

Digging Deeper – Lesson 1 – The Nazarenes (by Craig Wescoe)

*Now Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It was written:
"JESUS THE NAZARENE, THE KING OF THE JEWS."
John 19:19, NASB*

Name Meaning and variant spellings

- In Hebrew נָזִיר (nezir or nazir). In Greek ΝΑΖΩΡΑΙΟΣ (NAZŌRAIOS)
- meaning a consecrated, devoted one
- **Nazoraean, Nazarene, Nasaraean, Nasarene, Nazirite, Nazarite**

The name

- All believers in Christ were once called Nazoraean, before the name Christians arose at Antioch (Epiphanius)
- The Jews call the Christians Nazarenes; Tertullian applies "Her Nazarites were whiter than snow" to the Christians (Tertullian)
- "Nazoraean" used of the ancients who wore long hair under a vow (Epiphanius)
- Jesus called "the Nazarene" or "the Nazoraean" (Tertullian; Epiphanius)
- Called themselves Nazoraean, not Christians, Jessaeans or Jews (Epiphanius)

Individuals Associated with them

- **Jesus:** the name traced to him as "the Nazarene" or "the Nazoraean" (Tertullian; Epiphanius)
- **James the Lord's brother:** called a Nazoraean; lived as a Nazirite (Epiphanius)
- **Ebion:** the Ebionites sprang from the Nazoraean; Ebion their contemporary (Epiphanius)
- **Cerinthus and Merinthus:** the Nazoraean set beside them (Epiphanius)
- **Elchasai ("hidden power"):** the Nazoraean came after him and used his book (Epiphanius)
- **Samson and John the Baptist:** the long-hair sign taken as though from him (Epiphanius; Filastrius)
- **Moses, Aaron, Joshua son of Nun and the patriarchs:** revered by the Nasaraean (Epiphanius; John of Damascus)
- **Dostai and Ado:** the Nazarenes of Beth-Oromoye called partisans of Dostai (Theodore bar Konai)

Geographic associations

- Beroea in Coele Syria, the Decapolis near Pella, and Kokabe in Bashanitis: where they began, after the disciples left Jerusalem for Pella (Epiphanius)
- Nasaraean: Gilead, Bashan and the lands beyond the Jordan (Epiphanius)
- Antioch: before the name Christians arose there, all believers were called Nazoraean (Epiphanius)
- Beth-Oromoye and Mesene: the Mandaean called Nazarenes in Beth-Oromoye (Theodore bar Konai) (Theodore bar Konai)

Associated texts

- The Gospel according to Matthew, kept in full in Hebrew (Epiphanius)
- The Gospel according to Peter (Theodoret)
- The Old and New Testaments; the Law, the Prophets and the Writings, read in Hebrew (Epiphanius; Filastrius)
- The Book of Elchasai (Epiphanius)
- Nasaraeans: the Pentateuch, held not to be by Moses, and other scriptures besides it (Epiphanius; John of Damascus)

Practices

- Trained in Hebrew; read the Scriptures in Hebrew (Epiphanius)
- Let the hair of the head grow, as though from Samson (Epiphanius; Filastrius)
- Nasaraeans: abstained from all meat; ate nothing that had a soul; offered no sacrifice (Epiphanius; John of Damascus)
- Nasaraeans: kept the law in everything: circumcision, the sabbath and the feasts, as the Jews keep them (Epiphanius; Filastrius; Augustine; John of Damascus; Theodore bar Konai)
- James the Lord's brother, called a Nazoraean: no food from living creatures, no wool, no bathing, lifelong virginity (Epiphanius)

Beliefs

- Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (Epiphanius; Augustine; John of Damascus; Theodore bar Konai)
- Christ honoured as a just man (Theodoret)
- All that the law teaches, except that they believe in Christ; one God, whose child is Jesus Christ; the dead will rise (Epiphanius)
- All justification lies in carnal observance; the power of righteousness lies in uncut hair (Filastrius)
- Nasaraeans: the patriarchs of the Pentateuch, from Adam to Moses and Joshua, revered (Epiphanius; John of Damascus)
- Nasaraeans: Moses received a law, but a different one; the patriarchs offered none of the sacrifices recorded (Epiphanius)

Time

- Nasaraeans: before Christ; the Jewish sects lasted until after the capture of Jerusalem by Titus (Epiphanius)
- Named in Epiphanius' review of the Samaritan and Jewish sects of his own day (Epiphanius)
- Continued after the disciples moved from Jerusalem to Pella before the siege (Epiphanius)

Relations with other groups

- Ebionites: closely resemble the Cerinthians and Nazaraeans (Epiphanius; John of Damascus)
- Jessaeans: a name the Christians bore for a short time (Epiphanius)
- Ossenes: said to reject the books of Moses as the Nasaraeans do (Epiphanius)
- Ossaeans, Ebionites and Sampsaeans: the Book of Elchasai used by them and by the Nazaraeans (Epiphanius)

The name

All believers in Christ were once called Nazoraeans, before the name Christians arose at Antioch

Epiphanius, Panarion 29.1.2

For these did not call themselves by Christ's name, nor by the very name of Jesus, but by that of Nazoraeans. At that time all Christians were likewise called Nazoraeans. For a short time they also came to be called Jessaeans, before the disciples first took the name of Christians at Antioch. They were called Jessaeans, I suppose, on account of Jesse, since David was from Jesse, and Mary was descended by succession of seed from David, in fulfilment of the divine Scripture, for in the Old Testament the Lord says to David, "Of the fruit of your body I will set upon your throne."

Epiphanius, Panarion 29.6.2

Moreover, all men called the Christians Nazoraeans, as I said before, as they say in accusing the apostle Paul: "We have found this man a plague, one who turns the people aside, a ringleader of the sect of the Nazoraeans." The holy apostle does not deny the name. He does not confess their sect, but gladly accepts the name that the malice of his opponents had fastened on him on account of Christ. For he says before the judgement seat, "They did not find me in the temple disputing with anyone or stirring up a crowd, nor have I done any of the things of which they accuse me. But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship, believing all things that are in the law and in the prophets."

Epiphanius, Panarion 29.6.5

And it is no wonder that the apostle confessed himself a Nazoraean, since at that time everyone called the Christians by this name on account of the town of Nazareth, the name having no other use at the time; so that people called those who had believed in Christ Nazoraeans, of whom it is also written, "He shall be called a Nazoraean." For even now people call all the sects by the same name, I mean Manichaeans, Marcionites, Gnostics and others, calling Christians those who are not Christians; and yet each sect, though it goes by another name, gladly accepts this, because it is adorned by the name. For they think they can pride themselves on the name of Christ, though not on faith and works.

Epiphanius, Panarion 29.6.7

So too the holy disciples of Christ at that time called themselves disciples of Jesus, as indeed they were; but when they heard themselves called Nazoraeans by others they did not refuse it, seeing the intention of those who called them so: that they called them this on account of Christ, since our Lord Jesus himself was called the Nazoraean, as is stated in the gospels and in the Acts of the Apostles, because he was brought up in Joseph's house in the town of Nazareth, now a village. He had been born according to the flesh at Bethlehem of Mary the ever-virgin, who was betrothed to Joseph, and Joseph had moved to that same Nazareth after he left Bethlehem and settled in Galilee.

The Jews call the Christians Nazarenes; Tertullian applies "Her Nazarites were whiter than snow" to the Christians

Tertullian, Against Marcion 4.8

The Christ of the Creator had to be called a Nazarene according to prophecy; whence the Jews also designate us, on that very account, Nazarenes after Him. For we are they of whom it is written, "Her Nazarites were whiter than snow;" even they who were once defiled with the stains of sin, and darkened with the clouds of ignorance.

"Nazoraeans" used of the ancients who wore long hair under a vow

Epiphanius, Panarion 80.7

And what is worse and contrary? Some cut off the beard, the mark of a man's form, yet often let the hair of the head grow long. Concerning the beard, in the Apostolic Ordinances the divine word and instruction say not to spoil it, that is, not to cut the hair of the beard, nor to adorn oneself in the manner of harlots, nor to make one's approach to righteousness a display of pride. For this befitted the Nazoraeans alone, on account of the type. For the ancients were led by a type of what was to come, wearing long hair on the head because of the vow, until the vow of the world came and was fulfilled, and Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, was revealed as the head, and he who always is, yet had not been known to the whole of humanity save to a few who had believed in him, became known to the world; in order that, having come to know the head, we should not bring shame on the head. For he does not speak of one's own head; rather, from one's own head the act of mockery strikes at Christ. Hence the apostle says, "Does not even nature itself teach you that long hair is a dishonour to a man?" And this dishonour is not praiseworthy like that other, of which it says, "despising the shame." For the virtue is not for God's sake, even if it should be supposed to be for God's sake; rather, the conduct springs from contentiousness, now that what existed only as a type has passed away and the truth has come. And he says, "If anyone is minded to be contentious, we recognize no such custom, nor do the churches of God." He has therefore excluded those who do and practise such things in contentiousness both from the ordinance of the apostles and from the church of God. But we were compelled to say these things on account of the Massalians mentioned above, because they too took the sickness of this way of thinking from that source, turned aside in their understanding and ran aground against the truth; and a sect was formed in the dreadful condition of idleness and the other evils.

Jesus called "the Nazarene" or "the Nazorean"

Tertullian, On Modesty 21

In (Peter) himself the Church was reared; that is, through (Peter) himself; (Peter) himself essayed the key; you see what (key): "Men of Israel, let what I say sink into your ears: Jesus the Nazarene, a man destined by God for you," and so forth.

Tertullian, On Baptism 13

That point excepted, he had sufficiently learnt and believed “the Nazarene” to be “the Lord, the Son of God.”

Epiphanius, Panarion 30.10.3

There was a madman in the city, I mean in Tiberias, who went about the city naked, and often, when he was clothed, would tear his garment apart, as is the habit of such people. Josephus, wishing to put the vision to the test but still hesitating, was held back by shame. So he takes the man indoors, shuts the door, takes water in his hand, seals the water with the sign of the cross and sprinkles it on the madman, saying, “In the name of Jesus the Nazoraean, who was crucified, demon, come out of him, and let him be made well.”

Epiphanius, Panarion 64.67.17

The grain of wheat, then, died and rose. Did the whole grain rise, or a remnant of it? Was it some other grain that rose instead of the one that existed, or did the very one that was rise into being? [But that the body] which Joseph prepared for burial in a linen cloth and laid in a new tomb rose, you will surely not deny. Whom, then, did the angels announce to the women as raised? As they say, “Whom are you looking for? Jesus the Nazoraean? He is raised; he is not here. Come and look at the place.” As if to say: come and look at the place, and teach Origen some sense, that no remnant lies here, but the whole has risen. And so that you may know that the whole has risen, he says, “He is raised; he is not here,” to beat back your nonsense, that no remnant of him was left behind; but the very body that was nailed, the very body that was pierced by the lance, the very body that was seized by the Pharisees, the very body that was spat upon, rose.

Called themselves Nazoraeans, not Christians, Jessaeans or Jews

Epiphanius, Panarion 29.1.2

For these did not call themselves by Christ’s name, nor by the very name of Jesus, but by that of Nazoraeans. At that time all Christians were likewise called Nazoraeans. For a short time they also came to be called Jessaeans, before the disciples first took the name of Christians at Antioch. They were called Jessaeans, I suppose, on account of Jesse, since David was from Jesse, and Mary was descended by succession of seed from David, in fulfilment of the divine Scripture, for in the Old Testament the Lord says to David, “Of the fruit of your body I will set upon your throne.”

Epiphanius, Panarion 29.5.6

For hearing only the name of Jesus, and seeing the divine signs wrought through the apostles’ hands, they too believe in Jesus. And knowing that he was conceived in the womb at Nazareth and brought up in Joseph’s house, and that for this reason the gospel calls him Jesus the Nazoraean, just as the apostles declare: “Jesus the Nazoraean, a man commended by signs and wonders,” and what follows, they take this name for themselves, to be called Nazoraeans; not Nazirites, which is interpreted “consecrated ones.”

Epiphanius, Panarion 29.7.1

But these sectarians whom I am now describing, setting aside the name of Jesus, have neither called themselves Jessaeans, nor kept the name of Jews, nor taken the name of Christians, but that of Nazoraeans, as if from the name of the place Nazareth; yet in everything they are Jews and nothing else.

Individuals

Jesus: the name traced to him as "the Nazarene" or "the Nazoraean"

Tertullian, Against Marcion 4.8

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Epiphanius, Panarion 29.6.7

So too the holy disciples of Christ at that time called themselves disciples of Jesus, as indeed they were; but when they heard themselves called Nazoraeans by others they did not refuse it, seeing the intention of those who called them so: that they called them this on account of Christ, since our Lord Jesus himself was called the Nazoraean, as is stated in the gospels and in the Acts of the Apostles, because he was brought up in Joseph's house in the town of Nazareth, now a village. He had been born according to the flesh at Bethlehem of Mary the ever-virgin, who was betrothed to Joseph, and Joseph had moved to that same Nazareth after he left Bethlehem and settled in Galilee.

James the Lord's brother: called a Nazoraean; lived as a Nazirite

Epiphanius, Panarion 29.4.1

For this James was born to Joseph of his first wife and not of Mary, as I have stated in many places and have set out more clearly. Moreover we find that he was of David's line because he was Joseph's son, and that he became a Nazirite, for he was Joseph's firstborn and consecrated; and further we have found that he exercised the priesthood after the manner of the old priesthood. For this reason he was allowed to go into the Holy of Holies once each year, as the law commanded the high priests according to what is written; so many before us have recorded concerning him, Eusebius, Clement and others. He was even permitted to wear the plate upon his head, as the trustworthy men already mentioned have testified in those same memoirs.

Epiphanius, Panarion 78.7

I have been told by someone that some people venture to say of her that after she had given birth to the Saviour she was joined to a husband. And I am not surprised. For the ignorance of those who have not learned the divine Scriptures accurately, nor come near to the histories, always turns and drags from one thing to another anyone who wishes to track out something about the truth from his own mind. First, when the virgin was handed over to Joseph, the lots compelling her to come to this, she was not handed over to him for union, if the truth must be told, since he was a widower. By the law he is called her husband; but from the tradition of the Jews it is shown in due order that the virgin was entrusted to him not in order to be joined to him, but so that she might be kept as a witness of what was to come: that the dispensation of the coming in the flesh did not arrive as something spurious, but was attested in truth, accomplished in truth in the Holy Spirit apart from any man's seed. For how could so old a man, a widower for so many years after his first wife, have a virgin as his wife? This Joseph was the brother of Clopas; he was a son of Jacob, who was surnamed Panther, and both of them are born of the man surnamed Panther. His first wife this Joseph took from the tribe of Judah, and she conceived and bore him six children, four male and two female, as the Gospel according to Mark and that according to John have made plain. His firstborn was James, who was surnamed Oblias, interpreted "wall," and surnamed the Just, being a Nazoraean, which is interpreted "holy." He was the first to receive the chair of the episcopate, the one to whom first the Lord entrusted his throne upon the earth. He was also called the brother of the Lord, as the apostle too agrees, saying somewhere, "But I saw none other of the apostles except James the brother of the Lord," and so on. He is called the brother of the Lord because he was brought up with him, not by nature but by grace. For Mary, betrothed to Joseph, seemed to be the man's wife, though she had no bodily union with him. On this ground the close kinship of Joseph's sons to the Saviour came to be called, or rather reckoned, that of brothers. For just as Joseph himself, having no part in the Saviour's birth according to the flesh, is reckoned in the place of a father by dispensation, as Luke the evangelist says of the Saviour himself that he was the son, as was supposed, of Joseph, and as Mary herself said to him in the Gospel according to Luke, "Behold, your father and I have been seeking you in sorrow": who, then, would call Joseph the father of the Lord, when he had no causal part in him, especially as the coming in the flesh took place apart from a man's seed? But by the dispensation the course of events gave him this lot.

Epiphanius, Panarion 78.13

But let us look at other considerations as well. She followed Jesus, being always with him. Jesus was invited to a wedding, and his mother was there, and his brothers, and Joseph nowhere: "Woman, what have I to do with you? My hour has not yet come." And he did not say, "Men, what have I to do with you?" There stood by Mary Magdalene, and Mary the wife of Clopas, Mary the mother of Rufus, the other Mary, Salome and other women besides; and it does not say that Joseph was there, or James the brother of the Lord, who died at ninety-six years of age, having remained a virgin; on whose head no iron came, who did not use a bath, who partook of nothing that had life, who did not put on a second tunic, who wore only a single linen cloak, as the gospel says, "The youth fled, leaving behind the linen garment he had about him." For John,

James and James, these three kept this way of life: the two sons of Zebedee, and James the son of Joseph, the brother of the Lord, so called because he shared his life and his upbringing and held the place of a brother to him through the bond alone that Joseph had with Mary from her betrothal to him. This James alone was allowed to go into the Holy of Holies once each year, because he was a Nazoraean and connected with the priesthood. For in this way Mary was related in two ways to Elisabeth, and James was distinguished by the priesthood, since the two tribes alone were joined to one another, the royal to the priestly and the priestly to the royal; as earlier, in the Exodus, Naasson, the tribal chief from Judah, takes as his wife Elisabeth, the daughter of Aaron of old. Hence many of the sects are ignorant of the Saviour's genealogy according to the flesh, and through their perplexity they disbelieve and think to contradict the truth, saying, "How can she who comes from the tribe of David and of Judah be a kinswoman of Elisabeth, who comes from Levi?"

Epiphanius, Panarion 78.14

This James also wore the plate upon his head. And once, when there was a drought, he lifted up his hands to heaven and prayed, and at once heaven gave rain. He never put on a woollen garment. His knees grew hard like those of camels, from always bending them before the Lord out of the abundance of his piety. So they no longer called him by name; "the Just" was his name. He never bathed in a bath-house; he partook of nothing that had life, as I have shown above; he never put on a sandal. And there would be much to say about the man and his virtuous way of life. Do you see, then, that the house was altogether most worthy of note? For if the sons of Joseph knew the rule of virginity and the practice of the Nazoraeans, how much more did that aged and honoured man know how to guard a pure virgin and to honour the vessel in which, so to speak, the salvation of mankind took up its dwelling? Does not nature itself teach us that he was an old man, far advanced in age, great among men, faithful in character, devout in bearing? For the gospel says that, being a man who feared God, he sought to put her away secretly. This James, the brother of the Lord and son of Joseph, died at Jerusalem, having lived twenty-four years, more or less, after the Saviour's ascension, at ninety-six years of age, struck on the head with a fuller's club. He had been thrown from the pinnacle of the temple, had come down without any injury, and had bent his knees and prayed for those who threw him, saying, "Forgive them, for they know not what they do," so that Simeon also, his cousin, the son of Clopas, standing far off, cried, "Cease! Why do you stone the Just? See, he is praying the best of prayers for you." And so his martyrdom came about.

Ebion: the Ebionites sprang from the Nazoraeans; Ebion their contemporary

Epiphanius, Panarion 30.1.1

Ebion, from whom the Ebionites take their name, following next in order and holding views similar to these, rose up in his turn upon the world, a many-shaped monster who, so to speak, reproduced in himself the serpent form of the fabled many-headed hydra. He belonged to their school, but preached and taught other things beyond theirs.

Epiphanius, Panarion 30.1.2

For just as someone might gather for himself an ornament of various precious stones and a garment of many colours and adorn himself conspicuously, so this man, on the contrary, took from each sect every dreadful, destructive and abominable teaching, shapeless and unconvincing and full of rivalry, and modelled himself on them all. For he has the loathsomeness of the Samaritans, the name of the Jews, the thinking of the Ossaeans, the Nazoraeans and the Nasaraeans, the shape of the Cerinthians, the perversity of the Carpocratians; and he wishes to have only the title of Christians, certainly not their conduct, their opinion, their knowledge, or the agreement of the gospels and the apostles concerning faith.

Epiphanius, Panarion 30.2.1

This Ebion was a contemporary of these, and he sets out from them, being one of them. At first he said that Christ was born of sexual union and the seed of a man, that is, of Joseph. As has already been said, in all respects he held the same views as the others and differed in this alone, that he adhered to the law of Judaism in sabbath-keeping, in circumcision and in all the other observances practised among Jews and Samaritans. Moreover, like the Samaritans, he does still more than the Jews. For he added the rule of taking care not to touch anyone of another nation; and the rule of immersing himself in water every day, whenever he had been with a woman and had left her, wherever he could find plenty of water, whether the sea or any other. Further, if he should meet anyone as he came up from his plunge and immersion in the water, he likewise runs back to immerse himself again, often with his clothes on.

Epiphanius, Panarion 30.2.7

Their origin came after the capture of Jerusalem. For since all who had believed in Christ were at that time living for the most part in Peraea, in a city called Pella of the Decapolis mentioned in the gospel, near Batanaea and the region of Bashanitis, having moved there at that time and staying there, this gave Ebion his opportunity. He first took up residence in a village called Kokabe in the district of Karnaim, also called Ashtaroth, in the region of Bashanitis, as the information that has reached us relates. From there he begins his evil teaching, from the same place, it seems, as the Nazoraeans whom I described above. For he was joined to them and they to him, and each shared his own wickedness with the other. They differ from one another in some respect, but in their malice they have taken the impress of one another. I have already spoken at length, in other discourses and in treating the other sects, about the location of Kokabe and of Arabia.

Cerinthus and Merinthus: the Nazoraeans set beside them

Epiphanius, Panarion 29.1.1

The Nazoraeans follow next after these. They existed at the same time as these, whether before them, alongside them or after them, but in any case as contemporaries; for I cannot say more precisely which succeeded which. As I said, they were contemporaries of one another and hold opinions similar to one another.

Epiphanius, Panarion 29.7.4

They are thoroughly trained in the Hebrew language. For among them the entire Law, the Prophets and what are called the Writings (that is, the books in verse, Kings, Chronicles, Esther and all the others) are read in the Hebrew tongue, as is of course the case among the Jews also. In this alone they differ from Jews and Christians: they do not agree with the Jews, because they have believed in Christ; and they are not of one mind with Christians, because they are still bound by the law, by circumcision, the sabbath and the rest. Concerning Christ, I cannot say whether they too, led astray by the wickedness of the followers of Cerinthus and Merinthus mentioned above, regard him as merely a man, or whether they hold, as the truth has it, that he was begotten of Mary through the Holy Spirit.

Epiphanius, Panarion 69.23

That is why the blessed John, when he came, found people occupied with Christ's coming here below. The Ebionites had gone astray because of Christ's genealogy according to the flesh, traced down from Abraham and carried back by Luke as far as Adam; and he found the Cerinthians and Merinthians claiming that he was simply a man, conceived by intercourse, and the Nazoraeans, and many other sects. Coming last, for he is the fourth to write the gospel, he begins, so to speak, to call back those who had gone astray and were occupied with Christ's coming here below, and to say to them, like one who comes behind and sees some turned aside onto rough roads, having left the straight and true one: "Where are you being carried? Where are you walking, you who walk the rough road that causes stumbling and leads to a chasm? Turn back. It is not so. God the Word, begotten from the Father on high, is not from Mary only; he is not from the times of Joseph her betrothed, nor from the times of Salathiel and Zerubbabel and David and Abraham and Jacob and Noah and Adam; but in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." This "was" and "was" and "was" does not admit that he ever was not. And you see how he at once indicates first the things nearest at hand: how Matthew showed the way through the genealogy, and even he did not set it out in exact detail, though he did carry the genealogy down from above; how Mark wrote of the things done in the world and of "a voice crying in the wilderness," concerning the Lord foretold by the prophets and the law; how Luke, coming later, led upward from the things below to the things above. John, the fourth, made known last the crown and the pure essence of the order on high and of the Godhead that always is, as Solomon too says in a proverb, "the beginning of the ways," supposing that some should wish to speak devoutly of the incarnate dispensation, as though the text said of Christ's Godhead that the Godhead itself built the house, that the Godhead itself wrought the flesh and the becoming man, a beginning of his ways toward his works of the salvation and goodness of mankind. Then immediately afterward, as the matter advances, it says, "He established me in the beginning." Was the Son of God, then, created according to his Godhead and afterward established? Let the engineers tell us, those surveyors of the things above, by what craft wisdom was created, by what tool it was established. But if one must reason at all, let one flee from so great a depth of blasphemy and not lay a hand on the Godhead of the only-begotten, which always exists with the Father and is begotten from him.

For the Word was ever with the Father, ever Wisdom, ever Lord, God from God; ever true Light and not counterfeit, ever having his being from him, being Truth and existing as Life.

Elchasai (“hidden power”): the Nazoraeans came after him and used his book

Epiphanius, Panarion 19.5.4

And I shall pass over this sect as well. For this Elchasai, again, is joined to the Ebionites who came after Christ, and also to the Nazoraeans who arose afterwards. Four sects make use of him, being charmed by his error: that of the Ebionites, who arose afterwards, and of the Nazoraeans; that of the Ossaeans, who were before him and alongside him; and that of the Nasaraeans, whom I have described above.

Epiphanius, Panarion 53.1.2

For they boast that Elchasai is their teacher, and also of two women of his family still living to this day, who are worshipped as goddesses, supposedly because they are of blessed seed. The Ossaeans, Ebionites and Nazoraeans also make use of this book, as I have repeatedly said. These Sampsaeans spring from it by their very nature; they are neither Christians nor Jews nor Greeks, but, being simply in between, they are nothing. They say they also have another book, called that of Iexai, the brother of Elchasai.

Samson and John the Baptist: the long-hair sign taken as though from him

Epiphanius, Panarion 80.7

And what is worse and contrary? Some cut off the beard, the mark of a man’s form, yet often let the hair of the head grow long. Concerning the beard, in the Apostolic Ordinances the divine word and instruction say not to spoil it, that is, not to cut the hair of the beard, nor to adorn oneself in the manner of harlots, nor to make one’s approach to righteousness a display of pride. For this befitted the Nazoraeans alone, on account of the type. For the ancients were led by a type of what was to come, wearing long hair on the head because of the vow, until the vow of the world came and was fulfilled, and Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, was revealed as the head, and he who always is, yet had not been known to the whole of humanity save to a few who had believed in him, became known to the world; in order that, having come to know the head, we should not bring shame on the head. For he does not speak of one’s own head; rather, from one’s own head the act of mockery strikes at Christ. Hence the apostle says, “Does not even nature itself teach you that long hair is a dishonour to a man?” And this dishonour is not praiseworthy like that other, of which it says, “despising the shame.” For the virtue is not for God’s sake, even if it should be supposed to be for God’s sake; rather, the conduct springs from contentiousness, now that what existed only as a type has passed away and the truth has come. And he says, “If anyone is minded to be contentious, we recognize no such custom, nor do the churches of God.” He has therefore excluded those who do and practise such things in contentiousness both from the ordinance of the apostles and from the church of God. But we were compelled to say these things on account of the Massalians mentioned above, because they too took the sickness of this way of thinking from that source, turned aside in their

understanding and ran aground against the truth; and a sect was formed in the dreadful condition of idleness and the other evils.

Filastrius, Book of Diverse Heresies 8

Another is the heresy of the Jews who are called Nazoraeans, which accepts the law and the prophets yet affirms that one must live in a carnal way, and supposes that all justification consists in carnal observance, they also letting the hair of the head grow and thinking that all the power of righteousness consists in this, presuming this sign for themselves as though from Samson, that judge, because they were called Nazoraeans.

Moses, Aaron, Joshua son of Nun and the patriarchs: revered by the Nasaraeans

Epiphanius, Panarion, Anacephalaeosis I 19.1

19. Nasaraeans, a name interpreted as “rebels.” They forbid all eating of flesh and take no part at all in living things. Down to Moses and Joshua the son of Nun they use and believe the holy names of the patriarchs in the Pentateuch: I mean Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and those still earlier, and Moses himself, Aaron too and Joshua. Yet they teach that the writings of the Pentateuch do not come from Moses, and they maintain that they have other writings besides these.

Epiphanius, Panarion 18.1.3

It accepted as fathers those in the Pentateuch from Adam to Moses, men who had been distinguished in excellence of piety, that is, Adam, Seth, Enoch, Methuselah, Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Levi, Aaron and Moses, and Joshua the son of Nun. The Pentateuch itself, however, it rejected. It confessed Moses and believed he had been given a code of law; yet not this code, it says, but a different one. Hence, being Jews, they keep all the observances of the Jews, yet they would not offer sacrifice or partake of anything that has life; among them it was unlawful to eat meat or to offer sacrifice. For they used to say that these books are fabricated and that none of these things was done by the fathers. In this the Nasaraeans differed from the other sects; and so the refutation of them, too, is plain not from a single passage but from many.

John of Damascus, On Heresies 19

Down to Moses and Joshua son of Nun they use and believe the holy names of the patriarchs in the Pentateuch: I mean Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and those still earlier, and Moses himself, and Aaron and Joshua.

Dostai and Ado: the Nazarenes of Beth-Oromoye called partisans of Dostai

Theodore bar Konai, Book of Scholia XI, Pognon p. 224

In Mesene they are called Mandaean, Mashknaean, followers of the one who accomplished good deeds; in Beth-Oromoye they are called Nazarenes, partisans of Dostai; but the name that would suit them would be that of Adonaeans.

Geographic associations

Beroea in Coele Syria, the Decapolis near Pella, and Kokabe in Bashanitis: where they began, after the disciples left Jerusalem for Pella

Epiphanius, Panarion 29.7.7

This sect of the Nazoraeans is found at Beroea in the region of Coele Syria, in the Decapolis in the district of Pella, and in Bashanitis, at a place named Kokabe, which in Hebrew is called Chochabe. For from there it took its beginning, after all the disciples had moved from Jerusalem and were living at Pella, since Christ had told them to leave Jerusalem and withdraw on account of the siege that was coming upon it. For this reason they settled in Peraea and, as I said, lived there. From that point the sect of the Nazoraeans had its beginning.

Epiphanius, Panarion 30.2.7

Their origin came after the capture of Jerusalem. For since all who had believed in Christ were at that time living for the most part in Peraea, in a city called Pella of the Decapolis mentioned in the gospel, near Batanaea and the region of Bashanitis, having moved there at that time and staying there, this gave Ebion his opportunity. He first took up residence in a village called Kokabe in the district of Karnaim, also called Ashtaroth, in the region of Bashanitis, as the information that has reached us relates. From there he begins his evil teaching, from the same place, it seems, as the Nazoraeans whom I described above. For he was joined to them and they to him, and each shared his own wickedness with the other. They differ from one another in some respect, but in their malice they have taken the impress of one another. I have already spoken at length, in other discourses and in treating the other sects, about the location of Kokabe and of Arabia.

Epiphanius, Panarion 40.1.5

In his early life he had been found among many sects; but under the bishop Aetius he was accused and convicted of following at that time the sect of the Gnostics, and was deposed from the presbyterate, for he had at one time been ordained a presbyter. After his conviction he was driven from the place by Aetius, and went away and settled in Arabia, at Kokabe, where the roots of the Ebionites and the Nazoraeans began, as I have indicated concerning this place in many of the sects.

Nasaraeans: Gilead, Bashan and the lands beyond the Jordan

Epiphanius, Panarion 18.1.1

Next I shall undertake to describe the sect that comes after the Hemerobaptists, called that of the Nasaraeans. They are Jews by race, originating from Gileaditis and Bashanitis and the lands beyond the Jordan, as the account that has come down to us relates. The sect springs from Israel itself; it practised Judaism in every respect and held scarcely anything beyond the sects already described. For it had circumcision in the same way, kept the sabbath just as they do and held to the same feasts; it did not, however, bring in fate or astronomy.

Antioch: before the name Christians arose there, all believers were called Nazoraeans

Epiphanius, Panarion 29.1.2

For these did not call themselves by Christ's name, nor by the very name of Jesus, but by that of Nazoraeans. At that time all Christians were likewise called Nazoraeans. For a short time they also came to be called Jessaeans, before the disciples first took the name of Christians at Antioch. They were called Jessaeans, I suppose, on account of Jesse, since David was from Jesse, and Mary was descended by succession of seed from David, in fulfilment of the divine Scripture, for in the Old Testament the Lord says to David, "Of the fruit of your body I will set upon your throne."

Epiphanius, Panarion 29.6.2

Moreover, all men called the Christians Nazoraeans, as I said before, as they say in accusing the apostle Paul: "We have found this man a plague, one who turns the people aside, a ringleader of the sect of the Nazoraeans." The holy apostle does not deny the name. He does not confess their sect, but gladly accepts the name that the malice of his opponents had fastened on him on account of Christ. For he says before the judgement seat, "They did not find me in the temple disputing with anyone or stirring up a crowd, nor have I done any of the things of which they accuse me. But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship, believing all things that are in the law and in the prophets."

Epiphanius, Panarion 29.6.5

And it is no wonder that the apostle confessed himself a Nazorean, since at that time everyone called the Christians by this name on account of the town of Nazareth, the name having no other use at the time; so that people called those who had believed in Christ Nazoraeans, of whom it is also written, "He shall be called a Nazorean." For even now people call all the sects by the same name, I mean Manichaeans, Marcionites, Gnostics and others, calling Christians those who are not Christians; and yet each sect, though it goes by another name, gladly accepts this, because it is adorned by the name. For they think they can pride themselves on the name of Christ, though not on faith and works.

Epiphanius, Panarion 29.6.7

So too the holy disciples of Christ at that time called themselves disciples of Jesus, as indeed they were; but when they heard themselves called Nazoraeans by others they did not refuse it, seeing the intention of those who called them so: that they called them this on account of Christ, since our Lord Jesus himself was called the Nazorean, as is stated in the gospels and in the Acts of the Apostles, because he was brought up in Joseph's house in the town of Nazareth, now a village. He had been born according to the flesh at Bethlehem of Mary the ever-virgin, who was betrothed to Joseph, and Joseph had moved to that same Nazareth after he left Bethlehem and settled in Galilee.

Beth-Oromoye and Mesene: the Mandaeans called Nazarenes in Beth-Oromoye (Theodore bar Konai)

Theodore bar Konai, Book of Scholia XI, Pognon p. 224

In Mesene they are called Mandaeans, Mashknaeans, followers of the one who accomplished good deeds; in Beth-Oromoye they are called Nazarenes, partisans of Dostai; but the name that would suit them would be that of Adonaeans.

Associated texts

The Gospel according to Matthew, kept in full in Hebrew

Epiphanius, Panarion 29.9.4

They have the Gospel according to Matthew complete, in Hebrew. For among them it is clearly still preserved, as it was originally written, in Hebrew letters.

The Gospel according to Peter

Theodoret, Compendium of Heretical Fables 2.2

The Nazoraeans are Jews who honor Christ as a just man and use the so-called Gospel according to Peter.

The Old and New Testaments; the Law, the Prophets and the Writings, read in Hebrew

Epiphanius, Panarion 29.7.2

They make use not only of the New Testament but of the Old as well, as the Jews do. For the Law, the Prophets and the Writings, as the books are called among the Jews, are not rejected among them, as they are by the sects mentioned before. Nor do they hold anything different; they confess everything rightly according to the proclamation of the law, as the Jews do, except that they have, so they say, believed in Christ. For among them the resurrection of the dead is confessed, and that all things came into being from God; and they proclaim one God and his child Jesus Christ.

Epiphanius, Panarion 29.7.4

They are thoroughly trained in the Hebrew language. For among them the entire Law, the Prophets and what are called the Writings (that is, the books in verse, Kings, Chronicles, Esther and all the others) are read in the Hebrew tongue, as is of course the case among the Jews also. In this alone they differ from Jews and Christians: they do not agree with the Jews, because they have believed in Christ; and they are not of one mind with Christians, because they are still bound by the law, by circumcision, the sabbath and the rest. Concerning Christ, I cannot say whether they too, led astray by the wickedness of the followers of Cerinthus and Merinthus mentioned above, regard him as merely a man, or whether they hold, as the truth has it, that he was begotten of Mary through the Holy Spirit.

Filastrius, Book of Diverse Heresies 8

Another is the heresy of the Jews who are called Nazoraeans, which accepts the law and the prophets yet affirms that one must live in a carnal way, and supposes that all justification consists in carnal observance, they also letting the hair of the head grow and thinking that all the power of righteousness consists in this, presuming this sign for themselves as though from Samson, that judge, because they were called Nazoraeans.

The Book of Elchasai

Epiphanius, Panarion 53.1.2

For they boast that Elchasai is their teacher, and also of two women of his family still living to this day, who are worshipped as goddesses, supposedly because they are of blessed seed. The Ossaeans, Ebionites and Nazoraeans also make use of this book, as I have repeatedly said. These Sampsaeans spring from it by their very nature; they are neither Christians nor Jews nor Greeks, but, being simply in between, they are nothing. They say they also have another book, called that of Iexai, the brother of Elchasai.

Nasaraeans: the Pentateuch, held not to be by Moses, and other scriptures besides it

Epiphanius, Panarion, Anacephalaeosis I 19.1

19. Nasaraeans, a name interpreted as “rebels.” They forbid all eating of flesh and take no part at all in living things. Down to Moses and Joshua the son of Nun they use and believe the holy names of the patriarchs in the Pentateuch: I mean Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and those still earlier, and Moses himself, Aaron too and Joshua. Yet they teach that the writings of the Pentateuch do not come from Moses, and they maintain that they have other writings besides these.

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It accepted as fathers those in the Pentateuch from Adam to Moses, men who had been distinguished in excellence of piety, that is, Adam, Seth, Enoch, Methuselah, Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Levi, Aaron and Moses, and Joshua the son of Nun. The Pentateuch itself, however, it rejected. It confessed Moses and believed he had been given a code of law; yet not this code, it says, but a different one. Hence, being Jews, they keep all the observances of the Jews, yet they would not offer sacrifice or partake of anything that has life; among them it was unlawful to eat meat or to offer sacrifice. For they used to say that these books are fabricated and that none of these things was done by the fathers. In this the Nasaraeans differed from the other sects; and so the refutation of them, too, is plain not from a single passage but from many.

John of Damascus, On Heresies 19

But they hold as doctrine that the Scriptures of the Pentateuch are not by Moses, and they affirm other Scriptures besides these.

Practices

Trained in Hebrew; read the Scriptures in Hebrew

Epiphanius, Panarion 29.7.4

They are thoroughly trained in the Hebrew language. For among them the entire Law, the Prophets and what are called the Writings (that is, the books in verse, Kings, Chronicles, Esther and all the others) are read in the Hebrew tongue, as is of course the case among the Jews also. In this alone they differ from Jews and Christians: they do not agree with the Jews, because they have believed in Christ; and they are not of one mind with Christians, because they are still bound by the law, by circumcision, the sabbath and the rest. Concerning Christ, I cannot say whether they too, led astray by the wickedness of the followers of Cerinthus and Merinthus mentioned above, regard him as merely a man, or whether they hold, as the truth has it, that he was begotten of Mary through the Holy Spirit.

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Epiphanius, Panarion 29.9.4

They have the Gospel according to Matthew complete, in Hebrew. For among them it is clearly still preserved, as it was originally written, in Hebrew letters.

Let the hair of the head grow, as though from Samson

Epiphanius, Panarion 80.7

And what is worse and contrary? Some cut off the beard, the mark of a man's form, yet often let the hair of the head grow long. Concerning the beard, in the Apostolic Ordinances the divine word and instruction say not to spoil it, that is, not to cut the hair of the beard, nor to adorn oneself in the manner of harlots, nor to make one's approach to righteousness a display of pride. For this befitted the Nazoraeans alone, on account of the type. For the ancients were led by a type of what was to come, wearing long hair on the head because of the vow, until the vow of the world came and was fulfilled, and Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, was revealed as the head, and he who always is, yet had not been known to the whole of humanity save to a few who had believed in him, became known to the world; in order that, having come to know the head, we should not bring shame on the head. For he does not speak of one's own head; rather, from one's own head the act of mockery strikes at Christ. Hence the apostle says, "Does not even nature itself teach you that long hair is a dishonour to a man?" And this dishonour is not praiseworthy like that other, of which it says, "despising the shame." For the virtue is not for God's sake, even if it should be supposed to be for God's sake; rather, the conduct springs from

contentiousness, now that what existed only as a type has passed away and the truth has come. And he says, "If anyone is minded to be contentious, we recognize no such custom, nor do the churches of God." He has therefore excluded those who do and practise such things in contentiousness both from the ordinance of the apostles and from the church of God. But we were compelled to say these things on account of the Massalians mentioned above, because they too took the sickness of this way of thinking from that source, turned aside in their understanding and ran aground against the truth; and a sect was formed in the dreadful condition of idleness and the other evils.

Filastrius, Book of Diverse Heresies 8

Another is the heresy of the Jews who are called Nazoraeans, which accepts the law and the prophets yet affirms that one must live in a carnal way, and supposes that all justification consists in carnal observance, they also letting the hair of the head grow and thinking that all the power of righteousness consists in this, presuming this sign for themselves as though from Samson, that judge, because they were called Nazoraeans.

Nasaraeans: abstained from all meat; ate nothing that had a soul; offered no sacrifice

Epiphanius, Panarion, Anacephalaesis I 19.1

19. Nasaraeans, a name interpreted as "rebels." They forbid all eating of flesh and take no part at all in living things. Down to Moses and Joshua the son of Nun they use and believe the holy names of the patriarchs in the Pentateuch: I mean Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and those still earlier, and Moses himself, Aaron too and Joshua. Yet they teach that the writings of the Pentateuch do not come from Moses, and they maintain that they have other writings besides these.

Epiphanius, Panarion 18.1.3

It accepted as fathers those in the Pentateuch from Adam to Moses, men who had been distinguished in excellence of piety, that is, Adam, Seth, Enoch, Methuselah, Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Levi, Aaron and Moses, and Joshua the son of Nun. The Pentateuch itself, however, it rejected. It confessed Moses and believed he had been given a code of law; yet not this code, it says, but a different one. Hence, being Jews, they keep all the observances of the Jews, yet they would not offer sacrifice or partake of anything that has life; among them it was unlawful to eat meat or to offer sacrifice. For they used to say that these books are fabricated and that none of these things was done by the fathers. In this the Nasaraeans differed from the other sects; and so the refutation of them, too, is plain not from a single passage but from many.

John of Damascus, On Heresies 19

Nasaraeans, a name meaning 'rebels': they prohibit every kind of meat-eating and take no part at all in living things.

Nasaraeans: kept the law in everything: circumcision, the sabbath and the feasts, as the Jews keep them

Epiphanius, Panarion 18.1.1

Next I shall undertake to describe the sect that comes after the Hemerobaptists, called that of the Nasaraeans. They are Jews by race, originating from Gileaditis and Bashanitis and the lands beyond the Jordan, as the account that has come down to us relates. The sect springs from Israel itself; it practised Judaism in every respect and held scarcely anything beyond the sects already described. For it had circumcision in the same way, kept the sabbath just as they do and held to the same feasts; it did not, however, bring in fate or astronomy.

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Epiphanius, Panarion, Anacephalaeosis II 27.2

He said that Jesus received an intelligent soul and, knowing the things above, proclaimed them here; and that anyone who does deeds like those of Jesus stands on a level with him. He rejects the law, and the raising of the dead with it, as the sects from Simon onward do. Marcellina at Rome came from his school. Making images of Jesus, Paul, Homer and Pythagoras in secret, he burned incense to them and worshipped them. 28. Cerinthians, also called Merinthians. These are certain Jews deriving from Cerinthus and Merinthus, who boast of circumcision and say that the world came into being through angels, and that Jesus was called Christ by advancement. 29. Nazaraeans, who confess Jesus as Christ, Son of God, but conduct their lives in all things according to the law.

Epiphanius, Panarion 29.5.4

While, then, they were called Jessaeans for a short time after the Saviour's ascension, and after Mark had preached in the land of Egypt, at about this time certain people went out again, followers of the apostles in appearance: I mean the Nazaraeans whom I am describing here. They were Jews by race, devoted to the law and keeping circumcision. But like people who see a fire from a distance without understanding why those who kindled the pyre did so, or for what use they do it, whether to cook over the fire the provisions of their living, or to destroy some kind of combustible wood or brushwood that is commonly consumed by fire, so these too, in imitation, lit a fire and set themselves alight.

Epiphanius, Panarion 29.7.4

They are thoroughly trained in the Hebrew language. For among them the entire Law, the Prophets and what are called the Writings (that is, the books in verse, Kings, Chronicles, Esther and all the others) are read in the Hebrew tongue, as is of course the case among the Jews also. In this alone they differ from Jews and Christians: they do not agree with the Jews, because they have believed in Christ; and they are not of one mind with Christians, because they are still bound by the law, by circumcision, the sabbath and the rest. Concerning Christ, I cannot say whether they too, led astray by the wickedness of the followers of Cerinthus and Merinthus mentioned above, regard him as merely a man, or whether they hold, as the truth has it, that he was begotten of Mary through the Holy Spirit.

Epiphanius, Panarion 29.8.1

These too are in error, boasting of circumcision; and such people remain “under a curse,” being unable to fulfil the law. How, indeed, can they fulfil the law’s saying, “Three times a year you shall appear before the Lord your God, at Unleavened Bread, at Tabernacles and at Pentecost,” at the place of Jerusalem? For since the place has been shut off and the things in the law cannot be fulfilled, it should be plain to anyone of sense that Christ came as the fulfiller of the law, not to abolish the law but to fulfil it, and to remove the curse laid down for the breaking of the law. For when Moses had laid down every commandment, he reached the close of the book and “shut up everything under a curse,” saying, “Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all the words written in this book, to do them.”

Filastrius, Book of Diverse Heresies 8

Another is the heresy of the Jews who are called Nazoraeans, which accepts the law and the prophets yet affirms that one must live in a carnal way, and supposes that all justification consists in carnal observance, they also letting the hair of the head grow and thinking that all the power of righteousness consists in this, presuming this sign for themselves as though from Samson, that judge, because they were called Nazoraeans.

Augustine, On Heresies 9

The Nazarenes, though they confess that Christ is the Son of God, nevertheless observe all the things of the old Law, which Christians have learned through apostolic tradition not to observe carnally but to understand spiritually.

John of Damascus, On Heresies 29

Nazoraeans: those who confess Christ Jesus as Son of God, but who conduct their lives in all things according to the law.

Theodore bar Konai, Book of Scholia XI, Pognon p. 170

They confess that the Messiah is the son of God, but they conduct themselves in everything like the Jews.

James the Lord's brother, called a Nazoraean: no food from living creatures, no wool, no bathing, lifelong virginity

Epiphanius, Panarion 78.13

But let us look at other considerations as well. She followed Jesus, being always with him. Jesus was invited to a wedding, and his mother was there, and his brothers, and Joseph nowhere: "Woman, what have I to do with you? My hour has not yet come." And he did not say, "Men, what have I to do with you?" There stood by Mary Magdalene, and Mary the wife of Clopas, Mary the mother of Rufus, the other Mary, Salome and other women besides; and it does not say that Joseph was there, or James the brother of the Lord, who died at ninety-six years of age, having remained a virgin; on whose head no iron came, who did not use a bath, who partook of nothing that had life, who did not put on a second tunic, who wore only a single linen cloak, as the gospel says, "The youth fled, leaving behind the linen garment he had about him." For John, James and James, these three kept this way of life: the two sons of Zebedee, and James the son of Joseph, the brother of the Lord, so called because he shared his life and his upbringing and held the place of a brother to him through the bond alone that Joseph had with Mary from her betrothal to him. This James alone was allowed to go into the Holy of Holies once each year, because he was a Nazoraean and connected with the priesthood. For in this way Mary was related in two ways to Elisabeth, and James was distinguished by the priesthood, since the two tribes alone were joined to one another, the royal to the priestly and the priestly to the royal; as earlier, in the Exodus, Naasson, the tribal chief from Judah, takes as his wife Elisabeth, the daughter of Aaron of old. Hence many of the sects are ignorant of the Saviour's genealogy according to the flesh, and through their perplexity they disbelieve and think to contradict the truth, saying, "How can she who comes from the tribe of David and of Judah be a kinswoman of Elisabeth, who comes from Levi?"

Epiphanius, Panarion 78.14

This James also wore the plate upon his head. And once, when there was a drought, he lifted up his hands to heaven and prayed, and at once heaven gave rain. He never put on a woollen garment. His knees grew hard like those of camels, from always bending them before the Lord out of the abundance of his piety. So they no longer called him by name; "the Just" was his name. He never bathed in a bath-house; he partook of nothing that had life, as I have shown above; he never put on a sandal. And there would be much to say about the man and his virtuous way of life. Do you see, then, that the house was altogether most worthy of note? For if the sons of Joseph knew the rule of virginity and the practice of the Nazoraeans, how much more did that aged and honoured man know how to guard a pure virgin and to honour the vessel in which, so to speak, the salvation of mankind took up its dwelling? Does not nature itself teach us that he was an old man, far advanced in age, great among men, faithful in character, devout in bearing? For the gospel says that, being a man who feared God, he sought to put her away secretly. This James, the brother of the Lord and son of Joseph, died at Jerusalem, having lived twenty-four years, more or less, after the Saviour's ascension, at ninety-six years of age, struck on the head with a fuller's club. He had been thrown from the pinnacle of the temple, had come down without any injury, and had bent his knees and prayed for those

who threw him, saying, "Forgive them, for they know not what they do," so that Simeon also, his cousin, the son of Clopas, standing far off, cried, "Cease! Why do you stone the Just? See, he is praying the best of prayers for you." And so his martyrdom came about.

Beliefs

Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God

Epiphanius, Panarion, Anacephalaesis II 27.2

He said that Jesus received an intelligent soul and, knowing the things above, proclaimed them here; and that anyone who does deeds like those of Jesus stands on a level with him. He rejects the law, and the raising of the dead with it, as the sects from Simon onward do. Marcellina at Rome came from his school. Making images of Jesus, Paul, Homer and Pythagoras in secret, he burned incense to them and worshipped them. 28. Cerinthians, also called Merinthians. These are certain Jews deriving from Cerinthus and Merinthus, who boast of circumcision and say that the world came into being through angels, and that Jesus was called Christ by advancement. 29. Nazoraeans, who confess Jesus as Christ, Son of God, but conduct their lives in all things according to the law.

Epiphanius, Panarion 29.9.1

For this sect, too, my brief treatment will suffice. Such people are easily refuted and readily caught, and are rather Jews than anything else. Yet they are bitterly hated by the Jews. For not only do the children of the Jews bear hatred toward them; the Jews also, rising in the morning, at noon and at evening, three times daily when they say their prayers in the synagogues, call down curses on them and pronounce them anathema, declaring three times a day, "May God curse the Nazoraeans." For they bear a heavier grudge against these, because, being themselves of Jewish origin, they proclaim that Jesus is the Christ, which is contrary to those who remain Jews and have refused to receive Jesus.

Augustine, On Heresies 9

The Nazarenes, though they confess that Christ is the Son of God, nevertheless observe all the things of the old Law, which Christians have learned through apostolic tradition not to observe carnally but to understand spiritually.

John of Damascus, On Heresies 29

Nazoraeans: those who confess Christ Jesus as Son of God, but who conduct their lives in all things according to the law.

Theodore bar Konai, Book of Scholia XI, Pognon p. 170

They confess that the Messiah is the son of God, but they conduct themselves in everything like the Jews.

Christ honoured as a just man

Theodoret, Compendium of Heretical Fables 2.2

The Nazoraeans are Jews who honor Christ as a just man and use the so-called Gospel according to Peter.

All that the law teaches, except that they believe in Christ; one God, whose child is Jesus Christ; the dead will rise

Epiphanius, Panarion 29.7.2

They make use not only of the New Testament but of the Old as well, as the Jews do. For the Law, the Prophets and the Writings, as the books are called among the Jews, are not rejected among them, as they are by the sects mentioned before. Nor do they hold anything different; they confess everything rightly according to the proclamation of the law, as the Jews do, except that they have, so they say, believed in Christ. For among them the resurrection of the dead is confessed, and that all things came into being from God; and they proclaim one God and his child Jesus Christ.

Epiphanius, Panarion 29.7.4

They are thoroughly trained in the Hebrew language. For among them the entire Law, the Prophets and what are called the Writings (that is, the books in verse, Kings, Chronicles, Esther and all the others) are read in the Hebrew tongue, as is of course the case among the Jews also. In this alone they differ from Jews and Christians: they do not agree with the Jews, because they have believed in Christ; and they are not of one mind with Christians, because they are still bound by the law, by circumcision, the sabbath and the rest. Concerning Christ, I cannot say whether they too, led astray by the wickedness of the followers of Cerinthus and Merinthus mentioned above, regard him as merely a man, or whether they hold, as the truth has it, that he was begotten of Mary through the Holy Spirit.

All justification lies in carnal observance; the power of righteousness lies in uncut hair

Filastrius, Book of Diverse Heresies 8

Another is the heresy of the Jews who are called Nazoraeans, which accepts the law and the prophets yet affirms that one must live in a carnal way, and supposes that all justification consists in carnal observance, they also letting the hair of the head grow and thinking that all the power of righteousness consists in this, presuming this sign for themselves as though from Samson, that judge, because they were called Nazoraeans.

Nasaraeans: the patriarchs of the Pentateuch, from Adam to Moses and Joshua, revered

Epiphanius, Panarion, Anacephalaeosis I 19.1

19. Nasaraeans, a name interpreted as “rebels.” They forbid all eating of flesh and take no part at all in living things. Down to Moses and Joshua the son of Nun they use and believe the holy names of the patriarchs in the Pentateuch: I mean Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and those still earlier, and Moses himself, Aaron too and Joshua. Yet they teach that the writings of the

Pentateuch do not come from Moses, and they maintain that they have other writings besides these.

Epiphanius, Panarion 18.1.3

It accepted as fathers those in the Pentateuch from Adam to Moses, men who had been distinguished in excellence of piety, that is, Adam, Seth, Enoch, Methuselah, Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Levi, Aaron and Moses, and Joshua the son of Nun. The Pentateuch itself, however, it rejected. It confessed Moses and believed he had been given a code of law; yet not this code, it says, but a different one. Hence, being Jews, they keep all the observances of the Jews, yet they would not offer sacrifice or partake of anything that has life; among them it was unlawful to eat meat or to offer sacrifice. For they used to say that these books are fabricated and that none of these things was done by the fathers. In this the Nasaraeans differed from the other sects; and so the refutation of them, too, is plain not from a single passage but from many.

John of Damascus, On Heresies 19

Down to Moses and Joshua son of Nun they use and believe the holy names of the patriarchs in the Pentateuch: I mean Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and those still earlier, and Moses himself, and Aaron and Joshua.

Nasaraeans: Moses received a law, but a different one; the patriarchs offered none of the sacrifices recorded

Epiphanius, Panarion 18.1.3

It accepted as fathers those in the Pentateuch from Adam to Moses, men who had been distinguished in excellence of piety, that is, Adam, Seth, Enoch, Methuselah, Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Levi, Aaron and Moses, and Joshua the son of Nun. The Pentateuch itself, however, it rejected. It confessed Moses and believed he had been given a code of law; yet not this code, it says, but a different one. Hence, being Jews, they keep all the observances of the Jews, yet they would not offer sacrifice or partake of anything that has life; among them it was unlawful to eat meat or to offer sacrifice. For they used to say that these books are fabricated and that none of these things was done by the fathers. In this the Nasaraeans differed from the other sects; and so the refutation of them, too, is plain not from a single passage but from many.

Time

Nasaraeans: before Christ; the Jewish sects lasted until after the capture of Jerusalem by Titus

Epiphanius, Panarion 19.5.6

This is the sixth of the seven sects at Jerusalem, which lasted up to Christ's advent and, after his advent in the flesh, up to the capture of Jerusalem, which was accomplished by the emperor Titus, brother of Domitian and son of Vespasian, in the second year of the reign of his father Vespasian. After the capture of Jerusalem this sect and the others were still heard of for a short

time, I mean those of the Sadducees and the Scribes, the Pharisees and the Hemerobaptists, the Ossaeans, the Nasaraeans and the Herodians, until, each at its own time and season, every one of them was scattered and dissolved.

Epiphanius, Panarion 29.6.1

Nor did they call themselves Nasaraeans; for the sect of the Nasaraeans existed before Christ and did not know Christ.

Named in Epiphanius' review of the Samaritan and Jewish sects of his own day

Epiphanius, Panarion 20.3.1

These seven, then, were in Israel, in Jerusalem and in Judaea, and the four already mentioned were among the Samaritans in Samaria; most of them have been done away with. For there are no longer Scribes, no longer Pharisees, no longer Sadducees, no longer Hemerobaptists, no longer Herodians. Only a few are found here and there, and rarely: perhaps one or two Nasarenes somewhere beyond the upper Thebaid and on the far side of Arabia, and the remnant of the Ossaeans, no longer practising Judaism but joined to the Sampsites, who in succession [dwell in] the regions lying beyond the Dead Sea; and now they have been joined to the sect of the Ebionites. So it has come about that they have left off from Judaism, and that, as when a root or the body of a serpent is cut, a two-headed and rootless snake has grown from it, sprouting from a single half-severed body and hanging from it.

Epiphanius, Panarion 20.3.4

Thus far the account of the four sects of the Samaritans and the seven of the Jews. Of these no more survive than three of the Samaritans, namely the Gorothenes, the Dositheans and the Sebuaeans; of the Essenes hardly any, for they are as though buried in darkness; and among the Jews none survive but a few Ossaeans and Nasaraeans living apart. The Ossaeans have gone over from Judaism to the Sampsaeon sect, people who are now neither Jews nor Christians. Let this be enough from me, for the present, concerning the sects described above.

Continued after the disciples moved from Jerusalem to Pella before the siege

Epiphanius, Panarion 29.7.7

This sect of the Nazoraeans is found at Beroea in the region of Coele Syria, in the Decapolis in the district of Pella, and in Bashanitis, at a place named Kokabe, which in Hebrew is called Chochabe. For from there it took its beginning, after all the disciples had moved from Jerusalem and were living at Pella, since Christ had told them to leave Jerusalem and withdraw on account of the siege that was coming upon it. For this reason they settled in Peraea and, as I said, lived there. From that point the sect of the Nazoraeans had its beginning.

Epiphanius, Panarion 30.2.7

Their origin came after the capture of Jerusalem. For since all who had believed in Christ were at that time living for the most part in Peraea, in a city called Pella of the Decapolis mentioned in the gospel, near Batanaea and the region of Bashanitis, having moved there at that time and staying there, this gave Ebion his opportunity. He first took up residence in a village called

Kokabe in the district of Karnaim, also called Ashtaroth, in the region of Bashanitis, as the information that has reached us relates. From there he begins his evil teaching, from the same place, it seems, as the Nazoraeans whom I described above. For he was joined to them and they to him, and each shared his own wickedness with the other. They differ from one another in some respect, but in their malice they have taken the impress of one another. I have already spoken at length, in other discourses and in treating the other sects, about the location of Kokabe and of Arabia.

Epiphanius, Panarion 40.1.5

In his early life he had been found among many sects; but under the bishop Aetius he was accused and convicted of following at that time the sect of the Gnostics, and was deposed from the presbyterate, for he had at one time been ordained a presbyter. After his conviction he was driven from the place by Aetius, and went away and settled in Arabia, at Kokabe, where the roots of the Ebionites and the Nazoraeans began, as I have indicated concerning this place in many of the sects.

Relations with other groups

Ebionites: closely resemble the Cerinthians and Nazoraeans

Epiphanius, Panarion, Anacephalaeosis II 30.1

30. Ebionites, closely resembling the Cerinthians and Nazoraeans mentioned above; the sect of the Sampsaeans and Elkesaites was in some measure joined to them.

John of Damascus, On Heresies 30

Ebionites: closely resembling the Cerinthians and Nazoraeans mentioned above; and in some respect the heresy of our Sampsaeans and Elkesaites was joined with them; and they say that Christ was created in heaven, and the Holy Spirit as well.

Jessaeans: a name the Christians bore for a short time

Epiphanius, Panarion 29.1.2

For these did not call themselves by Christ's name, nor by the very name of Jesus, but by that of Nazoraeans. At that time all Christians were likewise called Nazoraeans. For a short time they also came to be called Jessaeans, before the disciples first took the name of Christians at Antioch. They were called Jessaeans, I suppose, on account of Jesse, since David was from Jesse, and Mary was descended by succession of seed from David, in fulfilment of the divine Scripture, for in the Old Testament the Lord says to David, "Of the fruit of your body I will set upon your throne."

Epiphanius, Panarion 29.5.4

While, then, they were called Jessaeans for a short time after the Saviour's ascension, and after Mark had preached in the land of Egypt, at about this time certain people went out again, followers of the apostles in appearance: I mean the Nazoraeans whom I am describing here.

They were Jews by race, devoted to the law and keeping circumcision. But like people who see a fire from a distance without understanding why those who kindled the pyre did so, or for what use they do it, whether to cook over the fire the provisions of their living, or to destroy some kind of combustible wood or brushwood that is commonly consumed by fire, so these too, in imitation, lit a fire and set themselves alight.

Ossenes: said to reject the books of Moses as the Nasaraeans do

Epiphanius, Panarion 19.5.1

This, then, is the sect of the Ossenes described above. It lives by the Jewish way of life in keeping the sabbath, in circumcision and in doing everything the law requires; only by rejecting the books of Moses, as the Nasaraeans do, does it make a schism, differing from the others among these seven sects. To overturn it, it will suffice to show [by a single saying] that it is estranged from God, since the Lord says plainly, "In the temple the priests violate the sabbath." And what is this profaning of the sabbath, except that no one did any work on the sabbath, while in the temple the priests, in offering sacrifice, broke the sabbath, profaning it through the continual sacrifice of animals?

Ossaean, Ebionite and Sampsaean: the Book of Elchasai used by them and by the Nazaraeans

Epiphanius, Panarion 53.1.2

For they boast that Elchasai is their teacher, and also of two women of his family still living to this day, who are worshipped as goddesses, supposedly because they are of blessed seed. The Ossaean, Ebionite and Nazaraean also make use of this book, as I have repeatedly said. These Sampsaean spring from it by their very nature; they are neither Christians nor Jews nor Greeks, but, being simply in between, they are nothing. They say they also have another book, called that of Iexai, the brother of Elchasai.

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