

**A HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS**  
**XIV. Christ's Identity Shown By His Settlement In Galilee**  
**(Matthew 2:19-23; Luke 2:39-40)**

**I. Introduction**

- A. The return of the Infant Jesus to Israel from Egypt was itself fraught with humanly unsettling conditions, but again, God's sovereign hand was involved in it all to reveal the true identity of Jesus as the Messiah and God.
- B. We view Matthew 2:19-23 with Luke 2:39-40 on this return for our insight and edification (as follows):

**II. Christ's Identity Shown By His Settlement In Galilee, Matthew 2:19-23; Luke 2:39-40.**

- A. After Herod died, God's angel appeared the third time to Joseph in a dream in Egypt to direct him to take the Infant Jesus and His mother and safely return to Israel, Matthew 2:19-20.
- B. Joseph thus arose from sleep and returned with his young family to the land of Israel, Matthew 2:21.
- C. Evidently, he had intended to settle in Bethlehem since he knew Jesus to be the Messiah Who had been born there (Micah 5:2 with Matthew 1:18-2:6 and Luke 1:26-37). However, Archelaus had begun to rule Judea, and he slew 3,000 Hebrews when he began his reign. (B. K. C., N. T., p. 23; Z. P. E. B., v. Three, p. 138)
- D. When Joseph heard that the Hebrew murderer Archelaus ruled Judea, he was afraid to settle the physically vulnerable little Infant Hebrew Messiah Jesus there in harm's way of Archelaus, Matthew 2:22a.
- E. Accordingly, in a fourth dream from God's angel, The Lord warned Joseph not to settle there, so he kept traveling up the Mediterranean coastline road he was using out of Egypt without turning inland for Judea until he arrived in northern Israel where he could turn east headed inland to return to his initial home up in Nazareth of Galilee, Matthew 2:22b-23a; Luke 2:4. (The Carta Bible Atlas, 2002, Map 10: "The Routes In Palestine")
- F. In Joseph's thus settling the Infant Jesus back in Nazareth, Matthew 2:23b adds that it fulfilled what had been spoken by several prophets, that the Messiah would be called a "Nazarene," Matthew 2:23b KJV.
- G. This claim as it appears in the King James Version is not literally defensible, for no Old Testament prophecy predicted that the Messiah would be a "Nazarene," a discrepancy has led to doubts about the divine inspiration of Matthew's Gospel. However, a study in the history of the Biblical text clears up this problem (as follows):
1. Old Testament Bible professor Ron Allen reported that when he was once visiting Israel, he saw a city road sign outside modern Nazareth, and both the Arabic and Hebrew translations of the sign supplied the "ts" letter (the letter *tsade* in the Hebrew alphabet) for the English letter "z" in "Nazareth." (Ronald B. Allen, "Does Anything Good Come from Nazareth?" Kindred Spirit, Winter 1999, p. 3, 11)
  2. Thus, Matthew was referring to "*netser*," the Hebrew word for "shoot" in Isaiah 11:1 where Messiah would be a shoot that spouted up out of the stump of Jesse, and three Old Testament prophets used a synonym for "*netser*" in the word "*tsemah*," translated "branch," to predict that the Messiah would be the figurative BRANCH from the stump of David. (cf. Isaiah 4:2; 6:13; Jeremiah 23:5; Zechariah 3:8)
  3. Allen reports that excavations from the old city of Nazareth reveal that around 100 B. C., a small group of returning Hebrew exiles from Babylon settled in the area, giving the area its family name, "*Natsara*." They believed that the SHOOT or BRANCH, that is, the Messiah, would arise from their midst, what apparently led other Hebrews to scoff at their claim since Messiah was predicted to be born in Bethlehem of Judea and presumably therefore raised there. This negative attitude toward the Hebrews in Nazareth is evidence by Nathaniel's question in John 1:46, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (Ibid.)
  4. The Hebrew letter *tsade* does not translate well into the Greek that Matthew used for his Gospel, so Matthew used the Greek letter *zeta* for the Hebrew *tsade* which was translated into the KJV as a "z" (instead of the Hebrew *ts*) to form the technically inexact "Nazareth" instead of the correct "Natsareth."
  5. Thus, by being settled and growing up in Nazareth, Jesus actually precisely fulfilled several Hebrew Messianic prophets' predictions of being the Davidic "SHOOT" or "BRANCH" while also being despised by other Hebrews as one of the Hebrews of Nazareth in fulfillment of passages like Isaiah 49:7 and 53:3.
- H. When Joseph returned the Infant Jesus and His Mother Mary to settle in Nazareth of Galilee, Jesus there "grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him," Luke 2:39-40 ESV.

***Lesson:*** *Forced to avoid being settled and raised in His birthplace of Bethlehem instead to be settled and raised as a despised Hebrew in Nazareth, Jesus fulfilled the Messianic "Branch" prophecies of several Old Testament prophets. Thus, God's inspiration of Matthew's Gospel is vindicated and Jesus is evidenced to be the Messiah.*

***Application:*** *May we believe the divine inspiration of Matthew's Gospel and the Messianic identity of Jesus Christ.*