

## Sepphoris: Understanding the World of Jesus



View of remains of Sepphoris from east. Photo by Todd Bolen, [Biblicalplaces.com](http://Biblicalplaces.com).

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### 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 3<sup>rd</sup> century Roman mansion in Sepphoris. Photo by Todd Bolen.

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### What's in a name?

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



Sepphoris excavations. Photo by Todd Bolen.

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## 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

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Sepphoris mikvah. Photo by Todd Bolen.

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

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## 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

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Nazareth view south from Sepphoris. Photo by Todd Bolen

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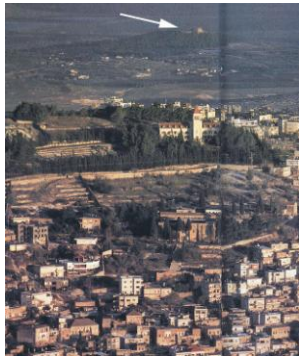
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**Matt. 5:14:**  
"A city situated  
upon a mountain  
cannot be hid."

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



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

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**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.

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Roman cardo, 1<sup>st</sup> Century A.D. Photo by Todd Bolen.

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Sepphoris cardo with wheel ruts. Photo by Todd Bolen.

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- 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."

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**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."

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Sepphoris theater, 1<sup>st</sup> Century A.D. Photo by Todd Bolen.

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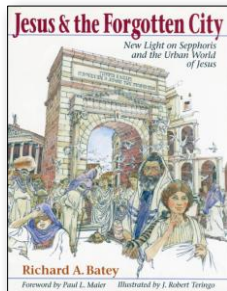
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**Other Topics**

- 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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