

## *Chapter 3*

# AT HOME IN NAZARETH



Jesus helps St. Joseph in the Carpenter's Shop from [marysrosaries.com/](http://marysrosaries.com/)

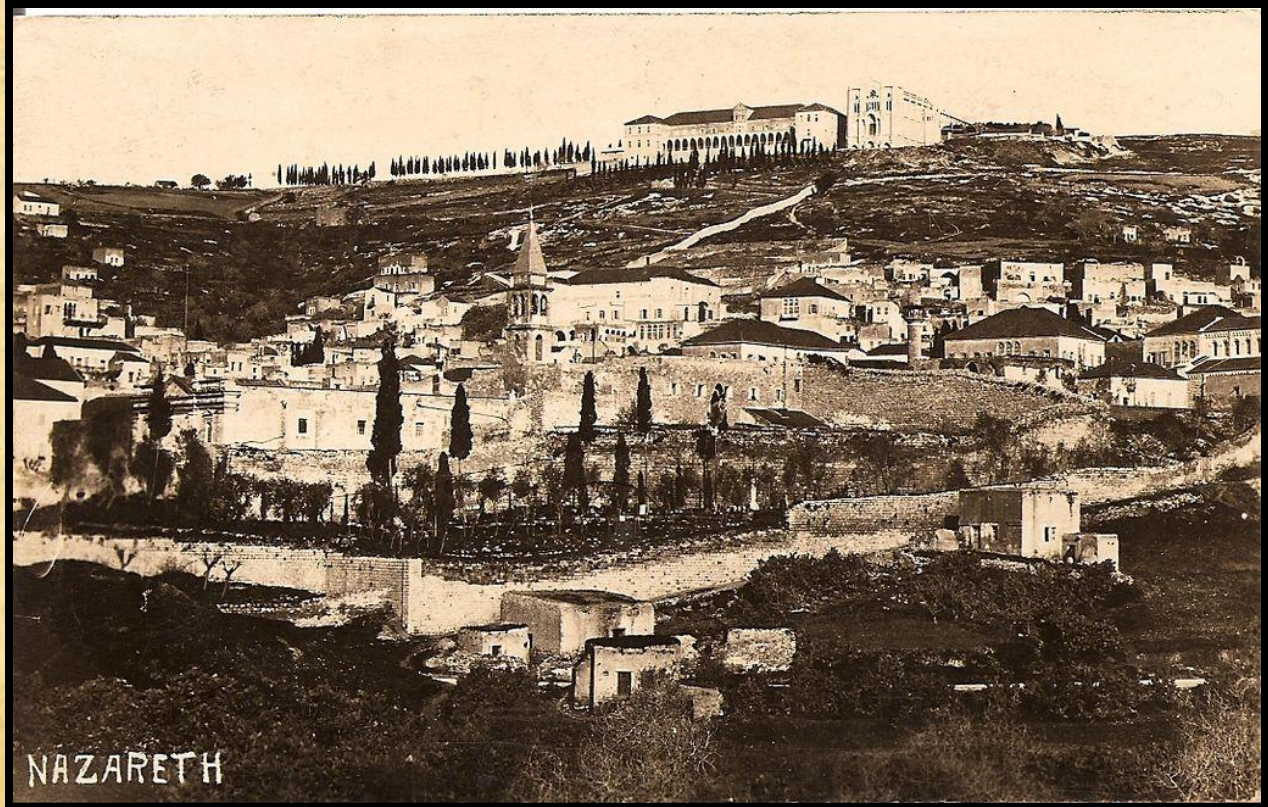
## AT HOME IN NAZARETH

**Matthew 2: 19-21:** “After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child’s life are dead. So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Having been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee, and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets: “He will be called a Nazarene.”

Once again, we must establish the extent the Roman rule in the area impacted the decisions made regarding the town which Joseph chose to call home. Although Herod had died, Rome did not trust Herod’s sons, thus, divided the kingdom into three parts, one for each son. Since Archelaus had received Judea, Samaria, and Idumea, Bethlehem was not even a possibility for Joseph because of the son’s reputation toward violence. Given the fact his evil personality surfaced at the very beginning of his reign by slaughtering 3,000 influential people, it is certainly clear why God did not want Joseph’s family in the region of this evil ruler.



[David Roberts](#) - The Holy Land Book Nazareth, 1842



Nazareth, postcard by Fadil Saba

Although the two above pictures of Nazareth were from a later time, it will still offer an understanding of the type of terrain found in the area. Certainly, once again, it is far from the misconception that people have of Jesus living in a flat desert area.

## Influence of Roman Empire Upon Nazareth

### 1) Religion

Nazareth was influenced greatly by the rule of the Romans in a myriad of ways. Not only were the people constantly paying unfair taxes imposed upon them, but were eking out a living on a daily basis that was being impacted greatly by famines, floods and thieves. Survival was the thought that remained at the forefront of most peoples' minds.

In addition, because of the Roman structure for governing, even the Jewish people had a hierarchy, or social rank, that added to the misery of the majority of the population of Palestine.

At the top stood a ruler, who when Jesus lived, served at the pleasure of Rome. **Mark 10: 42** explicitly expressed what Jesus thought of him by stating: **“You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them.”** This scripture was in response to James and John wanting the highest position in Jesus' kingdom and his message to them that serving others was a quality of true greatness.

Under the ruler came a thin layer of aristocracy; an example would be the chief priests (Sadducees) attached to the Temple.

Then, beneath this group came a level of men from the professional class, namely Pharisees, that served in the local administration; all literate and educated. Since the prevailing religious law was the one followed in Palestine, it stands to reason why Jesus was always in a debate with them over issues as an advocate for the downtrodden.

At the bottom, beneath all these layers came the majority of the population which was thought to be as much as 90 percent. This also included the poor, unemployed, and disabled.

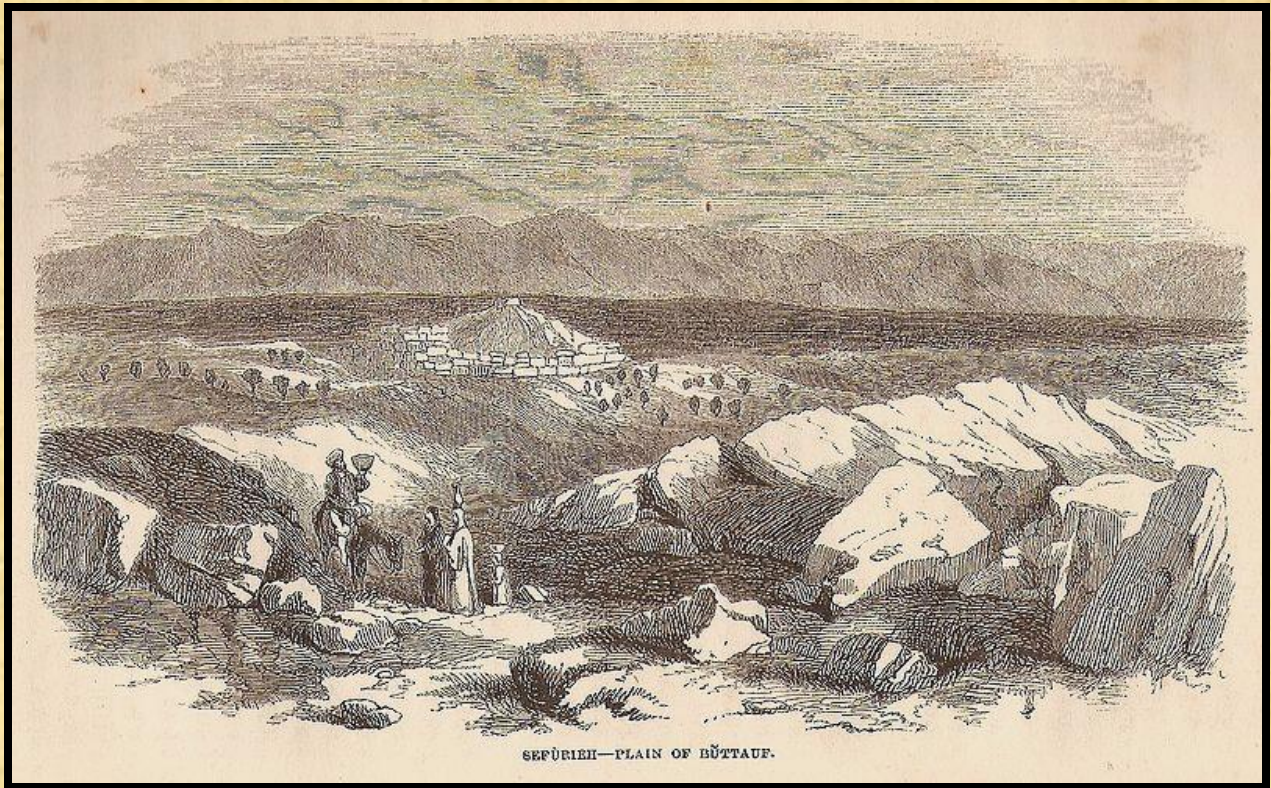
In addition, the Jewish people found themselves at odds with the Roman Empire due to their differences in religious practices. Romans were labeled as pagans, defined as anyone subscribing to the polytheistic religions found throughout the area. This practice was also defined as a “cult,” an abbreviated form of the Latin word *cultus deorum*, meaning “care of the gods.” They believed one must care for the gods and they in kind would care for the people. They simply had a god associated with literally everything. (Cities, crops, water, etc.) There was a class system for their gods; meaning some was more important than others. To the ancients of that time, they cared not what you believed and were unconcerned about how you lived on a daily basis. On the other hand, they did care how you worshipped the gods through cultic acts. Since they did not believe in an afterlife, they felt the gods would help them in all aspects of their daily lives. So, one would never want to offend a god for fear of being in disfavor.

Of course, this philosophy did not set well with the monotheistic, (belief in one God) of the Jewish people who were fervent about their religious practices. They believed one God, the creator of all, had made a covenant with his people. Within the Jewish religion, there were different viewpoints regarding afterlife. Some subscribed to the idea, while others did not.

## 2) *Economy*

The Roman Empire chose to allow the Greek language to remain even though they, personally, spoke Latin. This decision, along with the roads they built, allowed trade and also Christianity to grow rapidly after the death of Jesus.

In addition, recent archaeological findings at Sepphoris, a city that was renovated by Herod’s son Antipas, offers more information on how it might have impacted the living made by Jesus’ family; especially given the fact that it was within walking distance of Nazareth. Over time, it was labeled as the jewel of the Galilee because of its position and wealth.



SEFURIEH—PLAIN OF BUTTAUF.

Sefurieh - Plain of Buttauf, Palestine, picture p. 133 in W. M. Thomson: *The Land and the Book; or Biblical Illustrations Drawn from the Manners and Customs, the Scenes and Scenery of the Holy Land. Vol. II.* New York, 1859

*Often referred to as the*

*"Mona Lisa of the Galilee".*

*Part of a mosaic floor in Sepphoris.*



*Partially reconstructed Roman theater in Sepphoris*

Since it was the center of trade for the area, it would have not only impacted those living around it, but also brought in people possessing numerous cultural backgrounds. Over time, archaeology has uncovered ample findings to conclude that, without doubt, it was a Jewish city, and although beautified during the reign of Antipas, it would not have become a magnificent Roman village until after the death of Christ. Since it had a source of spring water, this would have been an additional draw to the people.

### *3) Agrarian Society under Roman Control*

During the time Jesus lived in Nazareth, it was considered an agrarian society; one whose economy was based on producing and maintaining crops using farmland. Through marriage, Jewish families sometimes farmed one or more small plots of land that had been a part of the contract. The main crops grown on these plots to feed the family were wheat or barley, legumes, and fruit. The challenge faced was to produce not only enough to feed the immediate family, but to also grow enough to meet the allotted amount that was to go to the Roman government. Given all the added challenges presented by weather conditions and natural disasters, it became impossible for many of the farmers to comply; thus causing the tax collectors to enter the scene, either as a lender or individual foreclosing on property. Thus, the 90 per cent designated to the bottom of the class system were certainly a vivid image of the downtrodden in society at that time. It is no wonder they were desperate for a messiah to rescue them from their unfair lot in life.

### Carpenter

Thus, after establishing Nazareth as home, Scripture then states that the child Jesus grew and became strong and was filled with wisdom. It also strongly indicates that the grace of God was upon him.

A quote from a book written by Paul E. Kretzmann called, EDUCATION AMONG THE JEWS, stating, "It was thought that if a father did not teach his son a trade, it was like teaching him to steal," best describes the immediate task set before Joseph regarding the life of his son, Jesus.

Although little is recorded in the Bible regarding the boyhood of Jesus in Nazareth, it is believed that he would have naturally followed in Joseph's footsteps as a carpenter. It is important to expand the definition of carpenter as defined in Palestine at that point in time.

Given the fact that wood was not plentiful in Nazareth, it has been speculated that perhaps Joseph trained his son in not only making objects of wood, but stone and metal, as well. This conclusion is also drawn from the Gospels description of Joseph as a "*tekton*" (τέκτων). *Tekton* has been traditionally translated into English as "carpenter", but is a rather general word (from the same root that gives us "technical" and "technology") that could cover makers of objects in various materials. (Dickson, 47: *Wikipedia*)

However, others still stand behind the theory that Joseph and Jesus probably made such items as ploughs and yokes from wood for farmers in the agrarian area where they lived.



John Everett Millais - Christ in the House of His Parents ('The Carpenter's Shop')

Certainly, **Mark 6: 3** does verify that Jesus followed in the footsteps of his father Joseph and became a carpenter by trade in stating, **“Isn’t this the carpenter? Isn’t this Mary’s son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren’t his sisters here with us? And they took offense at him.”**

### At Home In Nazareth

Although it is not a possibility to locate photographs of homes people lived in during the time of Christ, re-creations have been completed of dwellings that would be similar to his through information supplied from archeological excavations.

The home in which Jesus lived with his family would have been built of rocks and stones, being mortared with mud and coated with clay; for the purpose of warding off the hot summer sun, rain, and chill of winter. If more space was needed to accommodate a growing family, evidence shows that enlargement of quarters was accomplished by adding rooms on top of the crude structure.

Excavations also show that families probably built their homes close to one another in clusters; which would mean sharing common courtyards. This was done as a way of offering support to one another; protecting and sharing of daily needs for everyday living. They might have shared food stuffs such as milled grain, milk from goats, and eggs from chickens. Above all, the fellowship families enjoyed from preparing their food and eating together would have been invaluable in facing the challenges they most certainly endured on a daily basis. Also, as the son of a laborer, Jesus would need to be physically fit,

sporting various calluses on his hands and feet, along with dirt beneath his nails. No prince here!



*19th century photograph of a Middle Eastern village; note the stone, some rough and some dressed; small windows; doors below street level; flat roofs; haphazard positioning of houses*



*Reconstruction of interior of house like Jesus would have lived in.*



## JESUS LEARNED TO PRAY

As the early morning light danced playfully with the lingering shadows over the hills of Nazareth, Mary (Miryam) the mother of Jesus (Yeshua), would have already begun her day by grinding grain into flour for making bread; a process she went through at dawn, without fail. The difficult task of gleaning stalks of wheat from the field would have been completed at another time, followed by the arduous process of removing the grain from the stalk and storing it in a covered clay jar. Mary would have probably been about this work with other women that lived in her closely knit community; thus turning it into a time of friendship and support, which made the burden lighter for all. Not only would they have gleaned in the fields together, but also baked the bread in the courtyard over an open fire.



*The Gleaners* Jean-François Millet (II) 1857

It is estimated the grueling process of milling the grain would require at least 3 hours of work daily for an average family of five. (The upper hand stone was used to grind grain on the lower quern stone.)

Picture from Wikipedia



Without fail, due to his mother's hard work and diligence, Jesus would have been awakened every morning by the tantalizing aroma of freshly baked bread that wafted its way throughout the courtyard and rose quickly to the roof of the house where he slept with his other siblings. This morning ritual would have reiterated the importance of bread to the very core of his being. Without doubt, he would have realized from a very early age that bread was the most important food for his people. According to scholars, it was understood to be the biggest part of the diet for people during Biblical times; meaning that many lived almost entirely on it for sustenance.

Therefore, given all this emphasis on the Jewish teaching regarding the symbolism of bread, upon awakening, no matter how much his stomach rumbled, Jesus did not jump out of bed and race his siblings to the table with the goal of satisfying his hunger. Not Jesus (Yeshua), a child being raised by Mary and Joseph; two extremely devout Jewish parents. Thus, it is at this point we will begin to understand how the importance of prayer became so engrained in the fiber of our Lord's being at such an early age. Upon arising, he would have recited, "I offer thanks to You, living and eternal King, for You have mercifully restored my soul within me; Your faithfulness is great."

Then, after washing his hands, he would have said, "Blessed are You, Lord our G\_d,( YHWH) King of the universe who has sanctified us with His commandments, and commanded us concerning the washing of the hands," followed by, "Blessed be *Adonai*, our G\_d, King of the universe who brings forth bread from the earth." (*Since, out of respect, the Jewish people did not believe in saying God, they replaced it with Adonai, (Lord.)*)

Then, among many other prayers, the Shema, (An important prayer in Judaism that served as a centerpiece for morning and evening), from Deuteronomy 6: 4, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our G\_d, (*Adonai*) the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your G\_d with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates," was faithfully recited, and usually at bedtime with children.

Are you getting the picture of the importance the Jewish people placed on praying to God? They believed prayer built a relationship with Adonai; establishing such a strong bond that they would desire to serve him with all their heart, mind and soul. Their attitude toward prayer was established through the Torah; the first five books of the Old Testament as presented to them through God's servant Moses. The directions were clearly written and to be followed to the letter. Thus, it was not a chore to spend time praying to the Lord, but instead, an honor and pleasure. (*Wikipedia*)

## INFLUENCE OF AGRICULTURE

Since agriculture was the way the majority of people made their living in the Bible Lands, Jesus would have not only worked the land in order to provide food for his family's table, but would also have become intimately acquainted with every aspect of growing crops and raising animals. Thus, in order to stress greater understanding of his concepts when teaching, it was only natural that he would use examples in his lessons that were based around plants and methods of cultivation. Let us now take a look at some of these using Scripture.



## OLIVE TREE

*(Picture from Wikipedia)*



## OLIVE PRESS

Olive oil was used in the Temple worship service, cooking, for lamps, as a cleaning agent and for

medicinal purposes. Olive tree branches were often grafted into wild trees to insure no interruption of fruit production; the major

source of making a living for people. Olives were put into the vat and then either trodden or pounded with a stone or pestle. An additional way to extract oil was through the use of a press. Even the left over pulp was squeezed again to extract all remaining oil.

Throughout history, the olive tree has been a symbol for faithfulness and steadfastness. Our Lord, being extremely familiar with the book of Psalm, would have memorized the Scriptures below relating to the olive trees.



**Psalms 52: 8**

**"But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God; I trust in the mercies of God forever and ever."**

**Psalm 128:3**



**"Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine in the very heart of your house; Your children like olive plants all around your table."**

The olive tree was so significant that even Paul used it in his teachings describing the grafting in of the Gentiles.



**Romans 11: 17-21**

**"If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, do not boast over those branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you. You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in." Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by**



**faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either.”**

**\*\*\*\*Be aware that our Lord extended such mercy that we were not grafted into a wild tree, but the original, (His chosen people; the Hebrews); a sure sign of no favorites, but a genuine love for each of his children equally.**

**The Garden of Gethsemane (Gat Shemen in Hebrew, literally, the place of the “olive press”) was such an integral part of Jesus’ own prayer life that he repeatedly went there; and especially to spend time instructing his disciples.**

**Luke 22: 39**



**“Coming out, he went to the Mount of Olives, as he was accustomed, and his disciples also followed him.”**



**Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane by Arkhip Kuindzhi by Wikipaintings**



*Photograph of Garden of Gethsemane (Wikipedia)*

## ***GRAPES***



## Grape Presses

When the grapes were ripe, they were gathered and dumped, one or two baskets at a time, into a small vat whose floor sloped down towards a small basin.



The grapes were trampled by foot to extract juice.

## The Words Of Jesus

### *John 15:1-8 King James Version (KJV)*

**“I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abides not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herin is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.”**

## **YOKES**



A yoke is a wooden [beam](#) normally used between a pair of [oxen](#) or other animals to enable them to pull together on a load when working in pairs, as oxen usually do; some yokes are fitted to individual animals. There are several types of yokes, used in different cultures, and for different types of oxen. A pair of oxen may be called a yoke of oxen, and yoke is also a verb, as in "to yoke a pair of oxen". Other animals that may be yoked include [horses](#), [mules](#), [donkeys](#), and [water buffalo](#). Wikipedia

### Words of Jesus

#### Matthew 11:29 New International Version (NIV)

**“<sup>29</sup> Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”**

Paul also used the yoke to describe properly choosing a marriage partner by stating:

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 6: 14

**“Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership has righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?” (New American Standard)**

This usage of animals to plow the fields may have prompted Paul to use the example in Scripture of being unequally yoked. It was well known that the unevenness of the yoke due to a miss match of animal size was unworkable and stressful to the animals.

*(Photograph from Wikipedia)*





# BARLEY (GLEANING)



Gleaning (formerly 'leaving') is the act of collecting leftover crops from farmers' fields after they have been commercially harvested or on fields where it is not economically profitable to harvest. Some ancient cultures considered this as their welfare system for the poor.



"Ruth in Boaz's Field", 1828 by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld

## **TIME FOR CONTEMPLATION**

As you have read through this chapter, hopefully, it will have become obvious how Jesus, as a Jew, living under the Roman rule, had to navigate very treacherous and stormy waters on a daily basis in order to simply survive. In recognizing this fact, it should come as no surprise how aware he was of the plant and animal world. Certainly, he would have allowed the beauty of nature to fill his very heart and soul with peace during the many times of turmoil. He must have sought private places for talking to his Heavenly Father throughout his thirty three years of life in order to keep his mind focused and clear on his mission. Beyond doubt, he would have imprinted permanently on every fiber of his being that as the Son of God, he had come to be a sacrifice for the sin of mankind so that they would be drawn back to the Great Creator. Please take some time to contemplate on that mission. Even though our world and daily lives are filled with more questions than answers due to chaos and inner struggles, can you imagine how difficult it was for our Lord who faced such an enormously grave mission to keep his footing in this land of turmoil under Roman control? Is it, then, no surprise that he chose such a beautiful place called the Garden of Gethsemane as his sanctuary to receive a peace that passes all understanding that can only come from God? It was even the location where, just prior to being crucified for our sins, that his sweat poured out as drops of blood because of being in such turmoil. Consequently, it was at that time that his Father's angels tended to him; bestowing on him the courage and tenacity to move resolutely toward the cross. Gloria Hallelujah! Praise his holy name!

In closing, the question we all must ask ourselves is, "Where is the location of your Garden of Gethsemane?" Do you have a place of solace where you spend time with God? If not, the writer encourages you to locate one immediately. Let it be first on your "to do" list! It is the only way you can remain centered and in touch with your Lord! Amen!

### **SOURCES:**

"IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF JESUS," Jean-Pierre Isbouts

"LIFE APPLICATION STUDY BIBLE," New International Version (Tyndale)

"WORLD RELIGIONS," Michael D. Coogan (General Editor)

"BIBLICA," The Bible Atlas, Chief consultant Professor Barry J. Beitzel

"EDUCATION AMONG THE JEWS, Paul E. Kretzmann



## GROWING IN THE WORD



1) Before beginning your study individually or as a group, please go to the home page of [www.devotionalembbers.com](http://www.devotionalembbers.com), open the hymnal and listen to the recording of “IN THE GARDEN” by Organist/Pianist Brad Jent in preparation for learning.

2) Since this chapter spoke of certain important agricultural crops, let us now apply them directly to Scripture. Read the Scripture beneath each crop and discuss meaning as a group.

**Wheat** (Recognized as a symbol of the church on earth. The head of the wheat bound together symbolizes the individual members that make up one body; the church.)

**John 12: 24** (ESV) “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.”

**Luke 22: 31-32** (NIV) “Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.” (Can you think of other examples?)

**Olive Oil** (“Oil was used in all sorts of ceremonies where Israel desired to recognize the need and the presence of the Spirit in some given calling or task.”)(Christian Believer Knowing God with Heart and Mind by J. Ellsworth Kalas) Read the Scriptures below and discuss)

**I Samuel 10: 1** (NIV) “Then Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it on Saul’s head and kissed him, saying, “Has not the Lord anointed you leader over his inheritance?”

**James 5: 14** (NIV) “Is anyone of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil.”

(Go deeper by reading **Luke 4: 17-21** where Jesus read from the scroll of Isaiah. Who anointed him?)

### CLOSING PRAYER

*Dear Lord,*

*We praise you for the Scriptures that teach us what it was like to live in the Bible lands. Although it was long ago in a location hard for us to imagine and internalize, we ask that you open our minds to new concepts so that we will better understand your Word. Teach us what you want us to know and understand so that we get to know you intimately as our Savior.*

*Amen!*