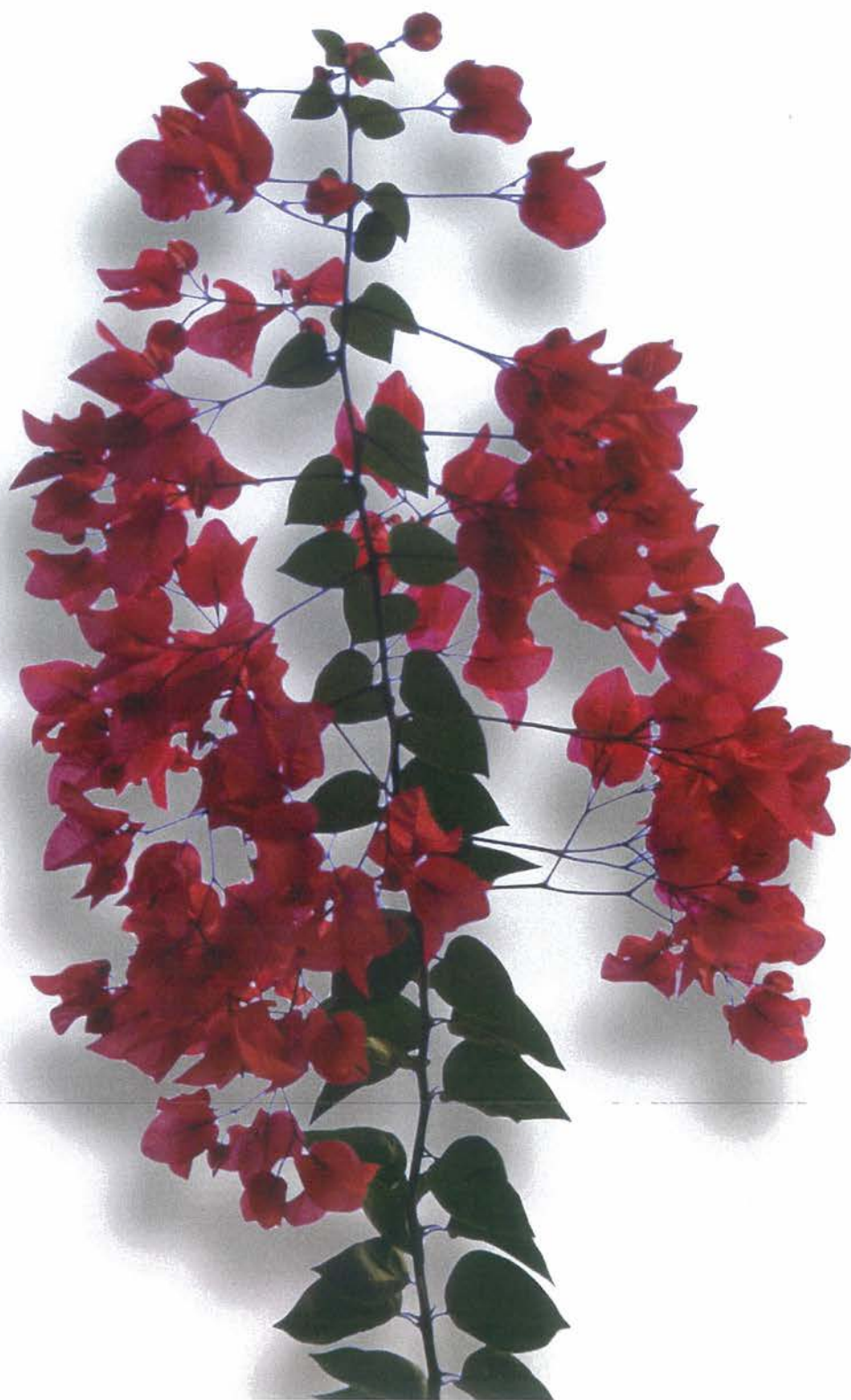


PROVIDENCE
& THE SECRET
OF NAZARETH



Jerusalem and the Path to Nazareth

I stepped off the plane in Tel Aviv and headed for customs. As I handed my passport to the immigration control officer, I asked him to stamp a removable entry slip instead of my passport.

The reason for my request - If I had an Israeli stamp in my passport, I would not have been allowed entry in to Lebanon.

This request was not well received, particularly when he saw the Lebanese visa in my passport. I was immediately taken aside and thoroughly questioned by Israeli security police. Lebanon is regarded as an enemy state of Israel.

Also, being a tourist at this time in Israel did not appear to make sense to the security police. I explained I was in fact a tourist and my itinerary included Sidon and Tyre in Lebanon.

After considerable discussions, they eventually handed me my passport with the stamped entry slip inside.

It was October 2000 and tensions were very high between the Israelis, Palestinians and surrounding Arab states. These tensions caused 300,000 tourists to cancel their bookings in the prior 3 months and with so few visitors in the country, my trip took on a very unique flavour.

My destination this day was Jerusalem and I had to take a bus to the central bus terminus in Tel Aviv then a second one to Jerusalem. This second bus comprised of one tourist, namely myself, a hand full of locals and about 15 military personnel armed with automatics.

Welcome to the Holy Lands!

As the bus headed for Jerusalem, I opened the travel guide and selected a hotel called the Seven Arches on Mt.Olivet. As you can see, my trip was well organised in advance.

On arriving at the Jerusalem bus station I hailed a taxi and asked the driver to take me to the Seven Arches Hotel on the Mount of Olives. The driver paused for quite awhile before we drove off. About half way he stopped saying this was as far as he would go. I discovered the Mount of Olives was a Palestinian area and stones would ruin the duco of this late model Mercedes taxi. The driver then flagged down a Palestinian taxi and I continued my journey passing Israeli army check points along the way to the hotel.

Weeks prior to this journey, well meaning friends expressed concern, even projecting some fear about my trip but it did not take hold. My desire to go to Israel was neither rational or emotional. It was a strange combination of attraction and assurance, though I must admit I could feel myself saying "trust" as I entered the Arab area of Jerusalem.

The view from Mt Olivet, over the Kidron Valley to the wall of the old city and Islam's Mosque 'Dome of the Rock'.

As we drove up Mt Olivet through Gethsemane I could see over Jerusalem, and what a sight!

Soon standing on the brink of Olivet, and Jesus saw for the first time (in his memory) the Holy City, the pretentious palaces, and the inspiring

temple of his Father. At no time in his life did Jesus ever experience such a purely human thrill as that which at this time so completely enthralled him as he stood there on this April afternoon on the Mount of Olives, drinking in his first view of Jerusalem. And in after years, on this same spot he stood and wept over the city which was about to reject another prophet, the last and the greatest of her heavenly teachers. Urantia Book Page 1373. Jesus is thirteen years old.



I was standing in the hotel foyer and there was not a soul to be seen. I rang the bell at the reception desk and stood there for sometime before a woman appeared. My presence surprised her.

Being the only visitor in such a complex which normally has 350 to 400 guests this time of year was a strange feeling. This is a Palestinian staffed hotel, originally built by Jordan but was taken over by Israel during the six day war.

I entered my room, number 305, walked over to the window, pulled up a chair and looked out over a fabulous view of Jerusalem. A few hours passed before I decided to walk to Bethany.



The view of Bethany from the Mount of Olives.

On the eastern slopes of Olivet they paused for rest in the borders of a little village called Bethany. The hospitable villagers poured forth to minister to the pilgrims, and it happened that Joseph and his family had stopped near the house of one Simon, who had three children about the same age as Jesus—Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. They invited the Nazareth family in for refreshment, and a lifelong friendship sprang up between the two families. Many times afterward, in his eventful life, Jesus stopped in this home.

Urantia Book Page 1373. Jesus is thirteen years old.

Walking back from Bethany, I bought a grapefruit juice and standing on a corner, I watched some youths roll a tyre in to the middle of the road, stuff it with paper then light it. Black smoke soon spiralled in to air.

As I continued walking up Mt Olivet from Bethany, I came across a building complex near the top and decided to venture in because I could see it had a beautiful outlook over Bethany.

It turns out this complex is a special school for disadvantaged children from the West Bank run by St Vincent De Paul. It also has very good budget accommodation and in the Church there are a series of paintings including one depicting Lazarus standing in the tomb entrance wrapped in bandages.

After a short visit with the Sisters, I walk backed to the hotel. It was a perfect afternoon, 24°C, blue sky and no wind. Out the back of the hotel is a large area of lawn and a some trees so I thought it would be a good place to read for a few hours. In the centre of the lawn there was a gum tree. Perfect!

At about 4 PM this Friday afternoon, I decided to walk down Olivet through Gethsemane to reflect and obtain a sense of the place. I continued on to Jerusalem passing the massive stone wall surrounding the old city. Impressive foundation stones! I entered via the South gate and walked through alleys lined with closed shops. The tourists were scarce.

I head towards the Jewish sector to find tight police security at the entrance. After the obligatory search and scan, I entered the court yard to the western wailing wall during the Friday evening Shabbat. One gentile to four hundred Jewish religionist praying, singing and socialising. To my great surprise, I was invited to join in.

As I was taking in the moment, I could sense the shadow of Islam's 'Dome of the Rock' sitting on the Temple Mount above.

Its getting late, so I walk back to the hotel. It's a tough walk and you need to be fit. Back in my room I enjoyed some excellent hommus, salad, bread and local beer whilst sitting at the window staring at Jerusalem. The day had been a gift!

On Saturday morning I walked back to the old city, this time entering through St Stephens Gate. (The gate of the first Christian martyr). I wanted to visit Islam's Dome of the Rock but was barred from entering. New rules as of last week.

I walked down Via Dolorosa to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre passing 'money changers' and religious commercialism along the way. Some things don't change.

Sunday lunch was in a café on Mt Zion and afterwards I walked down in to the Kidron Valley inadvertently walking towards Bethlehem. I sense the energy change, I am asked if I am lost, its time to change direction.

Next morning I say goodbye to Jerusalem. The taxi driver suggested an option to me, instead of travelling on a bus to Tiberias via Israeli cities, go via the West Bank, the Dead Sea, Jericho and up the Jordan valley. He said I would see more. I chose the latter.

This time the bus had 30 military personnel and yours truly. This serious firepower of 30 Automatic weapons was strangely assuring yet surreal at the same time. At the turn off to Jericho, white rocks splattered with red paint lined the embankment. A very powerful Palestinian statement! About 20 metres past the intersection a sign

warned individual travellers not to enter Jericho. As the bus continued up the Jordan valley to the Sea of Galilee, the rocky desert gave way to greening hills, crops and trees. Life was returning.

A rocky mountain near Jericho.



Sea of Galilee.



A sign on the way to Jericho.

Nazareth, Hills, Maps and Providence

I arrive in the 'resort' town of Tiberias after a three hour bus journey but decided to continue up to the Arab town of Nazareth in the hills some 40 minutes away.

I opened my travel guide in Nazareth and selected the Casa Nova hotel. On arrival I found it had closed, like most hotels but I was told to try the Sisters of Nazareth convent around the corner as they have rooms for pilgrims.

As I walked in, a beautiful peace filled the courtyard and I remember saying to myself 'This is it'. This is where I would make my base and travel out to the various towns like Sepphoris and Capernaum. It proved to be comfortable, quiet and well priced. Again, I was the only visitor.

I unpacked, then talked to the sisters for a while. They told me the order was established in France in 1822 and that they never entertained the slightest possibility of going to the Holy Lands, so it was a quite a surprise to be asked by the Church to move to Nazareth in 1850.

The Sisters of Nazareth founded the first dispensary, then several schools including an orphanage. Today, the convent runs a school for visually, hearing and physically impaired children.

I decided to go for a walk and only being early evening, I started to explore the area armed with my compass and map.

The home of Jesus was not far from the high hill in the northerly part of Nazareth, some distance from the village spring, which was in the eastern section of the town. Jesus' family dwelt in the outskirts of the city, and this made it all the easier for him subsequently to enjoy frequent strolls in the country and to make trips up to the top of this near-by highland, the highest of all the hills of southern Galilee save the Mount Tabor range to the east and the hill of Nain, which was about the same height. Their home was located a little to the south and east of the southern promontory of this hill and about midway between the base of this elevation and the road leading out of Nazareth toward Cana. Aside from climbing the hill, Jesus' favourite stroll was to follow a narrow trail winding about the base of the hill in a northeasterly direction to a point where it joined the road to Sepphoris.

Urantia Book Page 1349.

I soon realised the original home of Jesus was in this district.

Tomorrow I would start to search for the old location but I soon realised I would be lucky to narrow the area to about 500 metres by 500 metres.

Before sunset, I decided to walk to the top of the steep hill to the north to get my bearings and take in the view.

It was therefore the custom for Joseph to take Jesus out for walks on Sabbath afternoons, one of their favourite jaunts being to climb the high hill near their home, from which they could obtain a panoramic view of all Galilee.

Urantia Book Page 1363.

It was a great walk!

As dusk sets in, Islam clerics call Muslims to prayer from their Minarets. A little later, church bells rang out in organised procession.

Late that night lying on my bed, I thought how fortunate I was to find this convent.

Sepphoris and Searching

On Monday morning I went down stairs for breakfast. There was one solitary place setting in a dining room that could cater for 60 guests. After breakfast the Sisters mentioned an archaeological site under the courtyard of the convent and asked if I would like a guided tour. Though I was very keen to visit some other sites and start my mapping, I accepted the invitation.

Wash basins chiselled out of a rock ledge.



What a site! This is one of the most interesting excavations I had visited during my entire trip. It covered the Crusader, Byzantine and Herodian (1st century) periods. The site consisted of tombs, a deep well with wash basins carved into the rock ledge, stairs, walkways and vaults, simply fascinating. This is an undiscovered treasure I thought to myself but after 30 minutes and a few photos I decided to leave and begin my own journey in to the past.

As a lad, Jesus frequently visited Sepphoris, only a little over three miles from Nazareth to the northwest, and from 4 BC to about A.D. 25 the capital of Galilee and one of the residences of Herod Antipas.

Urantia Book Page 1368. Jesus is nine years old.



Grooves made by ropes drawing up water from the well. Circa 4th Century AD

Mid morning I took a taxi to Sepphoris (Zippori) some 15 minutes away. This Roman town is being restored and features some stunning mosaic work. There is one mosaic called the 'MonaLisa' and it is truly exceptional considering the artist only worked with eighteen shades of the small tiles.

The original roads have been unearthed and show all the signs of heavy 'traffic' wear. The main foot paths are also inlaid with mosaics and are very artistic. Knowing that Jesus had spent some 6 months working here made the visit all the more interesting.

The latter part of this year, when carpenter work was slack about Nazareth, Jesus left James in charge of the repair shop and Joseph (his brother) at the home bench while he went over to Sepphoris to work with a smith. He worked six months with metals and acquired considerable skill at the anvil.

Urantia Book Page 1410.

Jesus is twenty two years old.

After returning from Sepphoris, I picked up my maps and compass and headed back up to the high hill to get some sight lines established.

These hills are very demanding and I thought Olivet was steep. I spent the afternoon trying to work out where the 'peak' would have been because the top of the hill had been levelled flat for development.

Working from the map at the base of the hill and looking up, I estimated the highest point was located where the Salesian School (Don Bosco) is now located. Dropping a line South to the Promontory, the line came to the Carmelite Convent with its large grounds. I then took another line a little more to the South down the hill then East.



A main road of Sepphoris. A footpath inlaid with mosaic is to the left.

I drew a small circle on the map where I thought the old home of Jesus might be and in middle of the circle was what appeared to be a small park. The park entrance is off 6173 street.

A good place to start looking I thought. On arriving, I found the park in fact to be an Arab cemetery and a beautifully maintained one at that. After a few minutes of sitting on a bench a groundsman came up to me and in broken English asked me to follow him. To my surprise he showed me three new graves. They were the graves of three Palestinian youths who were killed a few days prior.

Realising I was as close as I would ever get to the location of the home of Joshua Ben Joseph, I decided to call it a day and headed back to the 'Sisters of Nazareth', which as it turned out, was about half a block away.

The next day, Tuesday I caught a 40 minute bus ride to Capernaum via Tiberias.



The White Synagogue, Capernaum.

Capernaum, Fish and Mango's

At Capernaum there is the partially restored synagogue, called the White Synagogue from the first century and you can see on the lintels the stone reliefs of various themes including the grape clusters that Jesus referred to in his epochal sermon during the crisis at Capernaum.

The main reason for my visit to Capernaum was to explore the hills to try and locate the Ordination Mount or sometimes called the Mount of Beatitudes.

Just before noon on Sunday, January 12, A.D. 27, Jesus called the apostles together for their ordination as public preachers of the gospel of the kingdom. Two by two he gathered up the other apostles, and when he had assembled all twelve, he journeyed with them to the highlands north of Capernaum, where he proceeded to instruct them in preparation for their formal ordination.

Urantia Book Page 1568.

They came down from the mountain about sundown, but no man asked Jesus a question.

Urantia Book Page 1571.

I reasoned that since Jesus and the Apostles left Capernaum at Midday to walk north then return at sundown, around 5.30pm in January, I estimated they initially walked for 2 hours, stayed for 1 to 1 1/2 hours, then returned.

With compass in hand I walked due north. The climb was steady and it wasn't long before I was walking through citrus orchards. I also broke off a branch of an unfamiliar tree in the orchard to identify later. Winding my way up the hill across very rocky fields, I could see a small group of houses on the ridge which I later learned was the village of Amnun.



'Orchard Road' heading north up in to the hills north of Capernaum.

After 1 hour, I was at the top of the first ridge past the village. The view over Capernaum and the Sea of Galilee was out of this world. The deep blue sky met the hills of Jordan and further below the Sea of Galilee was as smooth as glass. There was no wind, it was silent as I looked out over what must be one of the great vistas of the Holy Lands.

I then nicked-named my compass, my TA.

I had never done so much walking up and down hills. Jerusalem was tough, Nazareth even steeper but for endurance, the Capernaum hills take the cake.



The tree I call 'The Sentinel' sits on the top of the hill which I consider is the 'Mount of Beatitudes'.

After the first ridge, I knew this was not the spot, you could still see Capernaum. The second ridge took another hour to get to and, amazingly, there was no development on this second hilly ridge. It was just rocky, grazing land with a solitary tree on top. Capernaum was no longer in sight. This was the spot, I dropped my pack had a drink then read the Ordination Sermon. By the time I had finished, the sun was starting to get low as I had started late. I headed back, but this time I found a main road and hitched.

Had I left at lunch time and then walked back to Capernaum, I would have arrived at dusk.

An old van pulled up and I hopped in. The driver was a local orchardist so I pulled out the branch I had collected to see if he could identify it. It was from a young mango tree. He grew mango's. I asked him how much land was worth in this district as I wouldn't mind growing a few mango's myself.

Back in Tiberias, I decided to have dinner before catching the last bus to Nazareth. Walking down to the shore, I came to the promenade where there were some 5 or 6 restaurants along the waters edge. They were all empty.

A strange feeling of isolation swept over me as I sat at a table staring out over the lake. I felt like a visitor in a different world.



A meal for one.

I ordered the house speciality, fresh fish from the lake, called St Peter. It was excellent!

I reflected on the day and the 5 hour trek then I recalled the night was still young for Jesus and the Apostles.

Sunday evening, on reaching the home of Zebedee from the highlands north of Capernaum, Jesus and the twelve partook of a simple meal. Afterward, while Jesus went for a walk along the beach, the twelve talked among themselves.

Urantia Book 1576.

And so on through the early hours of the morning, the other apostles went in one by one to talk with the Master. When they had all held personal conferences with him save the twins, who had fallen asleep, Andrew went in to Jesus and said: "Master, the twins have fallen asleep in the garden by the fire; shall I arouse them to inquire if they would also talk with you?" And Jesus smilingly said to Andrew, "They do well... trouble them not." And now the night was passing; the light of another day was dawning.

Urantia Book 1578.

I wrote in my diary 'Behold the Man' (of spiritual and physical stamina).

Changing Plans and Puzzles

Wednesday morning I walked over to the office of British Airways in Nazareth to see if I could extend my ticket. No luck, so I decided to cancel my plans to visit Lebanon and stay longer in Nazareth. This decision felt good as I was starting to rush my journey, over-indulging in spiritual sightseeing you might say.

Still curious about the references to the home of Jesus in the Urantia Book and since British Airways was not far from Mary's Well, I decided to go up there and take some compass directions.

The home of Jesus was not far from the high hill in the northerly part of Nazareth, some distance from the village spring, which was in the eastern section of the town. Urantia Book 1349.

The puzzle was not fitting together, currently the spring is in the North East of town.

This is the calendar year of his fourteenth birthday. He had become a good yoke maker and worked well with both canvas and leather. He was also rapidly developing into an expert carpenter and cabinet maker. This summer he made frequent trips to the top of the hill to the northwest of Nazareth for prayer and meditation.

Urantia Book Page 1386.

Today's map shows the hill to the NNW of the town of Nazareth, not the NW.

Back at the convent on this Wednesday afternoon, I talked with Sister Margarita about intriguing site below the court yard and learned of the research work of Fr Senes and Rev. Jean-Bernard Livio.

Visiting the site once again, I came to the lower tomb on the South side located under the house.

Entrance to the tomb which is located in the hillside under the 'Venerated House'.



Running off the tomb is a small alcove containing a simple stone altar on which was found an altar spoon. The dating is around 200-300 AD.

Being such a fascinating site, I decided to take some more photographs of the doorways, door locking systems, stairway construction, the well, tombs and old walls.

This site is rich and unique but very difficult to make sense of.

On walking out of the site, Sister Margarita mentioned in passing the house was probably very similar to the one of Saint Joseph's.



Inside the tomb are two small crypts.



The Altar in the alcove adjacent to the tomb.

Restless

I could not sleep a wink that night, I was so restless then at about 2am on Thursday morning Bingo! I realised that if the centre of the 'old city' was in fact just 350 metres to the N.E of the current location, (hardly any distance over 2000 years) Mary's Well would then be in the East and the peak of the Hill would also be in the NW.

But questions remained about archaeological site here at the convent. I read the report of Jean-Bernard Livio which refers to a 'venerated Jewish house' of the 1st century.

Then the penny dropped! I just couldn't believe it, The Sisters Of Nazareth had uncovered one of the greatest treasures, the home of Josuha Ben Joseph, Jesus. The Sisters knew they had discovered something significant but could not prove it categorically.

Furthermore, this site, Jesus's home now appears to line up with the Urantia Book, ie 'on the outskirts of town' with the new location of the old city.

The Franciscans situated the "Church of Nutrition' or the house of Saint Joseph elsewhere and since the Sisters did not wish to rock the political boat, they kept quiet about the discovery since 1884.

In the 17th century, the Franciscans were the first Christians to establish themselves in Nazareth since the crusader times. From the 12th century the area has been under Muslim control.

As a side note, three times Muslims tried to construct a minaret on the site of the convent and three times it mysteriously collapsed so they 'got the message' and built the mosque elsewhere.

How ironic that I had been walking all over Nazareth looking for Nazareth home of Jesus only to realise I had been living at the site for the past four days.

Simply incredible and to think I found this site by accident because the convent was the only place I could find a bed. Amazing!

I checked my original map estimates which initially located the house near the cemetery off streets 6173 and 6156. The convent is located only 150 metres to the East of this position 'as the crow flies'.

Early in the morning, I went for walk up to the peak again to find the highest point. After awhile, I found a small path between the Church of the Adolescent Jesus and the Mosque Nabi Saeen. The path went along the edge of an old in-ground reservoir. Then I realised this must be very close to the peak because the reservoir water would have the maximum fall from the highest point. This spot is approximately 150m East of the Salesian School from where I took my original reading.

This new reading places the home of Jesus right on the Convent site which is approximately half way between the promontory and the road to Cana, now called Paulus VI.

Their home was located a little to the south and east of the southern promontory of this hill and about midway between the base of this elevation and the road leading out of Nazareth toward Cana.

Urantia Book 1350.

The Venerated House and a Beer

Walking back down the hill, I recalled seeing stone stairs leading to the roof on the western the side of the 'venerated house' and a heavy stone slab (table!) in the corner of the main room but I paid scant attention to these features during my earlier visits.

One evening about sundown, before Joseph had returned home, Gabriel appeared to Mary by the side of a low stone table.

Urantia Book Page 1346.

Reaching the convent, I requested if I could photograph the site again, this time using floodlights and 35mm slide film. Normally a Sister will accompany a visitor to this unique site but to my surprise, I was handed the key. I felt I was being handed the key to the home of Jesus and unlocking it after 2000 years.

As I walked down the stairs, I recalled the words I uttered when I first entered the Convent "This is it" not knowing this was really "It".

The site is truly fascinating and as I studied its various features I could not help seeing a 'double proof' unfolding here, that is, the Urantia Book is substantiating this site and the site is validating the descriptions in the Urantia Book.

Their new home in Nazareth had been built by Joseph with the assistance of two of his brothers. The house was located near the foot of the near-by elevated land which so charmingly overlooked the surrounding countryside.

Urantia Book Page 1349.

I start to wonder what is going to happen if this discovery becomes common knowledge. What will be the political pressure on the convent, will it be flooded with spiritual pilgrims, what of future restoration work and if war breaks out, will the site become a religious target. I was very unsure if I should continue.

The building and furnishing of a home had been a great drain on Joseph since he had also to contribute to the support of his parents, as his father had been recently disabled.

Urantia Book Page 1350.

In the near future teams of archaeologists and engineers will be required to research and preserve this site for generations to come. After a few hours, it was time to finish. I said a prayer for the family who lived here so long ago and called it a day.



In fact, it had been a huge day and as the stars came out I went over to the fridge by the dining room and found a beer, the lucky last. I took a chair and sat in the centre of the courtyard, looked up to the stars and toasted the universe. Cheers!

And it just so happened, it was the over the spot where the roof of Joseph's home would have been.

Much of his spare time - when his mother did not require his help about the house - was spent studying the flowers and plants by day and the stars by night. He evinced a troublesome penchant for lying on his back and gazing wonderingly up into the starry heavens long after his usual bedtime in this well-ordered Nazareth household.

Urantia Book Page 1360. Jesus is almost seven years old.

Joseph and the Sisters

It is now Friday morning November 10th and I head down for breakfast. A peace fills my spirit. This is indeed a place of sublime tranquillity.

How interesting that the home of Joseph is lovingly cared for by women and where the sounds of children's voices fills the air and flowers adorn the court yard.

Mary taught him to know and care for the vines and flowers growing about the garden walls which completely surrounded the home plot. She also provided on the roof of the house (the summer bedroom) shallow boxes of sand in which Jesus worked out maps and did much of his early practice at writing Aramaic, Greek, and later on, Hebrew, for in time he learned to read, write, and speak, fluently, all three languages. Urantia Book Page 1358. Jesus is five years old.

I recalled how it was the women who stayed at the foot of the cross and it was Mary Magdalene whom Jesus first appeared to after the resurrection.

It is the Sisters of Nazareth also who so quietly and lovingly look after the home not vying with men or church to have the 'most sacred place' or build the biggest basilica's or have the largest congregation.

And how apt that the acronym of The 'Sisters Of Nazareth' is The **SON**.

This is indeed, the home of **The Son**.

Loading up with film and flood lights, I head back to the site.

It was lunchtime when I emerged and I started coiling up the long power leads in the court yard when Sister Veronique walked past with a man and some young teenagers all in good spirits and laughing. They were the first people, apart from the Sisters I had seen in the convent grounds. After a few minutes, Sister Veronique invited me over to meet this man and his children. The first thing I noticed about him was the gold cross around his neck. He told me he went to school here many years ago and has wonderful memories and that he has two uncles living in Australia.

As he prepared to leave, he turned around to me and introduced himself. His name was Joseph. I was stunned!

As I mentioned, I had a lot of apprehension about what I was doing and prayed earlier that day whether I should continue with the photography and the sharing of this story but when I saw Joseph and his happy family wave goodbye, I knew my prayer had been answered.

I then returned the key to the house of Joseph, packed the power leads away and thought how nice it was to have had the key to Jesus' home and turn the lights on.

This Friday afternoon a most unusual set of circumstances occurred. The Sisters had been asked to assist in setting up a small convent in Northern Galilee which meant they would be would all be absent for the afternoon. I wondered whether they would be interested in looking after a mango orchard.

Being the only visitor and with no Sisters present, I was left alone in the convent to ponder the last five days. Such a situation of finding myself entirely alone in the convent would never happen again. The courtyard was quiet, the bright flowers lining the verandah, what a perfect setting to reflect in. The sky was a clear deep blue and the temperature was about 25°C. The weather had been absolutely perfect since I arrived. I made some notes about the 'venerated house'.

The 'Venerated House'

Steps leading up to the roof along the western wall.



I started my explorations at the stairs on the western wall leading up to the roof.

The only real accident Jesus had up to this time was a fall down the backyard stone stairs which led up to the canvas-roofed bedroom. It happened during an unexpected July sandstorm from the east. The hot winds, carrying blasts of fine sand, usually blew during the rainy season, especially in March and April. It was extraordinary to have such a storm in July. When the storm came up, Jesus was on the housetop playing, as was his habit, for during much of the dry season this was his accustomed playroom. He was blinded by the sand when descending the stairs and fell. After this accident Joseph built a balustrade up both sides of the stairway. Urantia Book Page 1361. Jesus is seven years old.

At this time, we know this is only a one room house because;

Jesus' second sister, Martha, was born Thursday night, September 13. Three weeks after the coming of Martha, Joseph, who was home for awhile, started the building of an addition to their house, a combined workshop and bedroom. A small workbench was built for Jesus, and for the first time he possessed tools of his own. At odd times for many years he worked at this bench and became highly expert in the making of yokes. Urantia Book Page 1367. Jesus is nine years old.



A perspective of the main room of the house from the rear wall towards the door.

Since the front door of the main room faces north and the outside stairs are on the western wall and to the south the land drops away down hill towards the Cana road, the only logical way or place to build an extension is on the eastern side and this where the second room is found.

Also, the second room is bigger measuring 6 metres by 5 metres to accompany the larger family and carpentry activity. The smaller main room measures 6 metres by 3 metres.

On inspecting the stone work of the second room you can see it is superior to the original house. Joseph was very poor when he built this first room of the house but not so when he constructed the second room. Also, he had considerable more experience as a building contractor at this later date and had made friends with various tradesmen, including the local stonemason.



The western wall of the main room.



Rear or southern wall of the 2nd room.

Perhaps Jesus' most unusual and outstanding trait was his unwillingness to fight for his rights. Since he was such a well-developed lad for his age, it seemed strange to his playfellow's that he was disinclined to defend himself even from injustice or when subjected to personal abuse. As it happened, he did not suffer much on account of this trait because of the friendship of Jacob, a neighbour boy, who was one year older. He was the son of the stone mason, a business associate of Joseph. Jacob was a great admirer of Jesus and made it his business to see that no one was permitted to impose upon Jesus because of his aversion to physical combat.

Urantia Book Page 1368. Jesus is ten years old.



Roman paving. This photo is taken from the rear of the second room towards the main room and the western wall. The paving is quite extensive across the back of the house.

The next major feature I looked at was the paving which runs across the rear of both rooms. It appears to be added at a later stage because it is laid around pillars and walls. I believe it was laid by worshippers which concurs with the thoughts of Fr Senes.

Initially, I thought what a pity but on reflection it has protected approximately 50% of the floor for nearly 2000 years. If little soil was removed before the laying of the paving it is quite possible to find relics, wood chips, maybe coins from the first century. Before the stone pavement was laid, many people would have bowed down on the earthen floor dropping numerous items. One may even find evidence of carpentry in the second room.

Many similar items were found around other parts of this site including terra cotta lamps.

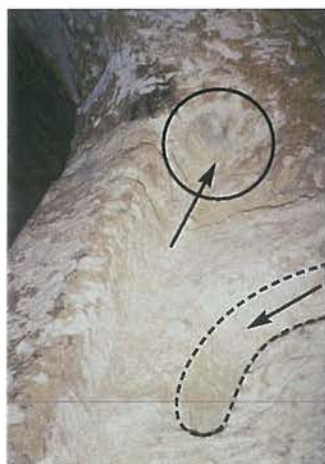
During the winter, at the evening meal the table would be lighted by a small, flat clay lamp, which was filled with olive oil.

Urantia Book Page 1350.



Various types of olive oil lamps found on site.

The next area of review was the doorway to the house. The upper and lower guide holes in the stone for the vertical axel were still there. More importantly, there were grooves in the doorway arch for the locking bar, typical for a house of the early first century.



This photo is of the front door arch. This is a vertical view showing the locking groove in the stone work and the vertical axel hole.

Finally, the 'breach' in the rear wall of the main room, where the wooden barrier is, was probably a door to access the animal yard or window to 'overlook the surrounding country side'.

For further information on the 'Venerated House', see Jean-Bernard Livio report following this article.



A modern day version.

The Table, Trough and Games Board

The next item I looked at was the stone slab in the main room in the north west corner. Was it the table where Jesus and his family enjoyed meals from?

The home of Joseph and Mary was a one-room stone structure with a flat roof and an adjoining building for housing the animals. The furniture consisted of a low stone table, earthenware and stone dishes and pots, a loom, a lamp stand, several small stools, and mats for sleeping on the stone floor.

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Lets assume this is a 'venerated house' and human nature being what it is, nearly everything would have been taken as a 'sacred relic' but to swipe a 200 kg stone slab!

If meals were enjoyed on this stone table, food oils, particularly olive oil from the lamp would have been absorbed by the stone. I am sure chemical investigation will confirm this. Also, the table was placed in the corner out of the way so in order to move it, it may have been flipped over thus the top side of the table has been protected for a long time.

The next thing I did was to sit crossed legged, as well as squat on the floor to see what height the table would have to be for ideal comfort. It was in a narrow range of between 22-25 cms. As It turns out, the stone slab (table) has a thickness averaging 24cms.



The low stone table.

In later years, as the family grew in size, they would all squat about the enlarged stone table to enjoy their meals, helping themselves from a common dish, or pot, of food.

Urantia Book Page 1350.



Is this the table extension?

The stone table in the main room could accommodate three or four people and so the only way to enlarge a stone table is to add a section but where is this section? I then recalled seeing a large slab of stone in the tomb under this house. It was leaning up against a wall and as far as I could tell, serving no purpose. Maybe it was used in the alcove as part of the altar to celebrate communion.

Did the slab have the same thickness as the one in the main room? I went down to the tomb and measured the second slab. It ranged from 21cms to 25cms and had distinctive chisel marks on one surface to level out the rough spots. Perfect I thought and the two slabs together would be the ideal size for the Nazareth family. It would be interesting to test this second stone slab for organic stains.

In the second room was the stone feeding trough which was chiselled out of a single piece of stone. It must weigh at least 300 Kg's plus. The rough edges made it unsuitable to be a washing basin. I can not help thinking Jacob's father was as it again and they certainly needed a trough for the animals.



The stone trough chiselled from a single stone piece.

This year Jesus learned to milk the family cow and care for the other animals. During this and the following year he also learned to make cheese and to weave. When he was ten years of age, he was an expert loom operator.

Urantia Book Page 1364.

Jesus is seven years old when he learned to milk the cow.

The trough has two sections, I presume one for water and the other for feed and food scraps. The trough was probably located in the animal annex then taken inside to the second room when the house became a

place of veneration (That's why it looks so out of place at the moment). I also suspect it was moved the shortest distance possible from the animal annex maybe via a back door of the second room.

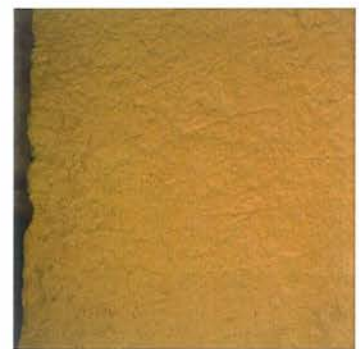
In the back yard, near the animal annex, was the shelter which covered the oven and the mill for grinding grain. It required two persons to operate this type of mill, one to grind and another to feed the grain. As a small boy Jesus often fed grain to this mill while his mother turned the grinder.

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One of the more unusual items in the house is what I call the 'games board'. When you first see this piece of stone you wonder what is it for. It has bevelled edges on three lower sides, as if it was an end or capping stone of a ledge on a building.

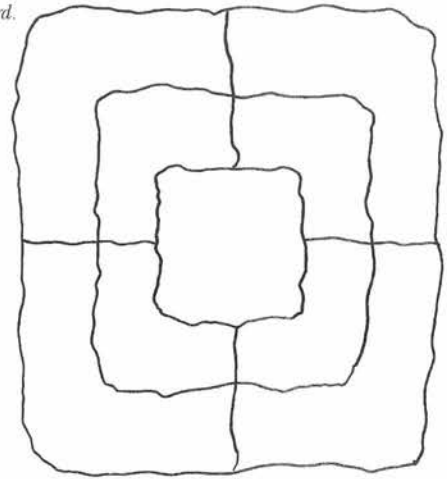
The stone measures 73 cms x 73 cms and is 26 cms thick so it is very heavy. On the top surface there are two patterns chiselled in to the surface. These patterns are actually drawings for quite a challenging game.

The basic premise of the game is that a player starts from any one point and moving forward with out making consecutive turns, in other words the player can only turn right, left, right etc, the first one back to the starting point wins. More exploration of the rules would be valuable.



*Top - The Games board
Middle - Upper corner game
Bottom - Lower corner game*

The pattern on the Games Board.



Before he was ten years old, he had become the leader of a group of seven lads who formed themselves into a society for promoting the acquirement's of manhood - physical, intellectual, and religious. Among these boys Jesus succeeded in introducing many new games and various improved methods of physical recreation.

Urantia Book Page 1366.

A Quiet Afternoon of Music and Songs Of Praise

My work was finished here for the time being, so it was time to relax and enjoy this peaceful afternoon in the courtyard.

I had been here nearly a week and I had yet to visit the Chapel which runs down one side of the courtyard. After an hour in the chapel I noticed a room off to the left hand side which inturn opened on to the courtyard walkway.

This room had some books, a few chairs, a small altar and a stereo system. On the shelf were about 15 CD's, mainly classical music, some monastic chants and traditional Christian songs.

One CD caught my attention, it was music of the African Kora, a little out of place I thought but having no idea what the Kora was, I put it on and lay on the floor closing my eyes. Soon I was captured by this beautiful music.

I reached for the CD cover and read that the Kora is a West African Harp. I could not believe it, this music was a collection of improvised harp compositions titled 'Inner Song' played by a Christian Monk, Jacques Burtin.

This year Jesus made arrangements to exchange dairy products for lessons on the harp. He had an unusual liking for everything musical. Later on he did much to promote an interest in vocal music among his youthful associates. By the time he was eleven years of age, he was a skilful harpist and greatly enjoyed entertaining both family and friends with his extraordinary interpretations and able improvisations.

Urantia Book Page 1364. Jesus is eight old.

It was a divine moment and emotions welled up in my being.

I opened the door to the courtyard, turned up the volume and filled the House of Joseph with the sublime sounds of the harp.

Lying on the floor listening to the music turned up quite loud, I lost track of time.

Sister Veronique tapped me on the shoulder and smiled. They had returned from Northern Galilee. I went to turn the music off but I was told there was no need to except in about half an hour at six, the Sisters required the room for prayers.

I turned off the CD player just before 6.00pm and was about to leave when the sisters invited me to stay for evening worship. For the next hour I listened to beautiful singing and prayerful worship.

A little later that night, around 9pm a tour arrives from Eastern Europe. About 30 people stream in to the court yard with back packs and suit cases.

The energy changed!

The following morning I went down for breakfast finding my 'usual' table, overlooking the court yard, occupied.

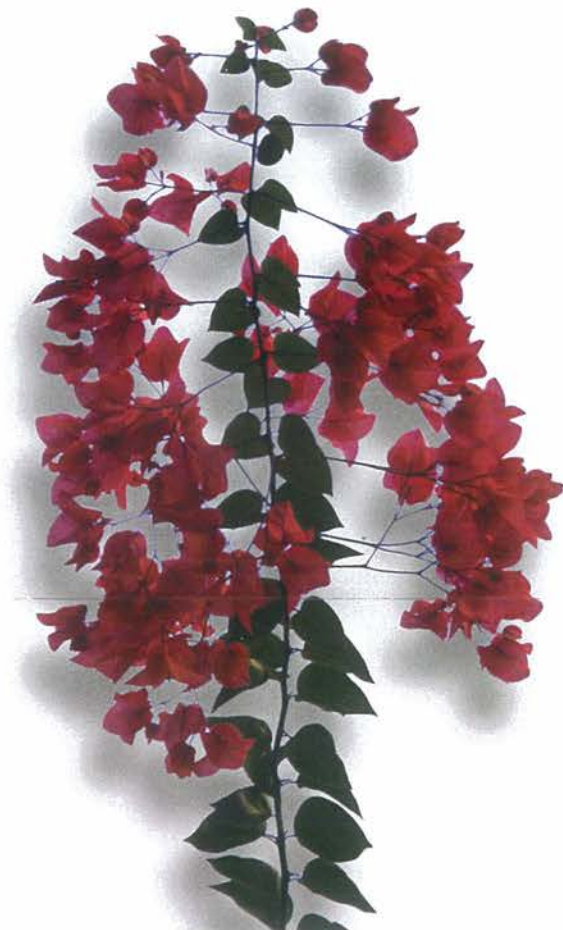
After breakfast, one of the Sisters mentioned the weather was going to change tomorrow - "winter is on the way" she said.

This winter and the next were the coldest in Nazareth for many decades. Jesus had seen snow on the mountains, and several times it had fallen in Nazareth, remaining on the ground only a short time; but not until this winter had he seen ice. The fact that water could be had as a solid, a liquid, and a vapour - he had long pondered over the escaping steam from the boiling pots - caused the lad to think a great deal about the physical world and its constitution; and yet the personality embodied in this growing youth was all this while the actual creator and Organizer of all these things throughout a far-flung universe.

Urantia Book Page 1367. Jesus is nine years old.

I went to my room and began to pack, my travels had come to an end for the moment.

Within 12 hours, I was on my flight home to Australia.





Street 6060 runs parallel to Mary's Well!