# CAPERNAUM



#### Background

- Established in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE by the Hasmoneans and abandoned by the 11<sup>th</sup> century CE
- Two ancient synagogues (left) and an octagonal church have been excavated in Capernaum

#### Basic History of Capernaum

- Capernaum was a prosperous city and was home to Jews, Gentiles, and Romans
- The Bible suggests that Capernaum was the home of Peter and archaeologists believe that they have uncovered Peter's house
- The number of coins uncovered suggest that Capernaum was a major tourist attraction as early as the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE
- Capernaum flourished economically during the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE while Jesus may have lived there

'He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the sea' Matt 4:13

#### Capernaum in the Bible

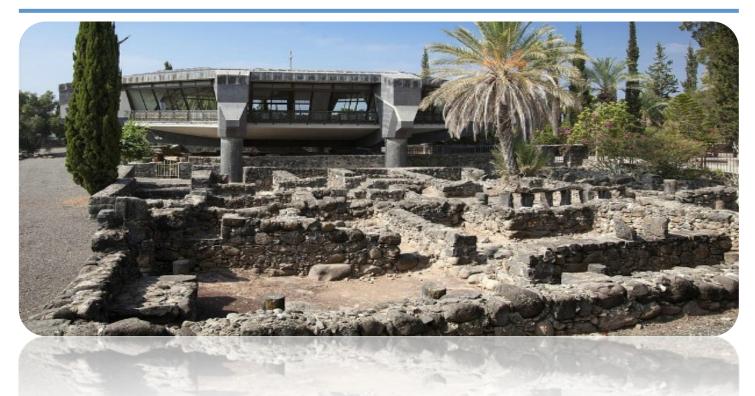
Pericope	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Ministry in Galilee	4:13-17	1:14b-15	4:14b-15	4:43-46
The Effect of the	7:28-29	1:21-22	4:31-32	
Sermon				
The Centurion of	8:5-13	7:30	7:1-10	4:46-54
Capernaum			13:28-29	
The Healing of the	<i>9:1-8</i> *Capernaum	2:1-12	5:17-26	5:8-9a
Paralytic	mentioned earlier			
Woes Pronounced	as Jesus' own city 11:20-24		10:12-15	
	11.20-24		10.12-15	
on Galilean Cities	12 52 50	(1)	4.16.20	
Preaching/Rejection	13:53-58	6:1-6a	4:16-30	
at Nazareth				
Walking on Water	14:22-33	6:45-52		6:16-21
Payment of the	17:24			
Temple Tax				
The Dispute about	18:1-5	9:33-37	9:46-48	13:20
Greatness				
Sojourn at				2:12
Capernaum				
Bread of Life				6:26-59

\* passages specifically mentioning Capernaum in bold

#### Capernaum and Christianity

- Capernaum is an important pilgrimage site for reasons including:
  - Jesus is believed to have based a large part of his ministry out of Capernaum
  - Peter's mother-in-law's house is believed to have been discovered here
    - An early church was built over her house
    - Many inscriptions here mentioning Jesus, Peter, and many Christian symbols and blessings
  - Capernaum was known as Jesus' own town where he spent a large part of his adult life
  - Pilgrims visit Capernaum in order to walk in the footsteps of Jesus
- It is impossible to discern whether or not the memories of Jesus in Capernaum are reliable because they have been part of Christian collective memory since the gospel period

'When he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home' Mark 2:1



### Questions to Consider

- Why may Jesus have chosen to centre his ministry in Capernaum?
- If this tradition developed among early Christians, why may they have chosen to centre Jesus' ministry in Capernaum?

## Readings

- Biblical passages mentioned above
- Laughlin, John C.H. 'Capernaum: From Jesus' Time and After.' *Biblical Archaeology Review* 19.5 (1993).
- Charlesworth, James H., ed. Jesus and Archaeology. Wm. . Eerdmans Publishing, 2006.
- Richardson, Peter. "What Has Cana to Do with Capernaum?" New Testament Studies 48, no. 3 (2002): 314–31.

'He went down to Capernaum, a city in Galilee, and was teaching them on the Sabbath' Luke 4:31