

Sepphoris: Understanding the World of Jesus



View of remains of Sepphoris from east. Photo by Todd Bolen, Biblicalplaces.com.

Modest Goals

1. Review names
2. Survey city's history
3. Examine three allusions to city



Mona Lisa of Galilee: Mosaic from banquet hall of 3rd century Roman mansion in Sepphoris. Photo by Todd Bolen.

What's in a name?

- Heb. – צפורין or צפורה = "bird"
- Gk. – Σέπφορις, Αυτόκράτωρις
- Latin – Sepphoris



Sepphoris excavations. Photo by Todd Bolen.

Historical Survey

- 4 B.C.E. – Revolt led by Judah ben Hezekiah
- 4 B.C.E. – Romans capture and burn the city, sell residents into slavery
- 3 B.C.E. – Herod Antipas - tetrarch of Galilee, Peraea (Transjordan)
- 3 B.C.E. – Antipas selects Sepphoris as capital
- 7 C.E. – Antipas begins massive construction campaign
- 66/67 C.E. – “greatest,” “strongest” city of Galilee



Sepphoris mikvah. Photo by Todd Bolen.

- Military, political and cultural center
- One of the three largest cities in Galilee

Geography

- About 4 miles NW of Nazareth
- One hour's walk from Nazareth
- Nazareth one of its many villages (Life 46)



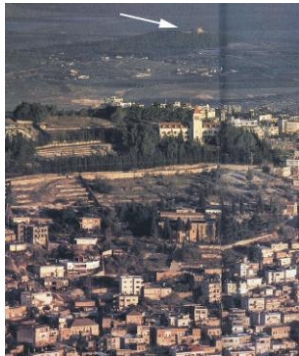
Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary, 851



Nazareth view south from Sepphoris. Photo by Todd Bolen

Matt. 5:14:
"A city situated
upon a mountain
cannot be hid."

- Sepphoris:
"the ornament
of Galilee"
(Ant. 18.2.1)



Aerial view of Sepphoris from Nazareth.
Photo by Ira Block.



Mark 6:3: "Is this not the
carpenter?"

Matthew 13:55: "Is this
not the carpenter's son?"

- Strange (1091): "employing
craftsmen from villages all
over Galilee."
- Theatre, wall, water works
(aqueduct), Roman cardo

Sepphoris Roman reservoir,
photo by Todd Bolen.



Roman cardo, 1st Century A.D. Photo by Todd Bolen.



Sepphoris cardo with wheel ruts. Photo by Todd Bolen.

- Greek word: τέκτων = "general craftsman," "builder" or "carpenter"
- In Classical Greek frequently used in opposition to masons and smiths (metal workers)
- Water wheels, scaffolding, oak-beam cranes, arches, vaults, cabinets, etc.



- Batey (76): "When a *tektōn*, or artisan, from a village near Sepphoris, visited the construction site, he would be introduced to another world—an urban world."

Matt. 6:5: "And when you pray, you must not be as the play-actors...."



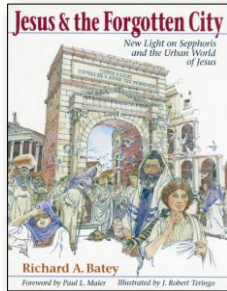
- Greek word: ὑποκριτής = "actor" in the sense of a pretender; false role in public
- Strange: reference to streets (Gk., πλατειῶν) = colonnade streets
- Jesus would have understood the significance of "hypocrites"
- Batey (88): "This public display of piety is a performance calculated to impress the observers."



Sepphoris theater, 1st Century A.D. Photo by Todd Bolen.

Other Topics

- Antipas the Fox and John the Baptist
- The King Figures in the Teachings of Jesus
- Herod Antipas' Galilean Economy
- The Economy of the Kingdom of God
- Jesus, Friend of Tax Collectors
- Jerusalem, City of the Great King



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