

# 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

\* passages specifically mentioning Capernaum in bold

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

## 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?

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## 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*