynthia Davis, Author Footprints from the Bible

Meeting God on the Journey

Travel through Israel—Galilee and Judea as known by Jesus. The towns, people, and events of the time impacted Jesus and his followers. Learning about some of the places mentioned in the Gospels, in light of the Gospel accounts, you will find your faith enriched.

By focusing on different aspects of Christ's pilgrimage through Israel, you will draw closer to God in your own journey.



Hints for an Effective Study

There are 7 lessons in this study—one for each week in Lent. You will journey with Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem (see below), taking time to look at some of the events of His life and ministry. You'll learn a bit about Israel in 30AD and there are questions to give you time to think and meditate on Jesus' ministry and your own faith.

Open each session with prayer. You can use the one here, the Lord's Prayer, or another favorite prayer.

Lord Jesus, walk with me and open my heart to what you would have me learn from these lessons. Amen.

After completing the readings, take time to reflect and journal on the questions. If you are doing this study with friends, share your insights with each other.

Close each session with the prayer in the lesson.

Nazareth & Cana

Awareness of Christ

Decapolis & Caesarea Philippi

Recognition of Christ

Lake District—Capernaum, Magdala, Gennesaret, Tiberias

Call of Christ

Bethlehem & Bethany

Power of Christ

Jerusalem

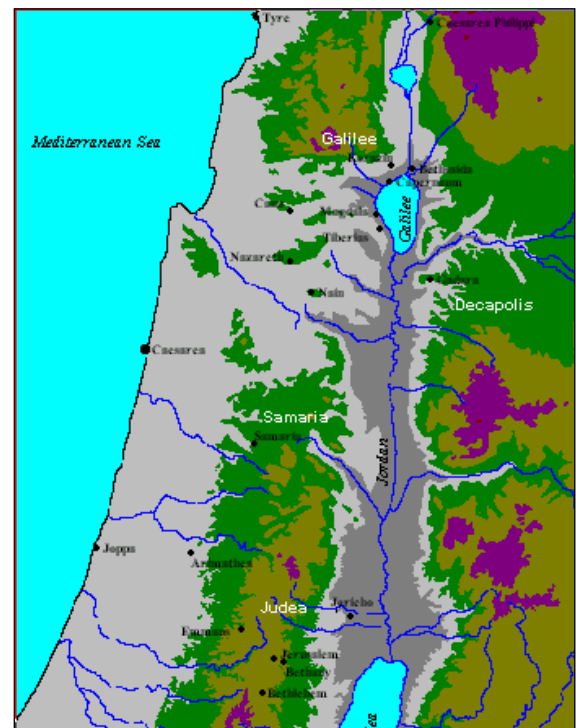
Rule of Christ

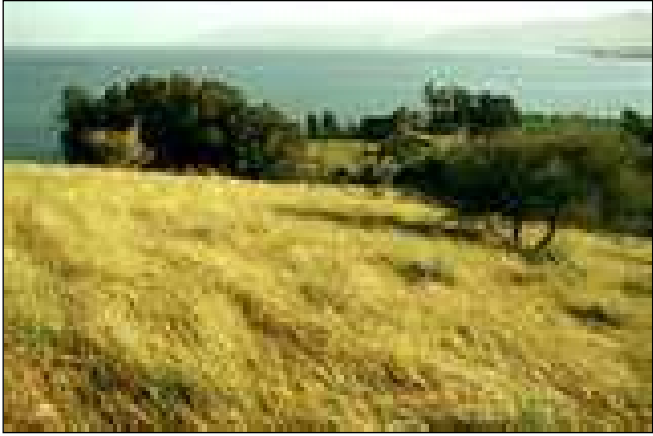
Golgotha

Kingship of Christ

The Garden

Triumph of Christ





Nazareth & Cana (Lesson 1)

Awareness of Christ

The hill country in the northern part of **Galilee** is where the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, walked with their flocks. Rome conquered the area in 63BCE. Hated Roman soldiers or some of Herod Antipas' guards march along the roads. Herod is the tetrarch, an honorary title granted by the Emperor, but the real power lies with Rome. Jesus' preaching ministry started among these hills.

Read Matthew 4:23-5:12

Jesus says that those who gain God's favor are the poor in spirit, the grieving, and the meek. How can you find the blessing in need, sorrow, or troubles of your life?

We are also called to mercy, peace, and purity. What can you do to cultivate these traits in yourself and in those around you?

Nazareth overlooks the prosperous farming land in the Great Valley. A wide variety of nationalities travel from the Great Sea to Jerusalem or the Sea of Galilee along the trade routes just down the hill. Some lucky people ride on camels, donkeys or horses but most walk from place to place. Occasionally the litter of a grand and wealthy lady can be seen, but such a thing is rare so far from the urban centers. Large numbers of workers from many nations have settled here creating a diverse community. Grain and many fruit crops such as pomegranates, grapes, figs and olives flourish in the sheltered climate of the area. These are sold locally and traded as far away as the seacoast and the capital. Houses are made of limestone covered with mud brick. Nazareth is the town Jesus grew up in and learned the carpenter's trade from his father, Joseph. However, when he returned to Nazareth he is not welcomed. Instead, the people are offended and try to throw him from the cliffs.

Read Luke 4:16-30

Jesus quotes Isaiah in the synagogue at Nazareth. Why do you think his teaching was rejected by his neighbors?

How can we 'preach good news to the poor...liberty to captives...proclaim the year of the Lord'?

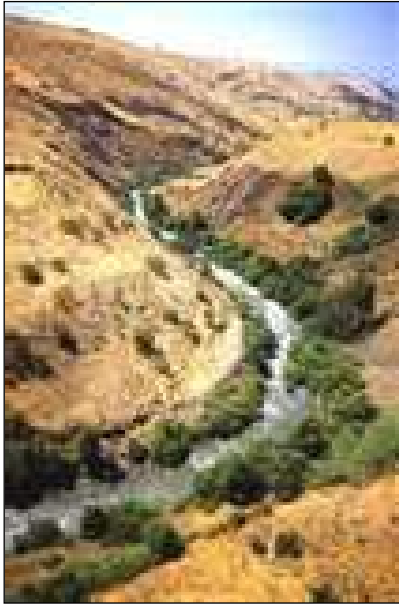
A half-day's walk north of Nazareth (10 miles) is the town of **Cana**. This farming village, known for its rich grapevines is comfortably situated in the Jezreel Valley at the foot of the Galilean hills. Grapes, raisins and wine are exported to surrounding areas and as far away as Jerusalem. Jesus performed the first miracle in Cana—changing water into wine.

Read John 2:1-11

Jesus' first miracle was at a wedding. How can we bring Jesus into the everyday events of our lives?

Mary believed that her son would help the couple. Do you have the same trust that God will provide for your needs?

Jesus, Lover of the poor and meek, help me to be aware of your presence in all aspects of my life and to be open to sharing the good news with all I meet, trusting that you will provide the words and the opportunity to witness to you. Amen.



Decapolis & Caesarea Philippi (Lesson 2)

Recognition of Christ

The **Jordan River**, lifeblood of the nation us born in the snows of Mt. Hermon in the north. The river flows south through the land in the rift valley left by the shifting land long ago. It is fed from the surrounding highlands by brooks and streams like the Jabok where Jacob wrestled with God. Far to the south, in Judea, lies the body of water known as the Dead Sea. It is below sea level and the Jordan ends there. The minerals of eons have left the water too salty to support life. Here in the north, however, the river flows vigorously, watering the land on each side and emptying into the lake called the Sea of Galilee.

The Jordan River area is full of history. Joshua, the warrior hero of the Conquest of the Promised Land is also remembered for stopping the flow of the river so the Israelites could enter the land. Naaman the Syrian officer was told by Elisha to wash in the river and be healed of his leprosy. John the Baptist preached repentance and foretold of the coming Messiah until his arrest. Many of his followers became disciples of Jesus.

Read Luke 3:1-22

John the Baptist called for repentance to ‘prepare the way of the Lord’ and said that people should share their food and clothing. What tangible ways can we prepare our lives and hearts to receive Christ?

John refused to be distracted from his mission. He said “one who is mightier is coming...he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit”. Do you find it difficult to stay focused on your ministry?

At least two days walk to the northeast of Cana (50 miles) lies the Gentile town of **Caesarea Philippi**. Located at the headwaters of the Jordan, this was the capital of Herod the Great's youngest surviving son Philip. Once known as Paneas, Philip renamed the city in honor of himself and the Emperor. Raised in Rome, this son of Herod was appointed tetrarch of the region bordering Syria. Philip ruled the resident nomadic tribes like a sheik, collecting his share of their wealth gained in trading horses and camels. Jesus astounded the traditional among his Jewish neighbors by visiting the Gentile towns of Caesarea Philippi and Tyre. In Tyre he healed the daughter of a Canaanite woman. It was near Caesarea Philippi that Jesus asked his disciples. “Who do you say I am?”

Read Matthew 16:13-21

Jesus asks each of us “Who do you say I am?” What answer are you willing to give?

When Peter makes his bold assertion, Jesus starts to teach his disciples about the coming end. What is it that you don't want to let go of in order to fully accept the demands God will make on our lives if we say “you are the Christ”?

The eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee is not part of Judea. It is known as the **Decapolis**, a group of ten widely scattered towns under Roman control but separate from Judea and south of Philip's territory. Manasseh, son of Joseph, claimed the area when the twelve tribes returned from their long exile in Egypt fifteen centuries before Christ. However, the area long ago came under Gentile rule. The residents even, to the disgust of all orthodox Jews, raise pigs to sell to the Roman troops. When Jesus passed through the area, he healed a man of many (a legion) of demons. This made the residents ask him fearfully to leave.

Read Mark 5:1-20

The people were afraid of what happened to the demoniac and asked Jesus to leave. Do you think there are times when you are afraid of the changes or demands God might make if you let him?

Jesus told the healed man to “go home and tell your friends what the Lord had done”. Why do you think Jesus refused to let the man come with him?

Jesus, Messiah, proclaimed by John, Peter and even recognized by demons, open my heart to allow the changes and demands you offer me for my healing, so that I may grow closer to you. Amen.

Lake District (Lesson 3)

(Capernaum, Magdala, Gennesaret, Tiberias)

Call of Christ

The **Sea of Galilee** is actually a large lake (5 miles east to west & 15 miles north to south) in the northern part of the country. It is also known as the Sea of Chinnereth. Surrounded by fishing villages and fish processing towns, the area was the center of export for both fresh and cured fish as far away as Rome. Judean fish are highly prized by Roman society. Fish was such an important commodity Jerusalem had a “Fish Gate”, where fish are bought and sold.

Fish in these waters include sardine, carp, perch, and catfish. Eels also swim in the lake. The Jewish people are forbidden by Levitical law to eat catfish and eels, but these were exported to the Gentiles. Boats up to 26 feet long and 7 feet wide, crewed by four rowers and carrying up to fifteen men, plied the waters along with smaller craft. Most of these boats also have masts, so they can take advantage of the lake winds.

Fishermen still use methods used for centuries. The most common is the seine net, which is cast out over the water. Weights on the edges make it sink. As it sinks, a drawstring is closed so that fish are caught in the semi-circle as the net is drawn tighter and tighter. Independent fishermen employ nets that one man can handle. Two or three fishermen may join together to use the 500 foot diameter nets. Larger operations use two boats or a crew on shore and one in the boat will work together to use one of the largest (1500 foot) nets. Some fish are caught by using a bone or shell hook but this is a much slower method. When the catch was sold, the profit was shared by the crew

Jesus and his followers spent a lot of time in the Lake District because it was familiar territory to many of the men like Peter and Andrew, James and John who left the family business to follow Jesus.

Read Mark 1:16-20

James and John left their father. How do you think Zebedee felt about his sons' abandoning the family business?

Jesus says “Follow me” to Peter and Andrew, James and John. Are you willing to follow where Jesus leads without thinking about the ‘cost’?

Capernaum is about 30 miles south of Caesarea Philippi and only 15 miles from Cana but the village is entirely different from either of these towns. Volcanic hills rise just 750 feet behind the beach on which the town sits. Homes in Capernaum are built of the surrounding rock, not the mud brick used in other areas of the country. Even the synagogue is constructed of the black volcanic basalt rock.



The prosperity of this town on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee was partly due to its location on the trade route running between the tetrarchy of Herod Antipas in Galilee and the tetrarchy of his brother Philip on the northeast side of the Sea.

Tiberius was built by Herod Antipas as his capital in Galilee. Antipas took 9 years to construct the Roman-style city at the site of a famous hot springs. He named it for the Emperor Tiberius in an attempt to curry favor with the monarch. It was a large city with a coliseum that held 10,000 people, about a quarter of the population. Few Jews lived in what they considered a pagan city. Herod's palace had a roof covered with gold and many statues inside.



Antipas, like other rulers throughout the empire, minted his own coinage. Many merchants used the Roman currency even though it had the image of the emperor. A *denarius* was a common coin—worth about 15 cents. The smallest coin in circulation was the *lepton* equal to $\frac{1}{4}$ cent. Tax collectors are considered a necessary if unsavory part of the economy. Every catch is taxed. Many tax collectors are known to be thieves, charging more than is due and pocketing the extra. Matthew, also known as Levi, was a tax collector before Jesus called him to the life of discipleship.

Read Mark 2:13-17

Levi left his position with the Roman government to follow Jesus. Would you be able to give up a prestigious position if Jesus called you?

Although an outcast to his Jewish neighbors, Levi was friends with 'tax collectors and sinners' who he invited to hear Jesus. Are you willing to invite all your friends to hear about Jesus?

Only a few miles away lie the plains near **Gennesaret**. The fertile soil is home to date palms, olive, walnut and sycamore trees as well as rich grain fields and vineyards.

Much of the farm produce was traded at **Magdala**. This trade center, on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. Residents carved stone coffins out of the limestone hillsides south of the town. West of town is a steep scenic climb up through the narrow "Valley of Doves" to the top of an extinct volcano known as the Horns of Hattin. At the top you can observe the lake and surrounding area from the height of 1300 feet.

Women, including Mary of Magdala were drawn to follow Jesus like the men.

Read Luke 8:1-3

Luke says that the women who followed Jesus had been healed. What healing have you felt in your life as you follow Jesus?

The women provided for Jesus and his disciples. How can you help spread the kingdom?

Jesus, you called the disciples to leave all they knew and follow you. Help me to be willing to abandon my careful plans in order to go where you call me. Amen

Bethlehem & Bethany (Lesson 4)

Power of Christ

The southern part of Israel, called **Judea**, was firmly under control of the Roman procurator, Pontius Pilate, installed in 26 CE. Even though Judea was given by Herod the Great to his son Archelaus, Rome had to exile the inept king to Gaul because riots



and incidents of civil unrest plagued his 10 year rule. Then Rome installed a procurator to keep the fragile peace.

Read Luke 13:1-9

Jesus uses the example of those killed by Pilate and by the disaster of the tower falling to urge repentance not revolt. Is it hard to turn the other cheek to those who hurt us?

The parable of the fig tree was a warning to the religious leaders of Israel. What sort of fertilizing do you need to bear fruit?

Bethlehem is a little town nestled in the hills 5 miles south of Jerusalem. The name *Bet Leven* means House of Bread. Wheat grown here is used for the shewbread in the temple.

The nearby hills were home to the temple shepherds and their flocks. The little fat-tailed sheep on the hills were raised to provide the lambs for the temple sacrifices. Selective breeding insured that these animals were entirely white, without any spot of another color. During lambing season, the numerous hill caves are used to shelter the ewes and newborn lambs from the chill spring winds.

Bethlehem is revered as the ancestral home of the family of David. It was the prophesied birthplace of Messiah.

Read Matthew 2:1-18

Being of the house of David was an honor to the ancient Jews. How much greater honor is it to be of the 'house and lineage' of Christ?

Herod was fearful for his own legacy. What damage do we do out of fear?

North of Bethlehem lies **Bethany**. The name means "House of Dates" and indeed there are many date palm trees in the area. The palm tree has many uses; not least of which is producing dates. This graceful tree can up to 100 feet tall. The branches were used to make the booths during the Feast of Booths (Succoth) every fall.

Scribes and some temple priests made their home in Bethany because it is so close to Jerusalem and the duties of the temple, without the dust and crowds of the larger city. Many wealthy families lived in the estates in and around the town. Bethany was the home of Jesus friend Lazarus who he raised. This miracle was the catalyst that convinced the Jewish leaders that Jesus had to die.

Read John 11:45-53

Caiphas and the council were afraid that the Romans would destroy the Temple if Jesus was not stopped. What are you afraid will be destroyed if you follow Christ?

The priests were trying to protect the status quo. Is there something you are protecting?

Lord Christ, I want you to be in charge of my life, but I can become fearful that you will ask too much of me, so I try to save my life just like the Roman and Jewish leaders did. Help me to trust you with my life. Amen.

Jerusalem (Lesson 5)

Rule of Christ



Jerusalem has been the capital of Israel for over a thousand years, since King David established his government within the walls. The city has seen many rulers come and go. Conquerors, too, have marched through the streets and torn down the walls. Each time, the Jews rebuilt the city with a faith that amazed their Gentile neighbors. Twelve gates surrounded the city. They were all shut at sunset when the Sabbath began so that no one could break the Law by conducting business within the walls on the holy day. Mud brick houses lined the narrow streets. The main road from the Temple to the city gate was paved with stones but most of the streets were packed dirt. Thousands of sandal shod feet raised a cloud of dust over the city which only settled after dark as people went to their camps and homes. The city overlooks the surrounding valleys and gardens.

Herod the Great added a theater, hippodrome and amphitheater to the capital. Orthodox Jews considered these Greek and Roman additions to the Holy City as sacrilege because of the sports held in the coliseum as well as the 'graven images' carved on the walls. With a nod to the patronage of Mark Anthony, Herod built the Fortress of Antonia on the north side of the Temple. This housed the Roman cohort and governor to the despair of devout Jews. Gentiles could gaze into the holy precincts even during religious celebrations. This led to riots such as the violence when the Roman standard was placed on the very entrance to the Temple. Seeing that every Jewish man in the city was willing to die rather than allow such an abomination, the governor wisely ordered the eagle removed.

Read Matthew 23:37-39

Jesus mourns over the Holy City, while chiding the leaders for "killing the prophets". In what ways are we blind to the prophets among us?

"How often would I have gathered your children..." Is it comforting to know that God desires to gather all God's children together?



Shining in the sunlight and visible above the city walls sat the **Temple**. It dominated the capital from the high ground on the eastern side of Jerusalem. Herod the Great doubled the size of the old temple built by Solomon, which was destroyed by Assyrian forces. The walls were made of golden limestone. This grand edifice, home of the worship of **ADONAI**, is the center of all Jewish religious and national pride. The priests and Temple scribes worked to maintain a favorable association with the Roman occupiers.

Read Matthew 24:1-2

Jesus was not impressed by the magnificence of the Temple. Can we become blinded by appearances and not see the truth?

The prophecy of the destruction of the Temple came true in 70AD. What happens when something you hold dear is destroyed?

*Living Christ, open my eyes to see your truth and my ears to hear your prophets amid the clamor and glamor of the world so that I may turn to you in the midst of worry and fear.
Amen.*

Palm Sunday, Passover (Lesson 6)

Kingship of Christ

Passover was the one time of the year when faithful Jews sought to travel to Jerusalem. This greatest of Festivals is the focal point of every Jewish man's life. Even those living far from Judea planned to make the trip to Jerusalem at least once in their life. Every spring a hundred thousand pilgrims thronged the city. They visited the Temple, awed by the magnificence and holiness of the place. All work ceased at noon on the day of the Passover. Men bought a ritual lamb from the Temple merchants to have it killed by the priests at the prescribed time. Three hours after noon, the *shofar* sounds to announce the beginning of the sacrifices.



Roman authority looked down on this display of religious fervor with a watchful eye. The governor and centurions were very aware that minor incidents quickly escalate into major riots in the climate of anticipation and remembrance. Every year talk of Messiah circulates. Jesus' arrival was greeted with songs of praise.

Read Matthew 21:1-13

The crowds were caught up in the religious and national fervor as they welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem. How do you think you would have reacted to news that the famous rabbi was coming?

Jesus drove the merchants out of the Temple. Is your heart a house of prayer or do you find yourself caught up in the secular busy-ness of the season?

The **Market** in Jerusalem was busy with the influx of the crowds for Passover. The many herbs and ingredients for the special meal were available for purchase, but sales must be completed at sundown when the *shofar* announces the beginning of Passover. Jewish families throughout the world still keep the Passover celebration. They gather together to remember the Exodus from Egypt centuries ago. The special lamb is roasted, then the family gathers to eat the ceremonial meal. Every person, thirteen and older, must eat a piece of lamb at least the size of an olive. The first cup of wine is shared and the lamb eaten with the bitter herbs, *haroseth*, matzo and eggs. Each portion has a symbolic meaning in remembering the time when God intervened and saved the first born of the Jews while killing the first born of the Egyptians.

Read Matthew 26:20-29

Jesus announces 'one of you will betray me' and each disciple asks 'is it I?' Have you ever betrayed Our Lord?

Jesus institutes the Last Supper (Holy Communion/Eucharist). When you receive the bread and wine, do you stop to think that it is a gift showing God's love?

Jesus, Prophet & Rabbi, here is my heart, cleanse it for service and praise of you each day so that I may welcome your love with joy. Amen.

Golgotha, The Garden (Lesson 7)

Triumph of Christ



Visitors entering from the north would see upright poles on the top of the small hill known as Golgotha. Prisoners and enemies of Rome were marched through the city from the Praetorium to this location. They carried the cross bar to which they are tied or nailed. Then they were hoisted to the top of the upright to die a slow and painful death by suffocation.

Jesus entered the city in triumph, acclaimed as the Messiah to lead the nation to victory against Rome. When He did not, they turned against him.

Read Matthew 27:1-66

Israelites were expecting a warrior king to defeat Rome, but that was not who Jesus was. How would you have reacted?

The priests hand Jesus over to the Roman authorities. Pilate tries to pass the blame back to the people who respond 'Crucify him'. Would you have shouted with the crowd or not?

In contrast to the stark hill of Golgotha, the garden nearby provided a cool shelter from the dusty road. The ancient olive grove with its oil press, called a *gethsemane*, was a popular sleeping area for travelers. It was in this garden that Jesus was arrested.

Farther down the hillside was another garden filled with caves used as tombs of many wealthy Jewish citizens. The caves were sealed with huge stones that rolled into a groove in front of the opening.

Read Matthew 28:1-8



It is the women who bravely venture to the grave. Why do you think they were faithful?

Why do you think Jesus told his disciples to meet him in Galilee?

Blessed Lord, you died in agony for my salvation—not a victory of armies, but of enduring and everlasting love. Help me to be faithful to your call to follow, not counting the cost, but following faithfully. Amen

Evaluation of the Study

It would be useful if you would email Cynthia this evaluation:

Was this study guide helpful?

Why or why not?

How did this study guide enrich your Lent study?

What suggestion(s) would you make for this and future study guides?