

Dr. Elaine Phillips Historical Geography, Lecture 5 -- Galilee

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Having done quite a bit of work now with the Coastal Plain area and the regions around Jerusalem, we're going to move up north and talk about Jesus and the Galilee. Here you see just the northwestern end of the Sea of Galilee and a very significant area that we're going to talk about a little bit later on, but first of all let's do a little bit of review as always.

Here we have our land between and we've already noticed the testing ground of faith so that's nothing new for us at all. One of the things that we've also noticed is that God's covenant relationship with Israel always involved the land. The blessings that were given to the people were blessings of rainfall and land productivity, all those wonderful things. It also involved the land in terms of threats and dangers and we saw that particularly this last lecture with confronting foreign influences. We talked about the hill country, we talked about Jerusalem, and we will talk about the wilderness. Last time we addressed the foreign influences from the Coastal Plain area.

Where we're going to go today will move us a little more up north. We're going to deal first with Nazareth which is going to be just across the Jezreel Valley from our Mount Carmel area that we talked about last time. Then we're going to look at Capernaum. We're going to move from Jesus' hometown of Nazareth to his working town of Capernaum. We'll talk a lot in terms of why indeed that is an important move. This is a very abbreviated look at some of the areas that were part of Jesus' life. We will move to Caesarea Philippi which is at the foothills of Mount Hermon. These are going to simply be small slices of a much bigger ministry of Jesus in the Galilee but this should give us a good idea of some of the important aspects of what it is that Jesus is doing when he is ministering during those years of Galilean ministry.

By a way of introduction, however, Galilee is not mentioned a whole lot in the Old Testament. We do have a significant reference to it and I'm going to read

this to you because this is going to be an important ground for something that we're going to see in the book of Mathew. So, Isaiah chapter nine, and by the way chapter eight of Isaiah closes down with a mention of gloom and deep darkness. Therefore our first word in English in chapter nine is "Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past, God humbled the land of Zebulon and the land of Naphtali but in the future he will honor Galilee of the Gentiles by the way of the sea along the Jordan. The people walking in darkness have seen a great light. On those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned." Now we're going to pick that up a little bit later on and those of you who know your book of Isaiah well know that this is going to be followed in verses six and seven by a promise of a child being born who has all those wonderful names that are God's names and titles, but we'll get there eventually. This is still introduction. That's one our few mentions of Galilee in the Old Testament. When we get to the gospels, however, obviously, the focus is on Galilee and Jesus will minister for at least two years up in the Galilee area. So the question of course is: What's happening in between the Old Testament and the New Testament?

Just a quick review of some history which will help us I think a little bit: After the division of the kingdom we have first the Northern Kingdom going into exile and then of course, the Southern Kingdom will go into exile and the destruction of the temple. In the North, which includes the Galilee, there are foreign populations that are brought in. 2 Kings 17 tells us all about this whole mixing and the syncretism that unfolds in that area. As the centuries go by, Alexander the Great will make his way down through Israel: actually he'll end up in Egypt as well. So this area will be also absorbing Greek influence. Hellenism is not just an imposition of Greek culture. What it is, is the local people are taking what they see in Greek culture and assimilating it into their own and developing something new and unique, very much with Greek culture infused within their current cultural contexts.

This area maintains its status as the land between because after the death of Alexander the Great, there are a number of his generals that are fighting back and forth, over the division of his kingdom. For our purposes, the area of Syria is taken by a man named Seleucid, one of the generals, and the area of Egypt is taken by a general named Ptolemy, and guess who is in between Syria and Egypt. It, of course, is the people of Israel. So it continues to be a land between because the Ptolemies and the Seleucids will fight back and forth over who gets to control this area. Lots of things happen in those battles back and forth.

By the end of the third century (ca. 200 B.C.) pretty much the Seleucids will take control over what had been Ptolemaic and then the middle of the second century we have a Seleucid ruler who is known as Antiochus Epiphanes and he will try to impose in a much more strong, significant, forceful way some of this Hellenistic stuff, particularly the philosophical and religious implications of it, onto the Jews. It comes to a head when he enters the temple and desecrates the temple. Out in a small area in the Shephelah, at a small town called Modi'in, the Jews are asked to sacrifice in an inappropriate way. A man named Mattathias rises up. He and his sons will start a revolt called the Maccabean Revolt. Judas Maccabeus is our big figure here and the important thing for our purposes in the Galilee is that the descendants of Judas Maccabeus and his brothers establish an independent state. The descendants continued that independent state for about a hundred years and one of them is a major figure. As those men expand their control out from what had been a very small entity around Jerusalem and Judea, they continued to add little entities to it, if you will, geopolitical areas. Galilee is one of those that's forcibly brought under the control of this independent Jewish state and it happens during the reign of Aristobolus. So in the years 104-103, Galilee, which has been sort of a mixture of people, foreign religions, and foreign peoples, is now brought and forcibly converted to Judaism.

As things move on, Rome is consistently encroaching eastward and they will be a very major presence from 63 B.C. In fact, they will establish a capital in

the area of the Galilee called Sepphoris and we're going to look at that in a little bit as well. So we have a real mish mash in the Galilee of people who are influenced by other foreign religions, Hellenism, and Roman presence, and it's into this that Jesus will step and do a major ministry.

We're going to look at Lower Galilee first of all. Galilee is divided into Upper Galilee and Lower Galilee. Upper Galilee is so rugged and isolated, not much happens there either in the Old Testament or the New Testament. Lower Galilee is a different story. You can see it has a western component to it and an eastern component to it. We don't see the Mediterranean Sea, but just recognize it's there. It's important for us to note that for a reason I hope will become evident very shortly.

As you look at western Lower Galilee on this map that has topography on it, you can see that there are some valleys and then there are ridges that run from west to east. This is an extremely significant geographical, topographical set of features and we just want to make a note of it. One thing that it means is that it's open to foreign influence. Just as the valleys in the Shephelah were avenues by which the Philistines made their way into the hill country, so also these valleys that are west to east mean the traffic goes much more easily from the Mediterranean Sea (Acco, Ptolemaeus, the cities out there), moving eastward; that's significant. Rome is going to establish a capital of the Galilee in a place called Sepphoris and we're going to talk about that more in a moment. Another fascinating aspect about this is the following: It turns out, over the Mediterranean Sea you have generally moist heavy cloud weather. Those prevailing winds that are coming from the Mediterranean Sea moving west to east are always blowing that moisture, those moisture laden clouds, towards the east, towards the Sea of Galilee. You have that perpetual movement. I think we went over that when we talked about the land between in an earlier lecture. Here it's particularly fascinating because as these winds are moving over this area, you've got kind of a funnel effect. The wind is not just (as you see down south in this land) moving up

over the face of the hill country depositing a rainfall on those western slopes. Here there's a funnel effect and it's going to funnel those stormy clouds right down through an opening (here), coming to the Sea of Galilee. In addition to that, the Sea of Galilee is fairly low in elevation; it's about 700 feet below sea level. It's humid, it's moist, it's warm, and that's going to create lots of turbulence. You know where I'm going with this, because as we read the gospel narratives, we see storms on the Sea Galilee coming up and Jesus and his disciples in the context of those storms on the Sea. Of course, the fascinating thing is that Jesus is Master of those storms. But here's the explanation simply from a meteorological standpoint of where those storms are arising, bringing that air right through these funnels, if you will, down into this area.

As I noted a moment ago and as our arrows indicate, we also have the Jezreel Valley to the south (here) kind of shaped like an arrowhead. It's always helpful to remember the Jezreel Valley that way because the Jezreel Valley throughout the history of God's people and even earlier served as a battleground because it was a big, wide, flat area. So if you think of an arrowhead (here) and the shaft of the arrow (there), that's a battleground, but we want to say more about that in a moment.

Right here on the northern side of the Jezreel valley is a ridge. It's the backside of this set of ridges that are running east and west, and we are calling it the Nazareth ridge because Nazareth is in a little bit of a depression or a kind of a chalk lowered area just on the back of this ridge. The Nazareth ridge is the whole thing. As I note for you here, one of the things we want to keep in mind is that Jesus, growing up in Nazareth, had some very interesting things surrounding him. First of all, he's got this whole stage of Old Testament history right out there in front of him. So as he goes out and overlooks the Jezreel Valley, there is a forest of stories that are unfolding there that he would know. We'll point out just a few of them as we look around. To the north and west of him is Sepphoris, the Roman capital of Galilee. Even though it is never mentioned in the Gospels, it's probably

a fairly significant city. It's a Greco-Roman city. It was built up by Herod the Great's son, Antipas, and there are suggestions that perhaps Jesus' father was actually employed in that construction process; it's at least a very likely possibility. It wouldn't be very far, it's about three and a half miles from Nazareth to Sepphoris. Nazareth is a small, tiny little town. You could live there and you could work in Sepphoris and come home to Nazareth. Jesus may well have had a fairly intimate acquaintance with the building activities in Sepphoris.

One of the things that was built there was a theater, and you may remember that Jesus uses the word "hypocrite" very often. If I remember it correctly I think it's seventeen times that he uses it in the Gospels to describe somebody who is an actor; that's what the word means in Greek. So where would he see that? He would have seen that in the context of the theater in Sepphoris.

At any rate, Nazareth is a very key location--small, kind of isolated in its own little ridge area (here), but close to Sepphoris, also close to the staging ground for Old Testament history. I just want to point out two additional locations as well; here's Mount Tabor, and of course, that's important for an Old Testament connection and then Mount Moreh also important for an Old Testament connection. So it was part of the scenery that Jesus would see as he was growing up.

We don't want to lose sight of the fact that there are red lines on this map, perhaps a little hard to see for you, but we have our international coastal route that we have been talking about when we talked about the Philistine plain. It makes its way through Mount Carmel: it makes its way across the Jezreel valley. It goes past Mount Tabor, and it's going to go down here to the area of Capernaum and then north. So keep in mind, we always want to be looking for travel routes when we're talking about geography, because this is how people move and we need to know that.

Let's move along and talk specifically about Jesus' ministry in western Galilee. Again, not an exhaustive narrative but just some things that we want to

make a note of. In Luke chapter 4, very close to the time where he is inaugurating his ministry, he goes back to Nazareth and he preaches in the synagogue there. And of course one of the interesting things that happens in this synagogue situation is that initially, the folks are really taken with him--they like him. But he begins to trample on their nationalistic sensitivities, because he refers positively to foreigners. He refers positively to Na'aman, for example, and he talks about Elijah going north up into the area of Phoenicia. They get very angry with him and what do they do? Well you remember that they are irritated enough that they grab hold of him, they take him to the brow of a hill, and are about to cast him over that brow of the hill. We'll look at that and a picture that might give us a better sense of that; here it is, the Nazareth ridge, and you can just use your imagination of what that might have been like.

Very close by to Nazareth, is a place called Gath Hepher. You're thinking, where does Gath Hepher show up in the gospels? Well, it doesn't, but we know that the prophet Jonah was from Gath Hepher and Jesus does refer to Jonah. So Jesus is drawing on the prophetic voice that is coming from hundreds of years prior to him, when the people around him say, "Give us a sign" and he says, "No sign is going to be given except the sign of Jonah." Then he goes on and makes some profound statements with regard to Jonah, "just as Jonah was in the belly of a fish, so also the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth for three nights and three days." So he's comparing himself in his situation to the Jonah context, but he's referring to a prophet that they would know because that prophet would have been a local prophet, someone from very nearby.

Also, in the repertoire of Old Testament history stories that would unfold in this particular situation would be something that took place in Shunem (right here). Now let's see if we can make this connection. When you read 2 Kings 4, you have the prophet Elisha. When we were talking about Elijah, we talked about the fact that at the end of his whole confrontation with the prophets of Baal, he fled to Mount Horeb. There God commissioned him to cast his mantle upon his

prophet, the prophet Elisha. Therefore Elisha would indeed be Elijah's spiritual successor. That whole story, by the way, unfolds as they cross the Jordan River and Elijah says, "if you see me when I'm taken from you, you will indeed inherit a double portion," and Elisha does. He does a fair number of miracles, a lot of them as a matter of fact. One of them is going to unfold at Shunem. Interestingly enough, let me just make an aside here; the miracles that Elisha does are, in some ways, precursors of the kinds of things that Jesus will do, because he will provide food, he will raise the dead, he does those kinds of things and does healings as well. So, he's doing those kinds of things that Jesus would do seven or eight centuries later. At any rate, back to Shunem.

As Elisha travels about, he does go through Shunem, and there's a woman there and her husband and they offer him hospitality. So they build a small little room for him to stay in, and there comes a point in time a little later on when he asks: "What would you like?" And it turns out that this couple has no children and so, she asks for a child and indeed they have a son. But tragically, some time later, the boy dies. The woman leaves the home in Shunem and she treks across the Jezreel Valley (here) to Mount Carmel where Elisha is at that particular point in time. Elisha doesn't know exactly what the problem is, but he sends Gehazi ahead of him and then he goes as well, and the upshot of the wonderful story is that when Elisha gets there he raises this child from the dead. So that's the Old Testament background.

What's absolutely fascinating is what you have in Luke chapter seven. Right around the corner, right around Mount Moreh (because here's Shunem), just around here is Nain, and you have the same kind of story unfolding. Jesus shows up. Coming out of the town of Nain is a procession that's a funeral procession. Of course, they are burying the body of a boy who has died and he's his mother's only son. And Jesus goes up and touches the corpse and the bier, and the child comes back to life. The people, and here's our connection that we want to make, the people there are overwhelmed and say, "there's a prophet among us, there's a

prophet among us!” Well, why are they saying that? It’s not just because it’s a general thing to say, but they too know their history, and they know that right around the corner as I said, this has happened before. Elisha had raised someone from the dead. So, here is this man Jesus doing it. They make the connection. Elisha has done this, Jesus is doing it; we’ve got somebody on our hands here who is a major, major significant person.

Well, and then just one quick look at Cana of Galilee. We know this story fairly well. Here’s Cana right across the set valleys from Nazareth. In John chapter 2, Jesus will change water into wine at the behest of his mother, as a matter of fact. We’re talking again about a location that’s fairly proximate. She probably knew this family well. Some people have suggested that perhaps when Jesus comes along with his disciples, this small little wedding party is kind of overwhelmed by the numbers of people that have shown up that they may not have expected. After all, this is thirteen additional people. That might be what prompted Mary to request Jesus to do something about it as they were running out of wine. I’ve already made the connection with Sepphoris (here) and again note that Nazareth is close to Sepphoris. We may have a situation where Jesus grew up working with his father Joseph. In this case it might be a stone mason as opposed to someone who’s working specifically with wood.

Just a couple things to look at to kind of put these stories into not only a map perspective but a foot on the ground perspective. Here we are standing down in the Jezreel Valley, actually in the midst of an orchard, looking up at the top of the Nazareth ridge right up here. Nazareth is right back over behind there in that depression. Again just use your imagination as you’re thinking of this narrative in Luke chapter 4 where the people in their anger at him drag him to the brow of the hill: let’s look at it from top down. It would be a rather dramatic crash if you went over this hill. This, by the way, is the remains of an old car that had been shoved over there so you get some sort of sense of the size perspective. The name that is probably the result of tourists visiting it many times is the Mount of

Precipitation. Not meaning the “Mount of Rain,” but the “Mount of Falling Down.” So keeping in mind that this is where we remember this particular narrative as it unfolds here. There’s a Rabbinic teaching--the Rabbis were those who taught in the centuries after the New Testament. Early Rabbinic teaching says that if someone had committed blasphemy they were to be taken to a height that was at least twice as tall as they were and thrown over. Who knows that might be part of the Jewish tradition behind taking Jesus to this point.

Just another quick connection, although we won’t make too much more of it at this point. We’re looking here at Mount Tabor. If we look at our Deborah narratives back in chapter four and five of Judges, we have Deborah, the Judge, who works with Barak, the general. They are encamped up here with the Israelite forces on Mount Tabor. At God’s word, they sweep down into this area of the Jezreel Valley to encounter the forces of Sisera, who was the general for Jabin, King of Hazor. So again we see a battle unfolding in this area of Jezreel Valley, a narrative of which Jesus would have been aware. Just a quick look--Mount Tabor is over here. Now here is our Mount Moreh area, Shunem right here, and Nain right around the corner over here.

Also, a brief look at some things from Sepphoris, even though Sepphoris is not mentioned in the Gospels. As I mentioned it was a fairly significant city, excavated in the 1980’s. Some remarkable things were found there. These are the theater seats actually cut into bedrock. Some theaters were structured and had vaulting underneath and so forth. These theater seats were cut right into the bedrock. This was a first century theater that was here, so we know this would have been here at the time Jesus was growing up in Nazareth.

Moving a little farther along in the Sepphoris time frame. I mentioned the Rabbis a moment ago and I’ll just do a little bit of a tangent at this point. After the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple in AD 70, the Jews were no longer in that Jerusalem area; they were forbidden from being there. They moved west first, and then they moved their center of activities up to the Galilee area, and

Sepphoris became a major Jewish center. From this later rabbinic period, the fourth century particularly, we have some remarkable, remarkable buildings that have been excavated. A beautiful Synagogue floor has been found up there.

This most intriguing section of mosaic floor (this is a panel), is actually labeled by the people who found it. Because of the beauty of the mosaics, it's labeled the Mona Lisa of the Galilee (this little medallion section right here). Actually, it's part of a much larger panel that is apparently celebrating the feast of Dionysius. So there are some interesting things. If we had time to explore them, we would because here you have a city that's a Rabbinic city but also very much in sync with the Romans. The Jewish Rabbis and the Roman rulers were getting along fairly well in the second, third, and fourth centuries, until the Christians came in and the Empire changed to Christian. There was basically some good interaction and so we seem to see in Sepphoris some adoption, major adoption, of Greco-Roman themes; this is one of them.

Well, let's move on. Looking from Sepphoris to the north, just across one of those east-west valleys, we simply see the remains of Cana right here. A little excavation has been done there, not a lot. Some things are coming from the later Byzantine period, but here we see again just the proximity of this site that's so important for Jesus' first miracle in the Galilee.

We're going to move now to the Sea of Galilee and just some sites around it first. We want to locate them, then some data about the Sea of Galilee, and then some of the incidents that happened here. Only some of them, we don't have time for all of them. This is called a "sea," which is really a misnomer. There will probably be some reasons for that, perhaps one of them in Isaiah, "the way of the sea," but at any rate it's a lake. Its dimensions are about thirteen miles long and seven and a half miles wide. It's actually less than that right now because, unfortunately, the water level has sunk rather drastically; that's an unfortunate thing. In our Old Testament period (and this idea still continues very much into the New Testament as well), large bodies of water, the Mediterranean Sea and

other seas as well, did represent forces of chaos. We are particularly aware of this as we look at material that comes from the Ugaritic culture to the north and west of Israel, but seas and everything associated with them were something to be feared.

It's really significant for us to remember that, as Jesus is very much engaged in bringing his power to bear on all the forces, He deals with demons, he deals with illness, he deals with epilepsy, but he also deals with nature that's around him. He controls the sea and he walks on it. So that's one of our issues we want to make a note of. Just a couple of additional locations; two major plains, if you will, areas that have good alluvial soils. They're very, very fertile--the plain of Gennesaret right here, and the plain of Bethsaida up there to the north and east. These will both play a significant role in terms of some cities that are located on or nearby them, but they are also important in terms of agricultural productivity. Capernaum is probably our major location, right here. Again, we're remembering that very shortly after Jesus' short stint in Nazareth, he and his family will move to Capernaum and that will be his place of residence. We're going to make some additional comments about Capernaum in a moment. We also have Korazin right out to the north kind of up the ridge that's above Capernaum, and then we have Bethsaida as well. A question mark with Bethsaida; there's some question with where exactly Bethsaida is located, or perhaps there were two of them, that's an option, too.

What's significant for my purposes right now are these three cities and the fact that Jesus will link them together in something that he says in Matthew eleven, which is a stinging rebuke to the residents of these cities. Let's look at it. And again, notice that they're kind of in a little triangle there. "Woe to you Korazin, woe to you Bethsaida, if the miracles that were performed in you...." In other words, although we don't have statements of miracles in those cities and we don't have descriptions of them as we do in some others, Jesus is saying, "Hey, in this area right around where I have been living, I've been doing God's works over

and over again.” “Believe His works” as Jesus says in the gospel of John. At any rate, “if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, . . .” remember that area up there to the north and west, Phoenicia, those cities that Jesus had alluded to while he was in Nazareth as well. “They would have repented long ago in sack cloth and ashes, but I tell you it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than it will be for you. And you, Capernaum. . . .” His home town, the people who knew him (well his hometown at that point, Nazareth had also cast him out and rejected him). “And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No. You will go down to the depths. If the miracles that were performed in you were performed in Sodom. . . .” – Wow what an insult! Go back to Genesis 19, where Sodom and the sins of Sodom were so heinous that God overwhelmed them with fiery outpouring, destroying them. “If the miracles that have been performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day, but I tell you it will be more bearable for Sodom on the Day of Judgment than it will be for you.” As I said a moment ago, these cities right proximate to where Jesus was living as he was ministering, were seeing time after time after time, his remarkable ministry that he was accomplishing through miracles, and yet their hearts were hardened.

A few more important bits of information that will help us understand the Gospel narratives in a bigger area I think: Again we have the Sea of Galilee being significantly below sea level, and that contributes to that weather pattern that I was mentioning earlier, so that we do have remarkable storms that come up fairly quickly. In addition, the Jordan River flows in from the north and east, and we’ll say more about the Jordan later on as we talk about the headwaters of the Jordan. At any rate, it’s coming in bring fresh water – fresh water that is a result of precipitation on Mount Hermon. At the same time, this whole area is part of the Rift Valley and it has a lot of seismic activity that’s going on and there are some salt springs too, particularly salt springs on the north and west and on the south and eastern shores. When you have that combination, this is wonderful breeding

ground for fish. And so the fishing was particularly good on this northwestern rim and also on the southeastern side.

Interestingly enough, I mentioned a moment ago that the water level of the Sea of Galilee has gone down significantly over the last two decades or so. That's unfortunate, and that's bad in terms of the water supply for Israel. But one of the good things that's come out of that (there two actually, but I'll mention one right now), is that archaeologists and people interested in this whole area and the first century were able to go around the shore line of the Sea of Galilee and find things they had never seen before.

One of those things that they found were at least thirty tiny little harbor areas made out of basalt rock. The area around there is all basalt rock, and they'd see these little hooks of harbors. Take in your minds a miniature of the harbor that we saw at Caesarea. You know kind of a breakwater that goes out and then a turn. They have found, now that the water level had gone down, a whole lot of these little tiny first century harbors, which are indicative of the fact that the fishing was definitely an industry there.

They also found lodged in the mud, back in 1986, the remains of a first century boat. We'll see a reconstruction of that a little bit later on.

One of the other things we want to note is that these two plains, the plain of Gennesaret and the plain of Bethsaida, were extremely important in terms of agricultural productivity. I'm going to quote Josephus for you in a moment, but we know that there was lots and lots and lots of olive oil production there. Olives are used for just about everything--oil, light, medications, food, food for animals, fuel. So producing olives and olive crops and olive oil was extremely important. That's going to show in a picture that we are going to look at in a moment, too. In addition to that, as you look at this area, Herod Antipas (one of the sons of Herod the Great that survived, because a lot of Herod the Great's sons didn't survive),-- Herod Antipas had been given upon Herod the Great's death, the region of Galilee. He also got Perea, which is farther south across the Jordan, but he got

Galilee. His brother Philip got the territory to the north and the east of the Sea of Galilee, and so you've got a boundary right about there, right at the Jordan River. This is significant because whenever there are borders, there are taxing institutions. So start putting together in your minds the kind of place to which Jesus is moving. He's moving to Capernaum--fishing industry, olive oil production, taxation, because it's real close to the border area. Of course, we do know that one of Jesus's disciples, that he drew when he was in Capernaum is going to be Mathew or Levi, the tax collector. So as I mentioned a moment ago, you are going to have commerce, travel, and taxation at the border.

This route, the International Coastal Highway, which is of course, not coastal anymore, but it is still international, is also going to go very close by here, because it's got to swing inland, as we saw earlier on that map, across the Jezereel valley, past Mount Tabor, down past the Sea of Galilee, and then head up north. So just to summarize this a little bit, Jesus moves his base of operations from Nazareth, clearly a major intentional move on his part for reasons I've just intimated. In Mathew chapter four we see that he's making his home in Nazareth, and John 2:12 will corroborate that he brings his family there as well.

So here we go, "leaving Nazareth he went and lived in Capernaum, in the land of Naphtali, to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah." And now let's see what Isaiah says and see if we can draw some things together that are going to draw on not only those geographical features that we've just talked about, taxation, olives, fishing, but some other historical issues as well that are important.

Do you remember that passage from Isaiah chapter nine verses one and two? "The people living" as it's quoted in Matthew, "walking" as you have in Isaiah, "the people living in the darkness has seen a great light." All right, and of course, anybody hearing that or reading that in Mathew would know extremely well what the passage went on to say. After it talks about trampling the boots of Midian and so forth then it says, "for unto us a Son is born, unto us a Child is given," and one of the names that is given to him is "Prince of peace," and that

wonderful recital of names: “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”

Now hang onto that for a moment, because what we have in the decades prior to Jesus coming here into the Galilee, moving from Nazareth to Capernaum is something that happens at a place called Arbel. Let’s look at the map. Here’s Capernaum: Nazareth is way out here. Right here is Arbel. The International Route that I’ve been talking about (red lines right here), has got to make its way down through a pass (right there). We’re above sea level here; we’re below sea level there. All traffic is going to run right down through here, and then up like so.

When Herod got himself appointed by the Roman senate as King of the Jews in 40 BC, he didn’t have an easy way of getting the kingdom. In fact, he had to fight for it. He fought for it for three years and one very horrific confrontation took place at Arbel. Why Arbel? Well obviously he needs to control it for the reasons I’ve just been mentioning. This is a major artery through here. He needs to control that place and he’s going to work hard at it. There are Jewish rebels, people who don’t want Herod to be king, who are being pressed, pressed, pressed by his forces. They will harbor themselves in a whole series of caves and the cliffs at Arbel. Josephus tells us a truly terrifying, horrifying story of Herod dropping his men, his soldiers on platforms, down from the top of the cliff, down the cliff face and slaughtering these Jewish defenders who were in the caves at this point. A lot of bloodshed, a lot of just horror is part of this picture. That’s the history at Arbel. By the way, even after Jesus’s time, we have, when the Romans come through, at 66-68 AD, the same kind of thing happening at Arbel. There is a battle there. Josephus tells us at that point the water of the Sea of Galilee was red with the blood of the people. So this is a hugely important strategic location, but it has been a place of warfare.

Notice, here’s the cliffs by the way, this is the opposite side. Here’s our pass; it’s going to come right through here. There are caves in all this side. Some caves on that side as well, so that’s our location. Matthew’s reference draws on

this, talking about Jesus' move, draws on that passage in Isaiah. He is forcing his people, because they would know the Isaiah context. He is forcing his people to think ahead to what he doesn't say, but this is going to be in addition to everything else, "Mighty God, Wonderful Counselor, Prince of Peace." What a hope that would be to people that have lived in this area and have been torn by war and would continue to be torn by war! That's the hope that's part of this picture. So Jesus is moving to that area for another reason as well, because the land of Naphtali is that area. The tribe of Naphtali inherited this section right around the west and north of the Sea of Galilee.

Okay, just a couple things on fishing. These disciples are fishermen. That was their livelihood. That was an industry up there. Jesus calls them from that. We learn as we study this a little bit more that they seem to have been fishing at night for a particular reason, and that is the nets are cotton. Therefore the suggestion is they would be less visible to the fish. Fishing is also hard work. In fact, whenever Jesus is calling them it seems like they're coming off of a night time of fishing. In Luke chapter five, as he's summoning these disciples to be fishers of men, they say "we've worked hard all night and caught nothing." Jesus, of course, helps them with a catch but then draws them to become fishers of men. I mentioned a moment ago that in 1986, because the water level was so low, there were a couple of men, brother as a matter of fact, at Kibbutz called Ginosaur, were out searching around, looking for Roman coins if I remember the story correctly, and they came across the remains of a boat. The boat spent about 15 years in solutions to bring it back to life. This is simply a model of it. I don't have a picture of the real thing because it's hard to get a good sense of it. It's surrounded by kind of a metal frame at this point. But here's how it would have looked reconstructed. We're talking about something that's, well, let's see, 30 feet long. What's interesting is that they can pretty much determine by doing all the tests on the wood and that this is a first century boat. But we also have a mosaic found from a place called Magdala, which is just on the western side of the Sea of Galilee just below that Arbel area,

as a matter of fact, which shows us what this would have looked like. You'd have a mast, you'd have the sail kind of gathered together up there, and then all these cords that would support the sail. The set of oars is out here. So that would be the general look of our first century boat.

A couple more things to look at: Here we are on top of Arbel, so here is some of the cliff-face. Again we can think of our horrifying Josephus narrative. Here's our plain of Gennesaret, the plain that was known for olive production,... Right up over here is going to be Capernaum. So Gennesaret is right there. Here's what Josephus says about the plain of Gennesaret: "A region whose natural properties and beauty are very remarkable. There is not a plant which its fertile soil refuses to produce, and its cultivators in fact grow every species. The walnut, palm tree, figs, olives, diverse fruits and grapes." Now Josephus is known for exaggerating a tad bit, but it does at least attest to the fertility of this area.

Again note its proximity to Capernaum. When the excavators began to dig at Capernaum and unearth some of these things, they came across a huge number of olive presses, more than the little tiny settlement that seems to have been Capernaum itself could have supported. The suggestion is that because of this, perhaps Capernaum was serving as a center for olive pressing industry. In other words, all the olives would be brought from the plain of Gennesaret and surrounding areas into Capernaum. They would process them and then start shipping it because they were proximate to this coastal highway.

Here's an olive press itself. Let's see a little bit how it works. You take your olives, you put them in this depressed area right here. You have a pole, a wooden post, that goes through and comes out to about here. This is your mill stone, and then you have either animals or human beings pushing that thing around, using that pole, so that it will indeed crush the olives. You take them out and you put them in some sort of a sack, put them on this press right here in that sack, and put weights on it. That presses down and your olive oil will come off into this little ring, and go down into the container that's capturing it there. So,

that's how that industry worked; you can see another mill stone here and there are a large number of them. Now why am I spending so much time on olive presses? Well, it might help us understand a little bit of a narrative here, or a teaching, I should say.

In Matthew chapter 18, Jesus picks up on this idea of millstones and uses it in a very dramatic way. He's got a teaching tool right there, right? And he says "If anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone" – got the picture? – "hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea." That would reach the people there because they would know the weight of that millstone, perhaps some of them had been involved in pressing it around as it crushed things. So Jesus has got a teachable moment. He's got his teaching tools right there, and the sea, of course, is not very far away, a matter of meters. And again, let's go back to our Old Testament idea; being cast into the depths of the sea wasn't just 'you get into the water.' Bad enough you're drowned, but there's also the implications that this is the abyss, and all the horror of the spiritual deprivation that's there as well.

Also, we have a synagogue in Capernaum. And in John chapter six we've got a wonderful situation where Jesus teaches in a synagogue in Capernaum. Now, the things that he teaches are remarkable. We've just had, earlier on in the chapter, and also in all the synoptic Gospels, Jesus providing food, the feeding of the five thousand. The people have followed him to Capernaum, they're asking him questions. And so he's going to preach in this synagogue in Capernaum. Because of the time, I'll leave you to look at that and read it for yourselves, but here's a synagogue, and interestingly enough this synagogue is made out of white limestone, which is quite unusual for a building in that area. This is an area that would have been basalt, all dark rocks. This is a white synagogue, so obviously there's something important about this. I would suggest perhaps Christian pilgrims are building this synagogue later on, but that's a story in and of itself. Underneath this synagogue, right along in here are the foundations of an earlier synagogue. It's

a basalt synagogue; it's what you'd expect a building to be made out of in that area. Not only do we have foundations of that earlier synagogue, which can probably be dated to first century, but if you walk into this one, right about in here, you can look down and see some columns from that synagogue. So, going to Capernaum, we don't sit in the synagogue from Jesus' day; this is a later one, but we know that there was one particularly in that location.

Not too far from this synagogue, we have some foundations of houses. We need to talk a little bit about how houses were structured because you and I live in way too large houses; most don't in the world this day. In that time houses were very, very small, but you could add to them, right? So here we have rooms, very tiny little rooms, but they all seem to be connected one onto the other. Here's a wall between this room and that room, it just keeps growing. Here's another wall right here between this room and that room. Here's our synagogue back here, by the way. The houses are called "insula" and what happened was this. When you had a family, the more children you had, the more you added to the house. When your son got married and brought his wife in, you added to the house. So these dwellings become more extensive dwellings. So as I note for you here, they're dwellings for extended families. You have interconnected units. By the way, in some parts of the Middle East you still have this situation, where a family will have a one story dwelling. Their children will come home with their families, they build a second story on top of it. Then they build another story on top of that. This went out horizontally, but it's the same idea going on, as you can see here, with some of these insula, which you see in all of these little Jewish villages, from the first centuries and beyond. They can have as many as fifteen rooms.

Now, why are we mentioning this? Well, there's something rather interesting that we have in John chapter 14, where Jesus is saying, "I am going to prepare a place for you." The suggestion here is that we can take that reference as Jesus talks about going to prepare a place for you. "In my Father's house, in my father's mansion are many rooms, and I'm going to prepare a place for you." In

other words, there's going to be room for you, because we can add on to this. That's how these people would have understood it. He's saying to these people, "You're going to be added to the family." And not only that, we could probably push it a little further because we do know Jesus is the bridegroom, the church is bride, and he is, as he says in John chapter 14, going to prepare a place for his bride as they come. So, again, some helpful, insightful lessons from our first century site in Capernaum. Well, we're going to skip other things in Capernaum because we need to keep moving along.

As we look at Jesus' life in the area of the Galilee, we see that he has, as we've said, a focus on cities around the Sea of Galilee but we also know that for a time things get a little hot for him—Herod Antipas is on his trail. Jesus is going to go over to Tyre and Sidon for a little while. He's going to go through some cities in the Decapolis. Hippos is one of them; Gadara's another. Decapolis cities all over here. But then he is going to take his disciples, and he's going to retire, going to retreat, if you will. He will go to a place called Caesarea Philippi. As you can see here, there's Mount Hermon right there. Caesarea Philippi is at the foothills of Mount Hermon. Caesarea Philippi is one of a number of locations where we have the headwaters of the Jordan River. It's at this location that Jesus has chosen to do something very dramatic. So, let's say a little bit more about this. I'm going to suggest also that since in the Gospel of Matthew, this confession that Peter makes about the identity of Jesus takes place in chapter 16 and the transfiguration is in chapter 17, there is kind of a geographical connection there as well. But let's watch this unfold a little bit.

First of all, we can look at Mount Hermon, across all of the Hulah Valley that is to the south and west of it. We're actually standing here in an Old Testament site called Hazor. There are nine thousand feet of elevation at Mount Hermon. I'll talk about this in just a moment. So here's Mount Hermon, with snow cover on it. It's got a hard limestone foundation and, as I said a moment ago, lots of springs at the base of Mount Hermon, lots of springs. One of them is Dan, right

here. Well, this is part of the headwaters of the Jordan River. Another at Caesarea Philippi.

Now, let me just make a couple of comments about Dan, even though it's an Old Testament site, because it's kind of a groundwork for something we want to do when we talk about the history of Caesarea Philippi. First of all, at Dan we have the largest karstic spring, or in other words, spring that's coming out from this limestone, in all the Middle East. As I understand correctly, it pumps out about five thousand gallons per second of water. So, it's a remarkable location. It's not an accident that when the tribe of Dan that we mentioned in our preceding lecture migrated up north, they settled at Dan. It's got water! It looks really good. So they settled there. As they did, they also brought some idols along with them, and established a place of worship. Later on, Jeroboam, when he split the kingdom, set up a golden calf at Dan. It continues to be a place of worship. It is a Jewish place of false worship. Israel plays at false worship through that whole historical period. Hang on to that as we start talking about Caesarea Philippi which is nearby.

So, here we have the remains of some things at Caesarea Philippi. Originally back in the first century, this would have been the orifice through which this water came. Due to seismic activity and two thousand years of change, the water is now coming out farther down. But it used to come out through this great opening. If you look carefully, you see a foundation platform here; this would have been a massive, massive temple. Herod the Great built this temple; his son Herod Philip enhanced this temple. Herod the Great called it the temple to Caesar Augustus. Herod Philip says, well, I got to get my name in on this somewhere, so he names the place Caesarea Philippi, after himself. But in addition to that, we've got all sorts of Greek gods being worshiped here. Pan, Zeus, Nemesis--you're recognizing some major names there. Pan, kind of the goat god representing fertility; Zeus, chief god; and Nemesis, god of the dead. When you see all this niches here and this rock face wall, this is our representative of places where these

statues would have been set. So, this is a place of false worship with the Temple to Augustus on top of all that. Herod Philip enlarges the city, as I have said. It's the center of pagan worship. Probably, we don't know this for sure, but probably, this is kind of the Greek answer to what was going on at Dan. The Israelites, or what's left of them in their assimilated fashion, are worshipping there. This is very much of a Hellenistic Greco-Roman counterpart to that.

Well, it's in this context—isn't this fascinating?—it's in this context that Jesus brings his disciples and asks the question, "Who do people say that I am?" And you know, some people say a prophet, some Jeremiah, etc. And finally, Peter says, "You are the Christ, the Messiah, the One we've been waiting for, the Son of the living God." And again, notice the emphasis on the *living* God. Remember David way back there said he is depending on the living God? Well, here is Peter referring to Jesus as Son of the Living God, and it's in this context we've just been talking about. I want to quote for you something I found a couple years ago that elucidates this for us. Here we go. "Jesus was standing in an area littered with temples of Assyrian gods, a place where the white marble splendor of the home of Caesar worship dominated the landscape." We only see the foundations of that temple, so you don't get the picture of it. But it would have been a majestic, marvelous, awe-inspiring temple. Here of all places, "Jesus deliberately set himself against the background of the world's religions in all their splendor and glory, and demanded to be compared with them." And of course, Peter does; he says, "You're the Son of the living God." That sets Jesus in stark contrast to gods of stone, who are simply lodged in those niches up there in that stone wall. One of the things that goes on here—by the way there's so much more we could say about that passage that we simply don't have time for—but Jesus uses the term *petra*, "on this rock." And of course, Peter has the name that's associated with that as well. Let's look at it just a little bit. Jesus uses the word "petra," and it's a word that would indeed, possibly be used to describe that backdrop, that huge stark bluff

that's there. We can refer to the same use of it in terms of Matthew chapter seven. So hang on to that for a minute, and let's go on.

Possibly, and I know there's a huge theological issue in terms of what it means to build the church on Peter, on the rock. But maybe something else is going on here. Let's read through this. Perhaps, Jesus' statement that he would build his church on this rock, doesn't refer to Peter, or to Peter's confession, which is the way some people try to explain it. Instead, it might be translated; that Greek preposition might be translated "against this rock." And if that's true—and you Greek scholars can take this on and wrestle with it—then possibly, he could be referring to a confrontation between him and his church, and all that pagan worship that's represented there. "The church would be on the move," let me keep reading, "the gates of hell would not withstand that attack." So it's going to move against that rock, which is symbolic of all those dead gods. And then just another interesting issue, later on there is a Rabbinic tradition that when the Messiah comes—the Christ, in their minds—the Jewish Messiah comes, the gates of Caesarea will collapse. The gates of Hades at Caesarea will collapse. But at any rate, what we do see here, no matter how you want to interpret that last thing, is, as I indicate for you, a whole series of reversals. Jesus' identity as the Son of God, the Son of the living God, is contrasted with those dead gods. Jesus will go on to teach both about the fact that he has to suffer, and of course, that's where Peter rebukes him. But also there's going to be a resurrection. Peter suffers his own incredible contrast in his own experience at that point, because Jesus will tell him that it's been God who's revealed this to him, and yet in the next moment he says, "Get behind me, Satan." And at that point, he says, as well, the people who follow him must take up their cross and follow him.

Well, just a couple lessons from the Transfiguration. Moses and Elijah are there; again, representative of the law and the prophets standing with Jesus. Peter, in his usual effervescent manner says, "Let's set up some booths." Well, one of the reasons for suggesting that is that this probably was near the Feast of Tabernacles

and the Feast of Tabernacles had strong messianic overtones. So as their up on this mount of transfiguration—and I would suggest it's Hermon because its whiteness and brilliance and light—that's probably what's going on. More important is what God says to those who are with him. "This is my beloved son. Listen to him," because we've just had that declaration that he's going to have to go to Jerusalem, he's going to suffer, but be raised on the third day. There are important teachings that they were having trouble hearing. After the promise of the resurrection, Jesus indeed does set his face to go to Jerusalem.

That's only the introduction to Galilee. There is much more to do in Galilee, but we'll stop for now with Galilee.

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Final edit by Dr. Elaine Phillips