

Capernaum – City of Our Lord – Pt. 1

INTRODUCTION:

1. It was recently suggested to me that a good topic for sermons would be the study of the various places mentioned *often* in the Bible.
 - A. So, I decided to give it a try.
 - B. After doing a few searches in my bible programs, I decided to focus on **Capernaum**.
2. I chose Capernaum not only because it is mentioned *often* in the N.T., but also because it was where Jesus *chose to live* and *do much of His work* while here on the earth.
 - A. They were blessed to hear a great deal of Jesus' teaching.
 - B. They were blessed to see and experience many miracles performed by Jesus.
 - C. What did with these very special blessings presents some important lessons for us.

BODY:

I. Facts about Capernaum:

A. General Facts:

1. Capernaum was a small Jewish fishing and agricultural community located on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee, near the borders of **Zebulun** and **Naphtali**.
2. Capernaum was the metropolis, or chief city, of Galilee due in part to its trade.
 - a. Its trade was boosted by the existence of an ancient roadway and major trade route running through Capernaum called "The Way of the Sea."
 - b. This route brought people and money to Capernaum, as well as **taxation money for the Romans**.
3. Despite being only a half mile long at best, it was crowded city, which according to Josephus, was inhabited by possibly as many as 15,000 people, while others say only 1,500.
4. Being a coastal town, most of its residents were **fishermen**.

B. Biblical facts:

1. Capernaum is mentioned 16 times in the N.T., but only in the gospels, and *not* in the O.T.
2. Its name means "city of Nahum," which **Thayer's** says means "city of comfort."
3. Capernaum is the city Jesus *chose* to live in when he left Nazareth and was beginning his public ministry. It was later called "His own city" (Matt. 9:1).
4. At least five of the original twelve apostles lived in or near Capernaum.
 - a. The brothers James and John and Andrew and Peter, who were *fisherman*.
 - b. Matthew, who was a *tax collector* for the Romans.

II. The Significance of Jesus' move to Capernaum:

A. Jesus' move to Capernaum was important because it fulfilled biblical prophecy.

1. Isaiah prophesied of this move (Isa. 9:1-2, 6 – NASB – "But there will be no more gloom for her who was in anguish; in earlier times He treated the land of **Zebulun** and the land of **Naphtali** with contempt, but later on He shall **make it glorious**, by the way of the sea, on the other side of Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles. ² The people who walk in darkness will see a great light; those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them...⁶ For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.").
 2. The land of Zebulun and Naphtali:
 - a. Would know gloom, anguish, and death. This was because they were the first to bear the brunt of the cruel and destructive invasion of Assyria under Tiglath-pileser (722 BC).
 - b. Would not remain in gloom and anguish, seeing these regions would see a great light that would dispel their darkness, gloom, and the shadow of death!
- B. This prophecy was fulfilled by Jesus' move from Nazareth to Capernaum (Matt. 4:12-16 – "Now when Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, He departed to Galilee. ¹³ **And leaving**

Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in **the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali**,¹⁴ that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying:¹⁵ “The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles:¹⁶ The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death Light has dawned.”).

1. Jesus’s move to Capernaum caused God’s light of *visitation* and *salvation* to shine on them, being the child of Isa. 9:6 born to the world who is Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God,
2. Capernaum was blessed with the special light of the Messiah, or “*Immanuel*,” “God with us,” living among them in the flesh (Matt. 1:23).
3. God’s own Son walked on their streets, shopped in their markets, taught in their synagogue, and did mighty works before their eyes. What an amazing blessing for such a small place!

III. Jesus’ teaching in Capernaum:

- A. It was in the area of Capernaum that Jesus began his teaching concerning **the kingdom of God**:
 1. After His temptation in the wilderness Jesus returned to Galilee (Lk. 4:14-15 – “Then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news of Him went out through all the surrounding region.¹⁵ And He taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all.”).
 2. They were the first to hear that the kingdom of God was near (Mark 1:14-15 – “Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the **gospel of the kingdom of God**,¹⁵ and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.”).
- B. When Jesus *entered* Capernaum and taught the people:
 1. His teaching was perceived to be unique and powerful (Mark 1:21-22 – “Then they went into **Capernaum**, and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and taught.²² And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.”).
 - a. Jesus taught like no other, drawing his authority and words *not* from the traditions of the rabbis, etc., as did the scribes, but from being God Himself.
 - b. The authority behind His message was “I say to you.” That was enough!
 2. He taught of the spiritual nature of His Messiahship and kingdom (John 6:24-29 – “when the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they also got into boats and **came to Capernaum**, seeking Jesus.²⁵ And when they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, “Rabbi, when did You come here?”²⁶ Jesus answered them and said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.²⁷ Do not labor for the food which perishes, **but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you**, because God the Father has set His seal on Him.²⁸ Then they said to Him, “What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?”²⁹ Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.”).
 - a. As I discussed recently, these people wanted Jesus to be their Christ and king believing He would provide daily bread so they could be fed *without working*!
 - b. Here Jesus rebuked and exhorted them to seek Him as *the bread of life* that *came down from heaven* which *provides eternal life*, not for physical bread or other carnal reasons!
 - i. He taught them that one can only be drawn to Him by the Father through *hearing and learning from the gospel* (John 6:44-45 – “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.⁴⁵ It is written in the prophets, and they shall all be **taught by God**.’ Therefore everyone who has **heard** and **learned** from the Father comes to Me.”).

- ii. These disciples in Capernaum were the *first* of many who upon hearing of the spiritual purpose of Christ and His coming refused to keep following Him (Jn. 6:66)!
- c. Sadly enough, people continue to reject it today, choosing rather to attempt to draw the world to Christ with food and other fleshly appeals, rejecting the power of the gospel!
- 3. Jesus taught His disciples concerning being God's Son (Mt. 17:24-27 – "When they had come to Capernaum, those who received the temple tax came to Peter and said, "Does your Teacher not pay the temple tax?" ²⁵ He said, "Yes." And when he had come into the house, Jesus anticipated him, saying, "What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth take customs or taxes, from their sons or from strangers?" ²⁶ Peter said to Him, "From strangers." Jesus said to him, "**Then the sons are free.**" ²⁷ Nevertheless, lest we offend them, go to the sea, cast in a hook, and take the fish that comes up first. And when you have opened its mouth, you will find a piece of money; take that and give it to them for Me and you."").
 - a. The temple tax was commanded by **God** through Moses, so Peter assume even Jesus would pay it (Ex. 30:13).
 - b. Jesus taught him that being the Messiah meant he was the Son of God, the Almighty God, Immanuel, God with us, which meant He was exempt from the tax!
 - i. Jesus proved His *Godhood* by *reading Peter's mind* about the temple tax question and by knowing that the fish would have a coin in its mouth!
 - ii. Jesus also taught them the wonderful nature of God by *sacrificing this liberty* for the good of others, even as He would do in dying on the cross for sinners (Phil. 2:5-8 – "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. ⁸ Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."").
- 4. Jesus taught His disciple concerning who is the greatest in the Kingdom (Mark 9:33-37 – "Then He came to Capernaum. And when He was in the house He asked them, "What was it you disputed among yourselves on the road?" ³⁴ But they kept silent, for on the road they had disputed among themselves who would be the greatest. ³⁵ And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all." ³⁶ Then He took a little child and set him in the midst of them. And when He had taken him in His arms, He said to them, ³⁷ "Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me."").
 - a. The disciples had quickly forgotten that Jesus had just told them that He must **die** to be King, showing their carnal view of His kingdom was wrong.
 - b. For, the greatest in the kingdom puts service to others above self, no vice-versa (Phi. 2:3-4 – "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. ⁴ Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others."").

CONCLUSION:

1. If the history of Capernaum just stopped here...
 - A. With Capernaum only hearing that Jesus had performed the miracle of turning the water to wine at Cana of Galilee some 16.5 miles away (Jn. 2)?
 - B. With Jesus' coming and living there *in the flesh* and fulfilling prophecy by this move?
 - C. With the light of Jesus' teaching being shed upon these people?
 - D. **Would the people of Capernaum have had enough evidence to sway them to believe?**
2. The answer:
 - A. Not every Jewish town got to experience Jesus and His miracles! Some only heard of them.

- i. Jesus praised those who believe without seeing (John 20:29 – “Jesus said to him, “Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”).
 - ii. Jesus’ miracles were written for all to believe (John 20:30-31 – “And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹ **but these are written that you may believe** that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.”).
- B. The gospel itself is to be preached so that all can hear and believe:
- i. Acts 15:6-7 – “Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter. ⁷ And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and said to them: “Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should **hear the word of the gospel and believe.**”
 - ii. Rom. 1:16 – “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.”
- C. So, the answer is **yes**. There was ample reason given them to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and follow Him!
3. I asked this question concerning Capernaum so that you would ask yourself about whether you believe enough to follow Jesus.
- A. You know Jesus fulfilled prophecy in His coming and work on this earth.
 - B. You have heard the testimony of faithful witnesses concerning His life, miracles, and even His resurrection!
 - C. You have heard His teaching and call to salvation through Him as the bread of life.
 - D. So, what will you do with Christ?