

# **Dr. Elaine Phillips, Introduction to Biblical Studies, Session 9, The Galilee Regional Study**

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This is Dr. Elaine Phillips in her teaching on Introduction to Biblical Studies. This is session 9, The Galilee Regional Study.

We are moving into our next regional study and as we're going to see, this focuses on the area where Jesus did a good deal of his ministry.

We're talking about the Galilee and we're going to find out, and when you look at this, that we in this country think of it as Galilee, but the Hebrew word is ha-galil, the Galilee, and so you're going to hear me referring to it over and over again the way Israelis refer to that part of their country as the Galilee. If you're writing a paper for a New Testament somewhere down the line, don't write in the Galilee. You'll probably get it corrected, but at any rate, that's where we're going.

For those of you using your regional study map, it's going to be map number five. It focuses on the northern part of the country. So, let's do a little review, first of all, and see where we've been in our regional studies, just so we have a sense of the comprehensive nature of this endeavor.

This is a map we've looked at and in the context of that, we talked a good deal about the testing ground of faith. So just a reminder, it's this little slice of land here, which has all kinds of implications in terms of being a land between. We talked about God's covenant relationship with Israel that especially involved the land, and so a focus in down here, and as we've seen a major set of differences within that very small geographical area.

We looked at hill country, and we've talked about the hill countries of Judah, Benjamin Ephraim, and Manassas. We got a good sense of that. We focused on Jerusalem, spent an hour talking about Jerusalem.

Again, just a reminder that when we're dealing with Jerusalem, if you need to find it, it's going to be your locus around which you can find everything else, because you just go west of the north end of the Dead Sea, about 12 miles worth, and that will be where Jerusalem is. We talked about the wilderness, the area of the rain shadow, which is going to be east of that hill country region, and then in the last couple of lectures, we explored various places in which foreign influences. Remember those westerners in this area between west and east? Well, we looked at foreign influences coming into the coastal plain, and we named some names in this context.

We talked about the Philistines. We talked about Phoenicians, Tyre, and Sidon and the influence of Baal worship. Today, we're going to be talking, and we have actually already with regard to Jerusalem, the influence that Rome and the Greco-Roman culture brought in, and we're going to see that in the Galilee as well as we move forward.

So just some introductory issues that we need to be talking about as we make our way through the material as a beginning point for Galilee. In the Old Testament or the First Testament, we don't see that name mentioned very often. It's something that shows up a good deal in the Gospels, but one of our major passages and few passages that actually mention that name is going to be Isaiah 9, verses 1 and 2, and I've actually got it here in front of us to read through it, and I want you to not just track right now, but we're going to come back to Isaiah 9 a little bit later.

So, let's get this planted in our minds. Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who are in distress. By the way, that draws on the last part of chapter 8, which talks in very weighty terms about gloom and darkness.

So now a switch, no more gloom. In the past, he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, two tribes that were planted in the Galilee area, but in the future, he will honor Galilee of the Gentiles by 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.

We'll be coming back to that, and of course, as we already know, when you read the Gospels, they focus on Jesus' ministry in the land, so that's where we're going to spend a good part of this lecture, not in its entirety, because there will be a few Old Testament or First Testament things we want to bring in, but primarily we're going to focus on the Gospels. What we do need to do, however, before we move into specific geography, we've got to pick up a little bit of history. And the question is, between the close of the First or Old Testament and our Gospel narratives, what's going on in those intervening years? So, here's just a brief summary that will help us kind of work our way towards this.

As we know, and we've explored this already, the Northern Kingdom was exiled in 722 BC. In the Southern Kingdom, a good number of people were taken off to Babylon. And by the way, there have been other issues that have made Jewish communities scatter, not least of which was the slave trade mentioned, among others, by Amos.

But we have exiles of Northern and Southern Kingdoms, specifically with regard to the Northern Kingdom. As we read in 2 Kings 17, the Assyrians had a repopulation policy; basically, when they took some folks into exile from one location, they

brought others in from elsewhere. And that has incredible implications in terms of destroying a community or a people's identity, because it was often tied to the land.

All that to say when this happened in the Northern Kingdom, 722 BC, and all sorts of additional peoples come in, they bring their own worship. And what we really have in the North is, as Isaiah would put it earlier, Galilee of the Gentiles. So hang on to that, because it's going to be important for us.

Add to that, this is after, of course, the people come back from the exile in Babylon, after they re-establish Judea. We then have in the 300s BC Alexander the Great and his successors. And, of course, Hellenism, the interface of Greek culture with whatever the local cultures happen to be, continues and grows.

And we're obviously going to pick up on that as we move forward in a number of ways. This is also just a reminder of the land between, in terms of the successors of Alexander the Great. One of them, Seleucus, took areas that would be to the north and east, i.e. Syria.

And so, we have Syrian Hellenism with that ongoing set of rulers that are there. And a person named Ptolemy took over Egypt, and so we have the Ptolemaic dynasty. They vie with each other for control of the land between, which affected Jews that were living in that area for those centuries, especially third and second and first centuries BC, prior to Rome coming in.

There is an interval during that time when Judas Maccabeus, his father Mattathias, and the brothers all revolted against the control of the Seleucid dynasty. You do have a quasi-independent Jewish state for about a hundred years. That's going to go from the middle of the second century BC to the middle of the first century BC.

That's important too, because during that time, and I'm giving you specific dates here, we have the rule of a person named Aristobulus. And at that point, in this small but for a while vibrant Jewish state, they're going to be expanding. They're going to be expanding control from what was Judea, small, expanding control south, expanding control north.

The northern expansion at one point will bring what we call the Galilee under Jewish control, under the control of the Hasmonean state. Forcibly brought, forcibly brought under that control, which has all kinds of religious and sociological implications for people who live in the Galilee in the generations that follow that. So, hang on to that datum.

That's a really important one. And then, as we've intimated already, and especially with regard to our study of Jerusalem, when Rome shows up, Pompey the general, 63 BC, basically intervenes in an internal conflict in the latter parts of the Hasmonean

dynasty. And once Rome's presence is there, it will definitely be there in Jerusalem, but also obvious in areas in the Galilee.

So, we have, just as we look at this, what happened in the interval, we've got an incredibly complicated business going on in terms of different groups of people, in terms of religious affiliations, in terms of Roman control, and Roman presence. Hang on to all those things because they're going to be important for us as we move forward. Our main focus, as I've already said, is going to be Jesus in the Galilee.

We've actually already looked at this particular photograph, and we've looked at it because we were interested at that time in the fact that we have grain fields here, and how lovely they are. We talked about grain, new wine, and oil being important for the produce of the land. Two of those, grain and oil, are going to show up as we continue to talk about Jesus' work around the Sea of Galilee.

So, hang on to that bit, and then catch two additional things here with regard to this photograph. Here, obviously, is the Sea of Galilee, the northwest corner of it, but I want you to see this cliff face. It's called the Arbel Cliffs right here, and it's opposite there, but notice the V in between, because that's an extremely important pass.

This geographical structure, topographical structure is called the Horns of Hattin. It's almost like having a road sign. You know, we have green road signs now, but if someone were coming across, let's say, from north of this area where we are, they would have a nice easy trek across this plain.

It's the plain of Gennesaret. We're going to revisit it, but then, you know what? They've got to get from the Sea of Galilee, which is below sea level. We'll come back to that in a moment.

They've got to get up to this area and points beyond, which are, of course, are above sea level. How do you do it? Well, this happens to be a pass. It's the Arbel Pass, and as you're going through there, here's your road sign that says, hey, you're on the right track.

Just kind of head to the south of that, keep going, and you'll be able to find Mount Tabor, and you'll be able to find the Jezreel Valley, etc., etc. Likewise, someone coming from the other direction would see this from maybe somewhere over in here and say, okay, now I know where that Arbel Pass is, and they're going to head right down this direction. You know, if there's any place that we can be pretty sure Jesus walked when he was coming from Nazareth and coming down to Capernaum and going back and forth in those contexts, this would be a route that he would have taken, so hold on to that as well.

The Horns of Hattin is not something that shows up in the biblical text, but for those of you who are interested in history subsequent to that, during the Crusader period, a very horrific battle took place, 1187, that actually pretty much lost the Crusades. There were some after that, but this was a terrible battle. Saladin won that battle; he did so very strategically, it happened on the Horns of Hattin; that's its own narrative.

But our focus is Jesus and the first century, so let's work at it first in terms of the geology topography, and then we're going to put history and some archaeology on top of that. Here's the map with which we are familiar in terms of the geological foundations that we've explored. We've certainly looked at this area, the upper part of the hill country, we've looked at Mount Carmel, we've looked at the Jezreel Valley.

Now, we're going to look at what's called Lower Galilee. Granted, that's a very artificial triangle there, and if you're saying Lower Galilee, you're saying what happened to Upper Galilee? Well, Upper Galilee is this area up in here. It's higher elevation-wise. I'll say more about that in a moment.

It's so rugged that, actually, it's isolated enough that there's very little that takes place in terms of either Old or New Testament history. So, although there is a geographical region called Upper Galilee, we are not going to worry about it at this point. We're focusing on Lower Galilee, and let's get our geography, geology first, and then topography down pat before we move on.

We've talked about the boundaries of other regions, and it helps us to get a sense of the basic, obvious, topographical features that make up the boundaries. So, on the south, stuff we already know. Here's the Jezreel Valley.

Now I realize my triangle cuts across that, but quite frankly the boundary is just right about here. We have high hills, we've got a valley. Likewise, our Lower Galilee includes not only this, which is known as Western Lower Galilee, but it also includes this, which is known as Eastern Lower Galilee, and you're going to see some difference in terms of the basalt here and various limestone chinks here.

I will come back to that as well, but still in terms of boundaries, the white line has not very strategically blotted out the fact that this is the Harod Valley. So that's our southern boundary. On the east, of course, we have the Rift Valley, including both the Jordan Valley itself, the Upper Jordan Valley, as well as our sea.

Again, we'll return to that. On the north, not something we know of in the biblical narratives, but Beit HaKarem Valley is just right about here. You're going to see it where Galilee is written, and it's a boundary because south of that, Lower Galilee is really lower.

Elevation-wise, this region is lower. Once you pass the Beit HaKarem Valley right here and get into this Upper Galilee, as I said earlier, it's much higher in elevation and it's much more isolated, it's much more rugged, and our boundary then in the north is going to be the Beit HaKarem Valley. On the west, we have this plain, a continuation of the coastal plain north of Mount Carmel.

So, it's the plain of Akko and then, of course, the Mediterranean Sea. So, if it helps to think of that triangle that has these basic components to it, they're rather different and drastic on the map. Both the limestone and the basalt make for good soils, and that's important to keep in mind.

Those types of rocks, when they erode, will make this quite a fertile area. Let's go on, different kind of map right now, but it'll help us, I think, unpack what we want to do. You can actually see in our circle now the emphasis on Lower Galilee, and you can see the region down here that is the other part, the eastern part of Lower Galilee.

There are three things that I want us to note now. This is a topographical map, picking up from that geology, and unlike what we saw in the hill country farther south, where our main ridges run north-south, and unlike Mount Carmel, where the main spine, if you will, of Mount Carmel runs northwest-southeast, here we've got ridges that run basically east-west in Lower Galilee. You can see the ridges.

You can see the valleys in between them right here. This one right here is a very significant one as well. Now, as I say in my sub-bullets there, this is significant for a number of reasons.

First of all, whenever you have a valley, it makes for easy access. We saw it in the Shephelah. Those east-west valleys in the Shephelah meant that people could travel through there, and foreign influence would come through there, and you add that foreign influence to the fact that Rome is now here.

I am going to return to Rome's presence in a place called Sepphoris very shortly, but that meant that as western influences were coming in, Rome was riding those coattails as well, and we will see shortly how the Roman capital in the Galilee, a place called Sepphoris, a place not far from Nazareth, is going to spread its influence tentacles farther to the east. But here's the really interesting thing. That's why it's in a different color on that particular slide, weather patterns, because here's what happens.

This is why it's so much fun to know the meteorological stuff that we talked about in our introduction. Do you remember those prevailing winds? The prevailing winds coming from the Mediterranean Sea are full of moisture, clouds, moisture-laden clouds, and as they come every day, they are going to move east. Now, farther south, as we saw, when they butt up against the ridge, then it rains on the western side.

Here, you've got these east-west valleys, and what they really do then is funnel those moisture-laden clouds and funnel that weather right down to the Sea of Galilee, all right? They serve as funnels, and you basically have this moisture stuff flowing that direction. Western winds pushing them here, and then what's really interesting, over the Sea of Galilee, you have a more dense atmosphere, because the Sea of Galilee is just about 600 feet below sea level. That means that the air here is going to be weightier, more dense.

When you've got this cool, moist air coming in here, it creates storms on the Sea of Galilee. All that to say, and you know exactly where I'm going with this, when Jesus and his disciples are in boats on the Sea of Galilee, it happens on more than one occasion, and the storm comes up at night. That's a pattern that would be totally recognizable to people who lived in that area.

So, I even noticed that our topography here is so incredibly interesting in terms of keeping weather patterns going that were just part of the whole picture. Well, we need to notice a couple of other things about Lower Galilee that are going to be important for us. In our lecture on the Jezreel Valley, especially the segment on the Jezreel Valley, we mentioned the Nazareth Ridge because, of course, it is part of our boundary, the northern boundary, the Jezreel Valley.

The Nazareth Ridge is, as we said last time, pretty much Jesus' backyard. Here we are right here, that's the Nazareth Ridge, and therefore, as he grew up in Nazareth, as he grew up knowing his First Testament history, he would have spread out in front of him, in the whole flat area of that Jezreel Valley, the stage. His backyard is a stage for Old Testament, a lot of Old Testament history.

So, there's Nazareth Ridge there on the map. We also just want to remind ourselves of Mount Tabor and Mount Moreh, because those are part of that fabric of Old Testament history that we studied last time, and we actually did the Jezreel Valley. Now, one more thing I want to say with regard to this map.

Always, as you're looking at these maps, and as you're thinking in terms of background for whatever the biblical narrative happens to be, think of where people would travel because they're going to take the route of least resistance. You'll remember that picture I showed just as we got started. It was the Arbel Cliffs right here.

So, someone, as I intimated about five minutes ago, coming from the south, making their way through Mount Carmel, that barrier, coming across here, probably going to pass Mount Tabor. The modern road does too, right, like so. And then, as you begin to go along this direction, you're going to look for your signpost of the Horns of

Hattin, and that's going to tell you that that is the open pass that goes down, and then, of course, continues to travel up north.

We're going to be traveling up north a little bit later on in this lecture. Well, that's a little bit of a handle on Lower Galilee in terms of topography. Let's get some cities in place here now as we think of Jesus' work in this area.

As you read the Gospels early on in the Gospels, you know that it's going to be relatively early on that he's going to migrate from the area of Nazareth. I'll say a little bit more about that in a moment, and he will move his base of operations to Capernaum, which is right about here. I'm going to deal with Capernaum when we talk about all the cities around the Sea of Galilee or the lake, but I just noticed that the first part of his Gospel ministry is going to take place in this area, so let's kind of see how these work out a little bit.

Luke chapter 4. Jesus goes to the synagogue in Nazareth. I will not read it, but I would encourage you to go back and review it because there's so much really interesting stuff happening as you read that narrative. He's going to refer to Elijah and Elisha, who minister to foreign populations.

That's how Jesus gets his audience a little bit irritated and vexed with him at that point, but for our purposes, just remember that at the end of that narrative, they were ready to pitch him off the precipice or the cliff near the town of Nazareth, because he had indeed vexed them with the kinds of things he said that challenged their probably rather self-centered nationalism as Jews living in the Galilee. The other thing I want you to notice about this, and I've got it as kind of a sub-bullet up here, but we have this name Gath-hepher or Gathepher, and although I didn't mark it on the map, it is right about here, and I note that just as a small aside, because at one point Jesus is challenged, you know, there's no prophet in the Galilee. Well, his opponents were a little off with that because when he refers in this passage, Matthew chapter 12, and parallel passages to a sign of Jonah, he would be referring to one of the local folks because Jonah, as we know from 2 Kings 14 verse 25, is a prophet from Gath-hepher.

So, kind of make that connection as well. Jesus draws on the local wonderful biblical traditions that are all around him, in addition to ministering publicly with the current situation as well. So, there's Nazareth, you can see it.

We talked about Shunem last time when we were talking about the situation where Elisha raised a young man from the dead, and we talked about Nain last time and talked about Luke chapter 7, and the fact that Nain and Shunem are just on opposite sides of Mount Moriah from each other, and so just to put that into its geographical context, there they are in relationship to Nazareth. What we want to do at this moment is talk about Cana. You see it on the map up there.



I've got the arrow going from Nazareth to Cana. In John chapter 2, we learn that this is the place where Jesus did his first miracle in the Galilee, turning the water to wine. Notice it's just across the valley.

I'll show you a picture of it in a moment, at least a picture of the remains of the site that most folks think is Cana. I shouldn't say most, many folks think it's Cana. There's also another miracle that's associated with Cana.

If we moved ahead to John chapter 4, we would see that Jesus is in Cana when an official's son is sick to the point of death, and so he sends messengers to Jesus, and Jesus gives the word, and that young man is healed. So, Cana has significance in terms of the early ministry of Jesus. I should say, by the way, that there have been, over the centuries of Christian pilgrimage to the land, there's been a tendency to have Cana, or I should say locate Cana, in a different place.

I pointed out Gath Heifer in this general vicinity a little bit ago. There have been those who have located Cana in that same area. Kfar Kana is the name of the location, village of Kana, but it's basically, and this is what most geographers say, it was a site, especially in the 19th century, that was kind of established because it was a lot more convenient to get to it for pilgrims coming to this area, and at this point, even though there are a fair number of interesting business establishments, small business, if you will, in Kfar Kana that make a bit of a deal out of wine and water, a better site is indeed what we have on our map up there that you're looking at already.

One more thing we need to note. Here is Sepphoris. There's a very interesting book by a guy named Richard Beatty entitled *The Forgotten City*, because that's not a name you read in the Gospels, is it? We never read about Sepphoris in the Gospels, and yet it's about three to four, probably closer to four miles from Nazareth, and at the time that Jesus was growing up, Sepphoris was the Roman capital of the Galilee.

Nobody really started excavating Sepphoris until the 1980s, and so when we were first there in the 1970s, we didn't visit it. There was a crusader fortress on top of a hill, but Josephus and, as a matter of fact, the rabbinic materials have a lot to say about Sepphoris. It had been burned.

You have the emperor deciding to rebuild it, and what's really interesting is that the rebuilding process chronologically fits in pretty well with what we have in Joseph moving back to Nazareth, serving as a builder. The suggestion is, and this is just a suggestion, don't have any textual evidence for it, but very possibly when Jesus was assisting his father Joseph in Nazareth, they may have been, because Nazareth is a very small town, they may have been making a daily commute by foot, by the way, to Sepphoris and working there, most likely as a stonemason, not sawing wood so much

as possibly chipping stones, to help rebuild this city of Sepphoris. Roman capital of the Galilee, as I said, and so now circle back to what we said earlier, and that is if you've got Rome's very strong presence right here, and if you've got valleys that are going towards the east, there's going to be an easy way to be moving that direction and moving forces that way.

I will say more about that as well. In the meantime, for now, one additional thing. Roman cities always had theaters.

They had theaters. We're going to see the remains of a theater. It is probably from a later century than the first century, but Sepphoris had a theater.

If Jesus spent a fair amount of time there helping his father working, then when he uses the term hypocrite, which he does repeatedly, our stellar example here is going to be Matthew 23, when he castigates people who are hypocrites, and of course the Pharisees are the target at that point, but over and over again, you hypocrites, you hypocrites, you hypocrites. Well, the term means actor. It comes from the Greek, and it means actor, and so this would be a perfect cultural backdrop.

His audience, speaking of actors, his audience would know that fairly well. Well, there's much more to say about that, but again, as usual, we need to keep moving at this point. We could spend a couple of hours at Sepphoris, and it would be a worthwhile endeavor.

Let's do some photographs for the moment, just to kind of see what we're talking about, and put some of these narratives and some of what I've said into a visual context as well. Here we are down in the Jezreel Valley in an orchard. As you look up here, you see a fairly significant ridge.

Back down this slope, behind where my green pointer would be, would be the village of Nazareth. Now, of course, it's a major city. There's a large church there.

Churches of the Annunciation. It's the largest parish church all around, but then it was a small village, and so we can just use our imaginations as we think of that narrative in Luke chapter 4 of the people hauling Jesus out to this ridge, or this precipice, and presuming they were going to push him over, but remember, he walked away through them, and very shortly thereafter, he will move his base of operations to Capernaum. We'll talk about that later.

By the way, the tourist agency in Israel knows what they're doing, so this is now labeled Mount Precipice. When we were first there in the 1970s, it wasn't all that easy to find our way by back roads and get up here, but it's quite different now. When you stand up there and look down that slope and look across the northeast edge of the Jezreel Valley and look at Mount Tabor, we have the perspective from

the top, and if you want a little perspective, here's a car, the remains of a car, that had gone over the edge as well, so we get a sense that this is rather significant.

Here, just to put Nain and Shunem in context, we're standing at the same location, and this now is Mount Moreh, so here's our Old Testament second king's foresight, Elisha's healing the young man, Nain, Luke 7, Jesus not healing, raising from the dead in both cases and of course we are looking from west to east. This is just a quick photograph of the theater at Sepphoris. It's been carved right into bedrock, and then, of course, we see some reconstruction taking place here.

Just one more thing about Sepphoris. As I said, it's really a fascinating place. After the destruction of the second temple by the Romans in AD 70, you have the Jewish presence in Jerusalem, well frankly it has been moved out, they're not there.

They first go west to a place called Yavne or Jamnia, but then they're going to move their operations to the Galilee and, at points in the centuries that follow, Sepphoris. Isn't this an irony? It had been the Roman capital of the Galilee. Now for a period of time, it becomes the rabbinic capital of the Galilee. The rabbis are carrying on the movement of Judaism, the whole traditions of Judaism, the oral Torah, the development, all those kinds of things.

That is what will be the rabbinic time period, so we're thinking of things like the Mishnah, the compilation of Jewish legal and halachic things, the Talmuds, and what's fascinating here is that in Sepphoris, which was one of those rabbinic center places, well look what we have. This is the rabbis. These are the rabbis who take very seriously the Torah, and yet here is a representation of a face, and by the way, it's beautifully done.

This is a one panel of a fairly large mosaic floor. Mosaic tiles were used in a very elegant way in buildings that are quite elaborate. Sepphoris is also called now the mosaic capital, so you have a Roman capital, then you have the rabbinic period during which this mosaic and many others were put down.

There's a mosaic of a synagogue floor that is also truly amazing in Sepphoris, but we can't lodge in Sepphoris for coffee. We need to keep going on, so let's take a quick look from Sepphoris, and by the way, it's just across one of those valleys that we see Cana. This is probably the best candidate for the Cana of John chapter 2. Across a lovely valley, here it is right in this location.

There have been some excavations that have been done there within the last decade or so, and we do know that there has been at least evidence of people early on, early on, we're talking fifth, sixth centuries, using this place, using a large cave there, leaving evidence that they were pilgrims, and they were pilgrims coming here specifically because it had some significance with regard to Jesus' ministry in Cana.

Well, we're leaving western Galilee, western lower Galilee at this point, and we want to look around the Sea of Galilee itself now. This is called a number of different things, so let's unpack just a tiny bit of what's going on.

First of all, as we're going to see, oh, bad pun, this is not really a sea because it's small. It's about 13 miles long and maybe seven and a half, eight miles wide at its widest place. So, it has the name of a sea, but really, it's a lake, and there are those who call it the Lake of Tiberias.

That's because there's a major city on the western side, right about here, that's called Tiberias, and that city, by the way, was built by Herod Antipas in honor of Tiberias, no surprise there. But it's also, in addition to being called Galilee, Sea of Galilee, Tiberias, Lake of Tiberias, it also has the name, and most Israelis refer to it this way today, of the Kinneret, the Sea of Kinneret, and we actually see that term in the Gospels as well. So, Galilee, Tiberias, Lake Tiberias, and the Kinneret.

Why is it called Kinneret? Well, the Hebrew word kinor means harp, and if you look at this, it has kind of a harp shape to it. It's wide up here, and then, of course, it narrows down, so it does have that name, Kinneret. Interestingly enough, there is a place up in here that's called that as well.

Let's talk a little bit about some data that have to do with this body of water, and then let's locate major cities around it and what we might want to do talking about Jesus' ministry here in several of those locations. Here's something you want to keep in mind for a narrative that I'm going to bring in shortly. In the Old Testament period, and by the way, this is not just Old Testament Hebrew Bible stuff; this is a wider cultural thing.

Large bodies of water were scary. This is particularly true of seas and oceans. They knew the Mediterranean Sea is a large body of water, and these large bodies of water that were deep, and you never really knew what was inside or down below, represented in their minds chaos, the abyss.

Do you remember when Jesus cast demons into the pigs? They went to the abyss as they went into this sea, so it was something to be feared. They were not really all that sanguine about water and all the kinds of sports that we think of now as water sports. But of course, we mentioned a moment ago Jesus and the fact that he indeed would walk on water and control the sea.

On one of those occasions, when the storms came up, as we said from the west with those winds swirling through the valleys and kicking up the waters of the Sea of Galilee, on one of those occasions, and I believe it's in the Gospel of Matthew, but you can go back and check me on this, it says a storm came up, and the word is the word that we get seismic from, seismos, seismic. This wasn't just any storm, and yet

here you have Jesus controlling that. That's going to draw on a number of Old Testament allusions too, Psalms especially, where we have the Lord God Almighty controlling those seas and waters, so this is another indication of who Jesus is, was in the sight of those who were on the boat with him.

There are a couple more things we want to note: you'll see a G on that plain area on the map, part of that lake, that's the plain of Gennesaret. It takes its name from a small town on the northern edge of that called Gennesaret, so it's the plain of Gennesaret. We also have the plain of Bethsaida, the B is indicating that, so two very agriculturally rich areas.

Again, just think of our principles that we talk about when we talk about this region. We've got limestone areas here, we've got basalt here, we know that both of those weather into extraordinarily good soil, we know that when it rains that stuff is going to flow down here, and so we've got two agriculturally very, very rich areas. Josephus tells us that both of these were very significant in terms of agricultural production.

However, let's notice a couple more cities and then make some notes about what Jesus says about them. Here's Capernaum, about halfway in between the plain of Gennesaret and Bethsaida, maybe a little less than halfway in between. Notice something about its location on the map, and I'm going to come back to this, but it's a political thing that we'll mention with this map because it's helpful.

This area right in here, Lower Galilee, right up to the Jordan Valley, was the Galilee, and in Jesus' day, it was ruled by one of Herod's sons called Herod Antipas. Across in this region here were, well, let's just call them ethnic entities, rather a mixture of them; Trachonitis, Iteria, and Golanitis were the place names, or I should say the region names, and that was an area that did not have Jewish inhabitants in it. There you have Philip the Tetrarch ruling.

So on this map, we're going to see that as Jesus, I'm going to come back to those two in a moment by the way, but as Jesus moved his base of operations from Sepphoris area, where Rome controlled, to Capernaum, which is really close to a border, this is a geopolitical border here between Herod Antipas' territory and Philip the Tetrarch's territory, he's coming really close to an area where you might want to have, well, maybe, say, a tax collector, wouldn't you know, and then also our major route. We've talked about our bell pass, we've talked about our route, we've talked about going this direction. Capernaum is going to be in that kind of location as well.

So, Jesus is not moving to a backwater when he leaves the sphere of control of Sepphoris and the little town of Nazareth and goes to Capernaum, far from it, but there's more to say here. Chorazin and Bethsaida, those three, notice that Chorazin is a little way up that red area; that's actually a basalt sill that's there. Bethsaida has a question mark next to it because there's an ongoing discussion in terms of just where

exactly, which site is Bethsaida, and I'm not going to weigh in on either one of those, but it is in that general area.

Here's what Jesus says in Matthew 11 about these cities. Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. And now think, this is really the unbelieving triangle of cities.

As I said a moment ago, Jesus moved his base of operations from Nazareth to Capernaum, and so that is where he's spending lots of time. The folks that lived in that proximity, that whole area nearby there, would have seen over and over and over again, they would have heard over and over again from those crowds that gathered around Jesus what he was doing, and yet apparently they are not believing. Let's keep reading.

I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment, and you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths. Hang on to that in a moment. We're coming back to that depths business with the sea and adding something to it.

If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom. Well, as we know, the thread throughout the Old Testament, not just in Genesis 19, but in Isaiah chapter 1, in Ezekiel, we see it over and over again. Sodom is the thing that characterizes or epitomizes evil in every sphere, but if they'd been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day.

I tell you, it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you. When you put together the implications that are wound around Tyre and Sidon and Sodom and then bring it into this context, you see how powerful this rebuke is, especially in the context of no, you will go down to the depths. Well, let's just draw together some of the things we've already said in terms of the data with regard to the Sea of Galilee or the Kinneret or the Lake of Tiberias.

I'm saying approximately 700 feet below sea level because this varies. It depends actually when we're talking about the surface of this body of water in terms of whether they've been under a drought, which has been the case off and on, and especially for the last 15 or 20 years, it's been bad. In fact, it's this year, and I speak in 2020, that finally, the level of the Kinneret is coming close to where it really should be.

At any rate, it is approximately 700 feet below sea level. Here's another really interesting thing. The Sea of Galilee is basically fresh water.

It's fed by the Jordan River, and we're going to talk more about the springs that are the sources of the Jordan River, but it also, in the northwestern corner, kind of located that somewhere near Capernaum maybe, and around that corner, as well as the southeastern shore, there are salt springs. And when you have those salt springs bubbling up, they're not toxic salts. They're actually the kind of things that nourish schools of fish.

And so, especially in that area from, let's just say, the plain of Gennesaret well around past Capernaum, lots of fishing. Of course, there exists other ways as well, but there is lots of fishing. Well, I mentioned the low level of the Sea of Galilee a moment ago, and I want to come back to that because in the last, as I said, 15 or 20 years, the level of the sea has dropped.

In fact, in the 1980s, it was drastically down, and so there was a very, very interesting man. I had the opportunity and the privilege actually of meeting him in the early 2000s. His name was Mendel Noon, and he was a native Galilean.

He had actually grown up in a kibbutz in Geb, which is located on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. As the waters went down, I mean, this guy was a kibbutznik, right? So, he worked on the kibbutz, but in his spare time, he loved exploring the Sea of Galilee. He went around tracking all these little first-century harbors.

I actually have a diagram of them. I don't have it with this pretty embedded in this particular presentation, but he diagrammed at least 30 little basalt harbors that from the shore go out maybe 15, 20 feet and then make a little bit of a hook. It's wonderful.

As you walk along the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee, and you can do that today, you can still see some of them, although now the water level has risen, so you don't see them nearly as much because there remains from 2,000 years ago. But you used to be able to see walking along those things, and there are diagrams of them. So that's fascinating.

You've got that. He also, by the way, found all sorts of weights for nets. They're little basalt things that have holes drilled in them.

So, this gives an indication of the fishing industry, especially in that northwestern corner. You know that it's there, salt springs, but also those first century harbors that we found. Well, I mentioned a moment ago, but just want to reiterate this because it's going to be important for us.

Both of these plains were agriculturally productive and well-known for their olive oil production. Already mentioned as well that geopolitically, this is the border of Herod

Antipas' territory, and that means, just put it all together, there's going to be lots of commerce because it is agriculturally productive. You can sell this stuff.

Travel, the route of the International Highway went pretty close to there, and taxation near the border. So just to draw that together with what we've already said, Jesus, after that debacle in Luke chapter 4, he moved his base of operations to Capernaum. We see it in the parallel in Matthew and also John 2.12. Interesting, that's right after he changed the water into wine in the first 11 verses of John 2. It doesn't mean he totally deserted Cana.

As we've said earlier, John 4 talks about his being back there. Well, let's do a little bit more with this, and I'm going to quote some passages of scripture and then kind of draw together a few more things that have to do with Jesus' ministry in this northwest corner. These are little vignettes.

I'm not going to be saying everything that's here, but just some vignettes. So, said this already, leaving Nazareth, Jesus went and lived in Capernaum, and then Matthew drew in, as Matthew was wont to do Old Testament, didn't he? Land of Naphtali. Ah, well, just a reminder that as those tribal inheritances got their inheritance, the four that were north of the Jezreel Valley included Naphtali, and more specifically, Naphtali is the that borders the northwestern corner of the Sea of Galilee.

That's Naphtali's tribal inheritance. Hang on to that, because it means that those cliffs of Arbel that we talked about are going to be in that tribal inheritance. The place we've talked about called Hazor that's farther north, it's all going to be what was the Old Testament tribal inheritance of Naphtali.

So, when Matthew talks about Jesus moving to Capernaum, then he says that to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah, the people living in darkness have seen a great light. That's where we started out our presentation this morning, with Isaiah chapter 9, verses 1 and 2. Now, let's pull a little history into this narrative from what we know from Josephus, and permit me just about three minutes to give a little backdrop to this. When we started talking about Herod, we were reminded that Herod was not fully Jewish.

He was Idumean. Folks didn't like him terribly much. The family 's father was Antipater.

Antipater got in really good with the Romans, but, you know, Idumeans were not viewed all that kindly. Herod had been governor of Galilee, but at one point he has to leave. He flees to Rome.



He's there for a good amount of time. As we've already said, he absorbs a fair amount of Greco-Roman culture and pretty much is swayed by it, but then the Roman senate appoints him as king. The date is 40 BC.

It takes him three years to win his kingdom, and those are three bloody, terrible years, and one of the things that happens, Josephus tells us all about it. By the way, Josephus's Jewish Wars is definitely a must-read, but Josephus tells us that as part of Herod's attempt to win his kingdom, first of all, he's going to attack Sepphoris, and he's going to march there through a snowstorm, interestingly enough, but then he moves east because he wants to take this area of the north, and particularly Galilee. Josephus tells us about his battle at Arbel.

He tells us that it was just a rugged battle because there are Jewish defenders. This place called Arbel is at an area, and you've seen those cliffs, and I'm going to show you close-ups in just a moment, but it's limestone, so limestone has lots of caves. There are caves in the cliff faces.

You can still see them today and walk up to them. The Jewish defenders, because they were being overrun by this force of Herod's, went and hid in the caves, and Josephus tells us how, as they were hiding, Herod was ordering them to come out, and finally, he sent his soldiers down in great, big, wooden platform cages, and they pulled the people out of the caves and slaughtered them. By the way, even though it's after our time of Jesus' ministry, the same kind of battle took place when the Romans came through, led by Vespasian.

They did the same thing, and Josephus tells us, in that battle near the Arbel and the Sea of Galilee, the blood of the sea ran red. Sorry, the waters of the sea ran red with blood. It was such a horrible time.

So, this is a violent area just a generation before Jesus arrives on the scene. So here we are with Arbel. Think of those cliffs.

Here is one side. That's the north side. In a short time, you're going to see the south side as well, but this whole cliff face full of those caves, and it's from this surface that they seem to have lowered down those cages full of Roman soldiers who were slaughtering the people.

But isn't that interesting that, as Matthew refers to this, he not only quotes people living in darkness who have seen a great light, but everybody who knew that passage, and here I'm going to just add in a little hermeneutical thing for our purposes? Sometimes, we accuse people of proof-texting, and that is usually a problem, but back in Matthew's day, when folks quoted a verse of scripture, they presumed that their audience knew the context. They presumed that.

We don't usually. It's one of the shames of us. We don't learn whole contexts, but the whole context of Matthew's quote of this bit of Isaiah is the end, well actually it works all the way from Isaiah 7 through 11.

I'm not going to expand on that, but you go back read that whole thing because it starts with a child being born, and by the time we get to Isaiah 9, we've had a stunning chapter in chapter 8, which has a repeated refrain of God with us, God with us, God with us, Emmanuel, and then we have in chapter 9, especially verse 6, for unto us a child is born, a son is given, and among the many, many titles that show up in those two verses is Prince of Peace. Think of how that resonates in this area, the land of Naphtali, which had been such a battleground and would continue to be a battleground. Again, as the immediate backdrop for Jesus' ministry there and Matthew's reference, you've got the Herodian backdrop, that in the future would come Vespasian, and in the far future would come the Crusaders fighting for the same area and being defeated by Salaf ad-Din.

Well, that's one vignette. Mention the fishing industry, and we need to pick up on that just a little bit. The disciples, you know this, were fishermen.

They fished at night, that's nice to know, but here's the main point. Luke chapter 5 is something you want to go back to and review when your time comes because this is Jesus calling them. This is going to focus on Peter, because when he goes and addresses them in terms of where they've been fishing and whether they've had success and so forth and so on, they say, we've worked hard all night.

That was our custom, as we've said. They need to fish at that time. Caught nothing.

Well, Jesus tells them how to go about fishing, and they make a catch, but here's what's interesting. In the context of Luke chapter 5, when Peter sees what happens, he says, oh, depart from me because I'm a sinful man, and we can kind of put that together and think, yeah, right. He's suddenly realizing that if Jesus can see into the sea, as it were, and figure out where to cast the net, Jesus can see into his heart.

Now, in God's mercy, Jesus does draw Peter into his gathering of disciples, and Peter will indeed follow him, and Jesus makes them fishers of men. But let's push this fishing thing just a little bit further because it's kind of interesting. Here on the right, as archaeologists, we're working in a place called Magdala.

Sadly, we're not going to visit that. There's been some really interesting work done there and some things found from the first century synagogue, but they found this wonderful little mosaic, which is a depiction of what a boat might have looked like. Yes, it's in mosaic, so it's a little bit crude, but here then has been somebody who's constructed a bit of a model in terms of what that might be.

Now, those are two depictions, one two-dimensional, the other three-dimensional. But in 1986, and here we get to go back to the low water level of the Sea of Galilee, not only did our friend Mendel Nun find weights for nets, and not only did he find first-century harbors, but there was a set of brothers at a kibbutz across the sea from where Mendel Nun lived, a place called Nof Ginosar, that were out looking around for coins. Because the water was down, they figured, hey, they'll find some interesting valuable coins in the mud.

And what did they find? Well, they found the remnants of a first century boat, 10 meters long, discovered in 1986. The process by which they got it out of the mud safely brought it because, of course, it had been buried, and once you exposed it to air, it would have disintegrated immediately. So, they kept it watered during the time they were digging the mud away.

They encased it in polyurethane to move it. They put it into a chemical wash so that chemicals could come and replace the actual wood itself. So now you have petrified stuff.

And here's what you have. This is the Galilee boat. This is what's left of it.

It was definitely a first-century boat. Again, the process from finding it in the mud and taking it out and getting it to this point, this may not look terribly elaborate, but it gives us a sense. Of course, this wasn't the boat that Jesus and his disciples used, but this is the kind of craft they would have been in.

Just recently, when I was there, I had a chance to meet Yuval again. He's one of the brothers. The other's gone, but Yuval, who was part of that tremendous discovery and still lives to tell about it, is kind of fun.

Well, moving along, that's the fishing industry and just a little bit about it. We also have, as Josephus describes it, our plain of Gennesaret right here, the last little northwestern edge of the sea. The region's natural properties and beauty are remarkable.

There's not a plant that its fertile soil refuses to produce. Its cultivators, in fact, grow every species and this is an all, but among those, of course, are going to be the olives and the grapes. That's the first century.

That's Josephus' day. So now let's come to Capernaum and the work that has been done at Capernaum. If you look at this photograph, you're seeing an olive press and I won't wax long on how it works, other than to say that the olive mash would be put in here, the olives would be put into here in that cavity.

You see a stone, which is called a millstone. Through that hole, a long pole would go out and it would be pushed by animals or perhaps people. Then, once this stuff is all squashed up, you put it into the equivalent of a burlap bag, put it on here, weigh it down, and then you have your olive oil extract.

What's really interesting here is that in the very small site of Capernaum, and it's relatively small, it's been excavated by the Franciscans, but a very extraordinarily large number of these presses has been found. So, there are those who say, you know, the people at Capernaum were not only doing olive pressing for themselves, but perhaps there was actually a bit of an industry going on in that context. So, let's just pause for a moment.

In Capernaum, we've got a place close to the border, we've got a place that's a fishing industry for all those reasons we've mentioned, and we have now possibly an oil pressing industry. In that context, let's just visit Matthew 18, which is a chapter that's absolutely wonderful for many reasons, but here is one of Jesus' very compelling statements. If anyone causes one of these little ones who believes in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.

And just, of course, a reminder that you've got in their minds the sea represented the abyss. Jesus used his teaching tools that were around him. This was a teachable moment for them because that would be sudden, sure death in frightening circumstances.

And anyone who causes a little one who believes in me to sin, better that. Well, a couple more things we need to say about Capernaum. We could go on and on here.

In John chapter 6, after Jesus and his disciples, Jesus has fed the 5,000, they come across the sea, he walks out to meet them, and then they arrive in a place called Gennesar and they're going to walk to Capernaum, which they do. And he preaches in John chapter 6 a very compelling sermon. I encourage you to read the whole thing.

It's just an astonishing sermon in the synagogue at Capernaum. The text says he preached this while he was in the synagogue at Capernaum. Is it this synagogue? No, this is a later building, but you can't see it closely. At the foundation of that building is a basalt dark stone synagogue.

This is limestone, it's white, it would stand out, be very impressive in terms of the looks of that particular synagogue. But underneath it is a first-century foundation. And if you go inside, there's also a little corner where we can look down and see the basalt, dark stone, first-century foundation of the synagogue.

So, this would have been the footprint on which this later synagogue was built. I may come back to that in a moment, but in the meantime, we have to move from this point in this direction. Now we're looking across at the synagogue at some structures here.

Again, footprints of dwellings. And let's see if we can get some lessons from those particular dwellings that might help us with a passage of scripture or two. This is called insula housing, and you can read as well as I can.

These are places where you would live, dwelling for extended family. You had interconnected units, right? And so, let's say a family, the eldest son gets married, brings home a bride. Catch those terms, you know where I'm going with this.

Brings home a bride, you'd simply add on to this. It would all be around kind of a courtyard, but you could just add on, and you could have as many as 15 rooms as you continue to add on to this insula housing. Is this only in Capernaum? No, you see it in all these villages that represent Jewish villages in the Galilee at that time.

You see it in a place called Katsrin, you see it in Korazin. Insula housing was sort of the template for housing in those days. Don't lose sight of the fact that there was a courtyard too, which you know we could draw in Jesus healing, crowds gathering, so many in the courtyard that they had to bring a person up on the roof and lower him.

But let's come back to our extended family and a family growing by a bride being brought in. Isn't it interesting that in John chapter 14, Jesus says, I go to prepare a place for you. My father's house has many rooms.

I go to prepare a place for you. Where I am, you will be as well. And this is another way in which we can think about how the archaeology even helps us understand that cultural context into which Jesus spoke theological truth.

Because the whole idea of adding to the family, a known concept. The whole idea of a bridegroom preparing a place for a bride to come home with the father and with the family, very much illustrated by what's going on even with this structural component here. Well, moving on to one other thing at Capernaum.

That picture on the left is really awful, but it's old and it's one we took, so I'm leaving it there because it's really important as well. This is the foundation back in the 1970s, the photograph was taken, of a dwelling. And it's a dwelling that had quite a bit of history.

Here, by the way, is what has happened to it since. Here's the insula housing we were just looking at, and here is the chapel that has been built over this location,

which is the same as that. Why is it built over it? Well, it's preserving a very significant tradition.

Early on, starting at the first century, we have a house there that seemed to have had pilgrims visiting it. They leave graffiti. By the fourth century, it is expanded into a house church.

By the fifth and sixth centuries, it becomes an eight-sided commemorative church. So, the suggestion is that we may well be dealing with the house of Peter's mother-in-law, which is where Jesus laid his head when he came to Capernaum, and it certainly became early on a place of pilgrimage. Now here's a hypothetical statement at this point, and you can like this or not.

There's some discussion in terms of that synagogue I showed you a moment ago, because by the time that synagogue was built, and there's all kinds of reasons for dating it as they dated in the fourth century, most synagogue structures were much less ornate on the outside. They moved their beauty and their decorations inside, such as those mosaic floors, which we have seen one example of. But this one is, I mean, it is really out there.

It's in your face. It's evident. And maybe the possibility is this.

Maybe by the time you have a significant Christian community in this place called Capernaum, Jesus' hometown, important place. By the way, we have a pilgrim. Her name was Egeria, who in the fourth century talks about visiting this whole area, and she names places.

So, we know it's a place of pilgrimage very clearly. Coming back to the synagogue, possible suggestion, and I'm not the only one that throws this out there. Possibly the folks here in this basically Christian community, knowing the value of having pilgrims come and visit the synagogue where Jesus preached such a compelling sermon as is recorded in John 6, perhaps they built that also to be part of the pilgrimage endeavor.

Well, we're going to move along because we have to finish this at some point or other. Making kind of a quick chronological statement between the Galilean ministry, which we've been talking about, and the cities around the Sea of Galilee, that would be in this area, to Jesus' what's often called the retirement ministry. That doesn't mean he's putting his feet up.

It means he leaves basically Herod Antipas' territory because Herod Antipas is kind of out to get him. Jesus calls him that fox. So, during this time period, he will indeed go to Tyre and Sidon to be sure, get up there, and then he comes over, and he's in this area.

Now, most of us probably know the term Decapolis, ten cities, the ten cities that were Greco-Roman cities that were by and large east of the Rift Valley and a number of them up in here. We're going to have Jesus at least part of the time in that Decapolis area right there, but then he's going to go up to Caesarea Philippi, and that's where we want to spend our next time with Jesus at this place called Caesarea Philippi. On the way there, we're going to take a detour back to the Old Testament.

On the way there, we have to get from here up to Caesarea Philippi, and there are a couple of really important things we need to say en route and see en route. So, let's see what we want to do. He's going to make the Transfiguration after the Confession, probably Mount Hermon, but we have a bit of a flashback to the Old Testament.

I will do this quite quickly because our focus is Jesus and the Galilee, but I would be remiss if we didn't talk a little bit about this place called Hazor. It is important because Jabin king of Hazor, Jabin king of Hazor, seems to be a dynastic name because as Joshua and the Israelites conquer the land, Jabin is an opponent up north. Also in the period of the Judges with Deborah, Judges 4 and 5, Jabin is an opponent up north.

So Hazor, a tremendously important place. I cannot say enough about it, but I won't say it here. Here we've got Hazor right up there.

As we make our way past Hazor, we're climbing up quite an elevation. There's going to be a Hula Valley here, and then we're going to go to Mount Hermon. But before we do that, let's look a little bit at some of the things.

I have only two slides here, but I want to just make a note. When the archaeologists started digging at Hazor, and that too is such a long and fascinating story, first they came across, well not first, but the first important remains were Israelite remains from the Israelite period. But they knew that there was more there because extra-biblical texts talked about Hazor.

Extra-biblical texts talked about Hazor as a major, major site during the late bronze Canaanite period, right? So, they knew something was there. What they did was they finished excavating the Israelite stuff, tried to discuss whether it was Solomonic or after that, and then they moved every stone, kind of like moving the temples of Ramses or the memories of Ramses in Egypt. They moved the stones, and they started digging down below.

They were digging into the late and middle bronze era, and they found the remains of an astonishing temple here at Hazor. Basalt, that's our local building stone, so we see it here. We see it all along here.

You see some stuff on top of it. You also see some mud bricks. But the really interesting thing is those are the Israelite remains.

The really interesting thing about that temple, and I can only say a couple of issues that are important here. As they excavated it, they found evidence of destruction. They found evidence of a cataclysmic destruction.

Apparently, this place was burned and it was burned so severely that those basalt stones that I showed you a moment ago, in fact, let's go back there. These basalt stones, this by the way is volcanic material. It doesn't just crumble, but they had cracks.

They were shattered. The basalt had been broken apart very seriously. They found layers of ash that were about three feet thick.

They did an analysis on this stuff and estimated that the temperatures of the conflagration at the time of this fire would have been upwards of 2300 degrees Fahrenheit. This was a horrible burn, and of course the question is, who did it? Philistines? A little far east for Philistine and Persian. Israelites? Maybe.

Canaanites? Probably not, because along with the burn level and so forth, they also found the destruction of a number of figures that were certainly serving as god and goddess figures, and probably Canaanites would not go around intentionally destroying those kinds of things. So, maybe. The dates don't work out really well, but on the other hand, sometimes doing dating with archaeology is a little bit of a question mark.

So, we can at least put that out there that Hazor did indeed suffer serious burning. After the time of the conflagration, the burning of that whole Bronze Age settlement, and by the way, just a note, Bronze Age Hazor was 210 acres. Are you remembering how big Jerusalem was? A mere 11 acres? And here's Hazor being 210 acres in its Bronze Age time frame.

Obviously, it's going to be resettled after that, but it's going to have a much smaller population size from those points on. Well, you know, one of the things that archaeologists have been looking for over and over again at Hazor is an archive, because they found some tablets. I think they're up to 11 tablets, but they haven't found the archive.

That's still a quest. Here, we're looking across the Hula Valley. This is the reposition of some of the Israelite remains, but we're looking at snow-covered Mount Hermon up here, and that's where we want to go next.



There's the same picture. Here is a picture of the headwaters, one of the areas where the headwaters come bubbling out. I'm going to return to that one in a moment, but let's get some data.

The fact that we have a very high elevation here means that, oh, there's lots of precipitation. Snow-covered a good part of the year. It's got a hard limestone foundation, got springs at its base, which means there are a number of bubbling out headwaters, which will coalesce to be the Jordan River eventually.

The two that are important for us are at Dan. That's an Old Testament site. I'll come back to that in just a bit.

And Caesarea, which is our main focus, which is going to be in non-Jewish territory. More to say on that in a moment. First of all, near Dan.

This, by the way, is a karstic spring. If I'm remembering my data correctly, this is hard for me to wrap my mind around, but we're talking about 5,000 gallons per second that bubble up out of the ground at this point, so it's astonishing. At Dan, just really fast, we have a middle bronze gate.

We had one of those at Ashkelon. Here's another one, and you're saying, okay, so what? Well, so what is that Abraham, when he went up to fetch Lot and rescue him, his nephew Lot, this gate would have been probably standing at that point in time or nearly about that time. Moving a little forward, we have our Israelite gate area.

This is the footprint of it. This is a podium on which a king or a ruler or somebody like a judge would be stationed as someone came in the gate. But here is our connection to, believe it or not, the New Testament.

Because when the tribe of Dan, or at least part of the tribe of Dan, migrated from its tribal allotment in the Shephelah area and they came up here, they built a place of worship. We know right from the end of Judges 18 that they brought some idols along with them. They belonged to a guy named Micah from Ephraim earlier on, and they built a place of worship.

And, of course, that became sort of the foundation, that's the figurative foundation, for what Jeroboam, son of Nebat, would do when he set up golden calves. One at Dan, one at Bethel. But this continued to be a place of worship, false worship.

You have right into the Hellenistic period evidence of a worship area. The people who have made this into a national park have actually put up a metal frame that represents the dimensions of a horned altar, so you can kind of see what that would be like. Now, why is this important? Because Dan is really close to Caesarea Philippi.

They're both at the foothills of Mount Hermon. Worship often takes place, especially in pagan contexts, in the presence of water and water sources. Dan was already functioning, had been so for centuries, as a Jewish place of worship.

So, when this becomes a Hellenized area, we're going to have a, what should we say, competing development in terms of a worship site. The title there is Caesarea Philippi, and we know that from our New Testament. But long before 1st century, 2nd and 1st century BC, we have places of worship here.

Because, as with Dan, there was a spring, and 2,000 years ago the water would gush out of this huge cave. It's called the Cave of Pan, if you want to think of how to spell it, P-A-N, pronounce it Pan. Pan was a deity.

Pan was a deity apparently brought in from Greece by Hellenizers. So, this is called the Cave of Pan. If you look very carefully, you'll see some additional niches here.

You're going to see a platform, and if we were to go farther to the right, there are going to be additional things on the rock face. All along, you see them carved in here, and they continue this whole expanse. Because not only was Pan worshipped here, apparently Zeus was worshipped here, apparently Nemesis was worshipped here.

So, we've got a temple complex at the base of what is a massive cliff way up here. By the way, the water no longer gushes out of that cave, obviously with seismic changes. This is an unstable area in terms of shifting and faulting.

The water now comes out down in this area. But a few more things, worship of gods, Pan at least, Zeus and Nemesis, perhaps the others. We do know, again, bless Josephus, he tells us so many things.

Herod the Great again built a temple to Augustus somewhere in this vicinity. Some folks used to think it was right in here, maybe, maybe somewhere else nearby. There are other temples and temple complexes close by.

It is, after all, an area of water. Herod and other pagan worshippers were drawn to water. Herod Philip, Philip the Tetrarch, is really the proper thing there, he enlarged the city when he took over this area in control.

He enlarges it, and of course, he not only has a temple to Augustus or Caesar Augustus, but he'll add his name, and hence we have Herod Philippi. And therefore it was already, by the time Jesus gets here with disciples, it is a place of burgeoning pagan worship, all kinds of things. We see it now, and occasionally, there are flocks of tourists around there, but you can use your imagination and think of flocks of worshippers coming.

Just to get some idea in terms of what this might have looked like, a large temple, whether it's the Augustus Temple or a different one in front of that great cave of Pan. By the way, all kinds of coins and so forth with inscriptions on them are found there. We have another temple complex and then some things over here as well, and then an artist's representation of the huge cliff face at the base of Mount Hermon.

Going way off up that direction is going to be Mount Hermon. Well, this is interesting because this is where Jesus brings his disciples as kind of the tail end of that retirement ministry. In Matthew 16 records, who do people say that I am? And the disciples say this, that, the other thing.

One says Jeremiah or one of the prophets. And then there's that wonderful exchange, isn't there? But before we do that, I'm quoting a person named David Padfield, who said this in 1996, because now it puts together the gospel, Jesus's question, and Peter's answer with the context. Jesus was standing in an area littered with the temples of the Syrian gods, a place where the white marble splendor of the home of Caesar worship dominated the landscape.

And 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. Peter's declaration, you are the Christ, the son of the living God, challenged the stone-dead gods. But there's one other thing going on, too, that is before this, and I urge you to go back and read Matthew 16 in its entirety.

The disciples said, oh, one of the prophets, Moses, Elijah, Jesus is pushing them, too. He's not just pushing back against these Syrian Roman gods. He's pushing back against their own understandings of who he is because he is going to be, in their minds, lodged at prophet or something unless they have to go beyond that.

When Peter says, you're the Messiah, the son of the living God, he is definitely on the right track. But even he doesn't have it quite right, as you remember. It's not going to be long before he challenges Jesus' claim that Jesus has to go suffer, die, and be raised again.

So, it takes a long time. At any rate, we want to say one more thing about the context as well. Not just that this is a stone face full of niches that are representative of dead gods, but Jesus uses the word *petra*.

And a *petra*, he's going to call Peter rock, that's true, but this is a different kind of rock here. It's a metaphor. Describes such a bluff.

And let me just throw some possibilities into this. You can like them or not, but let's try it and see. I would suggest that maybe, as Jesus is talking about building his

church on this rock, those of you who are Greek scholars can push back on this as much as you want because the prepositions are a little flexible.

Epi is the one that's here. It may not refer to Peter or to Peter's confession. I know there's a huge ecclesiastical discussion that sometimes goes on.

But I'm going to throw the opportunity out there to think about the following. Perhaps we can translate that preposition as against. And if we do, then Jesus is saying something powerful with regard to the church.

The church will then not be on the defense. The church is going to be confronting all instances of pagan false worship against this rock and all that it represents. The church will be on the move, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

And then I just throw in this next thing as well. There is a rabbinic tradition. It's a fascinating one.

If you're interested, I can get you the reference that when the Messiah comes, the gates of Hades at Caesarea will collapse. Well, that's kind of fun. Now I realize that's written down centuries later.

But in this, we do see a whole series of reversals. Jesus compels them to contrast his own identity and person with pagan gods. As I said a moment ago, he's going to be teaching about suffering, but he's also going to be teaching about resurrection.

In that context, we have Jesus, who, on the one hand, says, Peter, you know what you're doing. On the other hand, Peter, you don't know what you're saying. And then Jesus will say, take up your cross, follow me, saving and losing lives.

Well, just a couple of things with regard to the transfiguration, and then we will stop this lecture. Matthew 17 follows directly on that passage we've just been reflecting on. And so the suggestion is that it's taking place on Mount Hermon, even though Mount Tabor is often thought of as being the Mount of Transfiguration.

In Moses and Elijah, the present with Jesus, the veil of his human flesh is ripped open basically so that they can see. I've used that figuratively. I would suggest that if we put our chronology together, this is indeed taking place in the fall, which would be the time of the Feast of Tabernacles, which makes perfect sense then for Peter to say in his usual exuberance, let's build booths for all of you if that time frame works out just about right.

But of course, more important than that is the voice from heaven that says, this is my beloved son, listen to him. And it's really a centerpiece, isn't it? From here on in, especially as we move into the Gospel of Luke, Luke will tell us at the end of this

transfiguration episode, Jesus set his face to go to Jerusalem. Well, that's only the introduction to the Galilee.

But with that, we have to stop, and we will pick up with a quick sweep through Transjordan in the next lecture.

This is Dr. Elaine Phillips in her teaching on Introduction to Biblical Studies. This is session 9, The Galilee Regional Study.