

# Capernaum

The Jewish Town Where Jesus Lived

כפר נחום

How did a Galilean Jewish town become a Christian pilgrimage site?



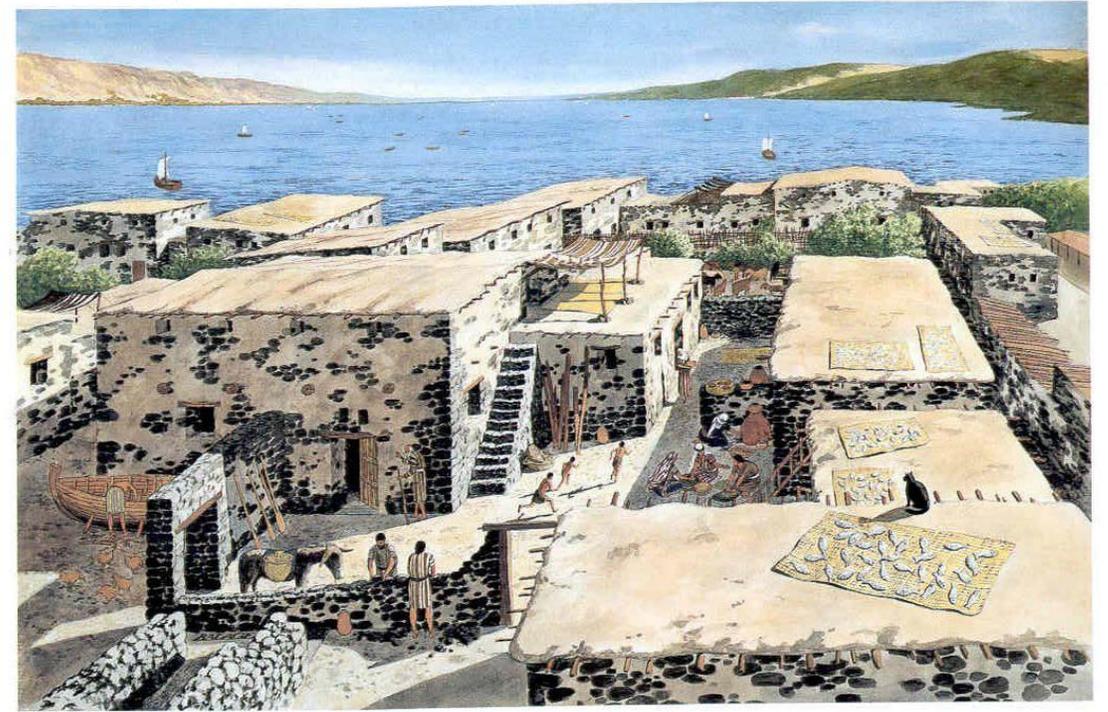
Daniel Ehrlich *MSW*  
Vice-President & Educational Director  
Keshet Educational Journeys  
[danny@keshetisrael.co.il](mailto:danny@keshetisrael.co.il)

## Jesus moves to Capernaum



### Matthew 4

12 When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he withdrew to Galilee. 13 Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali



Reconstruction of a First-Century Courtyard House at Capernaum

### Mark 1

1 A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home.

# The Ministry of Jesus – A Possible Chronology based on the Gospels (Active Ministry of Jesus from about 27 – 30 CE)

- ➔ Grows up and lives in Nazareth in the Galilee until about age 30 – **not a public figure**
- ➔ “Baptism” of Jesus by John the Baptist. Beginning of public teaching and preaching – at least part time
- ➔ John the “Baptist” is arrested by Herod Antipas, Tetrarch (ruler) of Galilee and Perea.

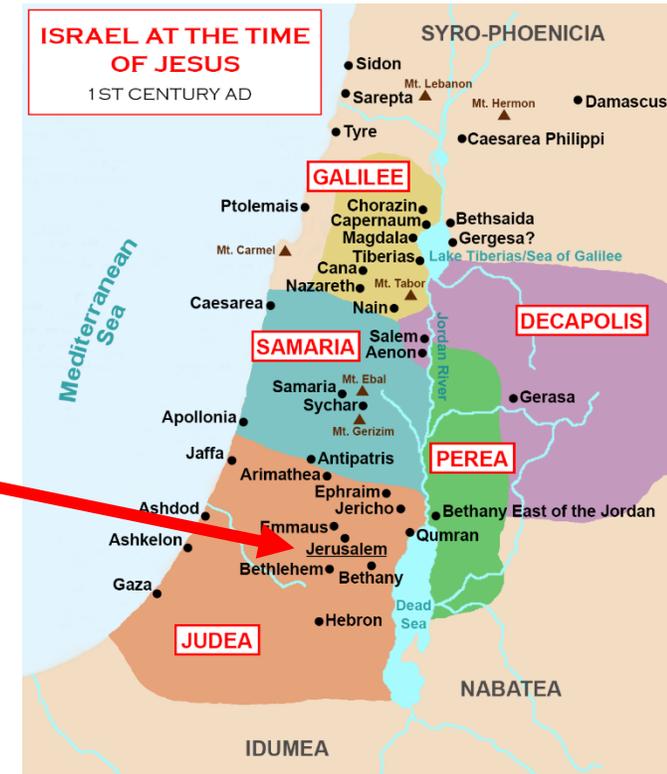
**“Full Time” Ministry: Lives in Capernaum (in the Galilee) has full time disciples**

***How is Jesus able to preach and teach openly in Capernaum for about a year while his older colleague/cousin John is arrested?***

- ➔ Execution of John “The Baptist” by Herod Antipas who is also “looking to meet” Jesus (apparently now a “wanted” man”)
- ➔ It is no longer safe for Jesus in Capernaum and the Galilee. Jesus and his disciples cross the border and leave the territory controlled by Herod Antipas to “Gaulanitis” in the Tetrarchy of Herod Phillip
- ➔ Transfiguration, training of the disciples and onto Jerusalem:  
Crucifixion and Resurrection



From 6 CE, Judea and Jerusalem under direct Roman rule



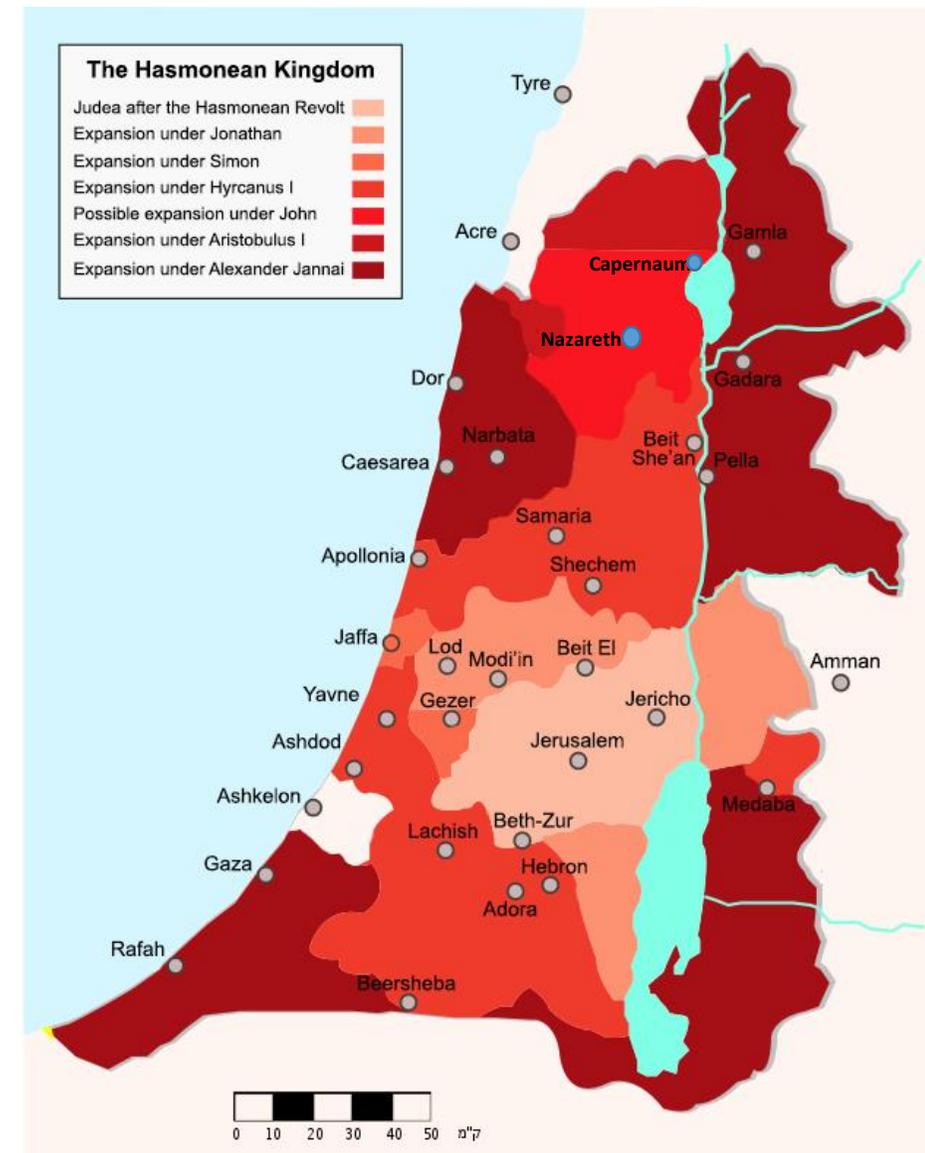
## Second Temple Period 539 BCE – 70 CE



539 BCE - Persians conquer Babylon. King Cyrus allows Jewish return to Judah. Province of Yehud under Persian Empire until 332 BCE

516 BCE – Dedication of the Second Temple in Jerusalem

332 BCE - Greeks Conquer Judah



160s BCE - Maccabean Revolt against the (Syrian) Greeks and the beginning of the Hasmonean Jewish Kingdom

104 BCE – Galilee annexed to the Hasmonean Jewish Kingdom

64 BCE – Romans Conquer Judea

37 – 4 BCE Herod King of Judea under Roman sponsorship

4 BCE – Herods' Kingdom divided into 3 by the Romans amongst his sons

30s CE – Jesus crucified by the Romans

66 – 73 CE : Jewish revolt against Rome

70 CE – Jerusalem & Temple destroyed by the Romans

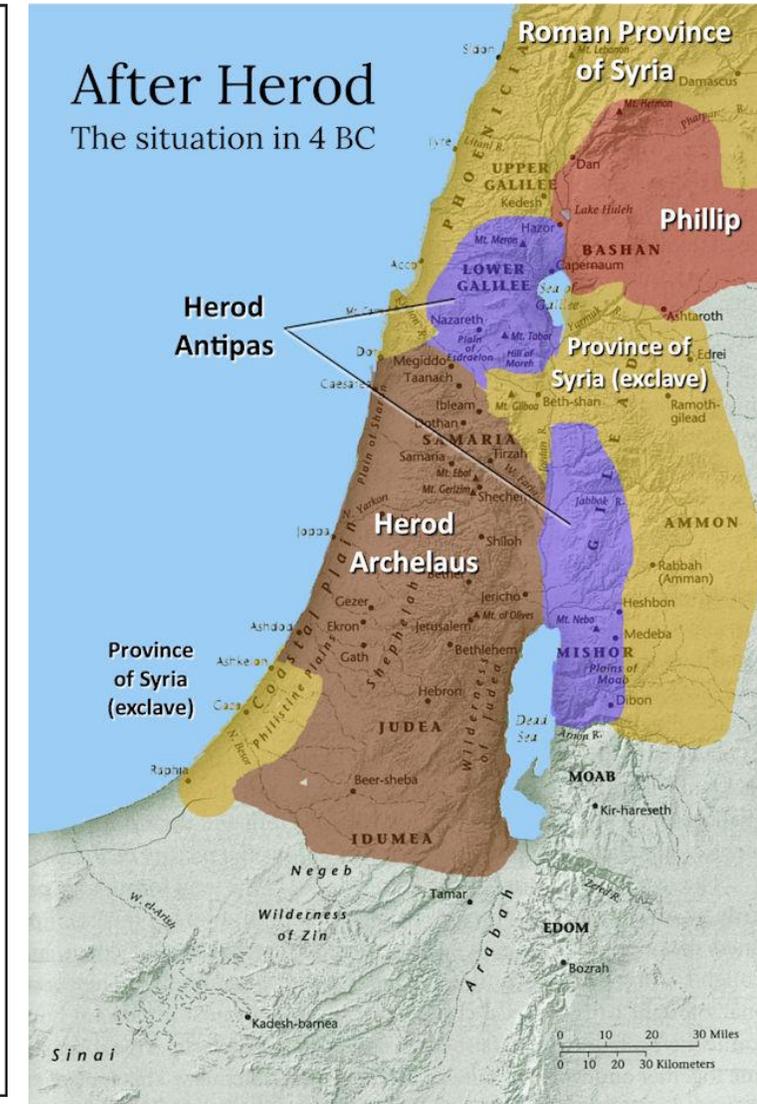
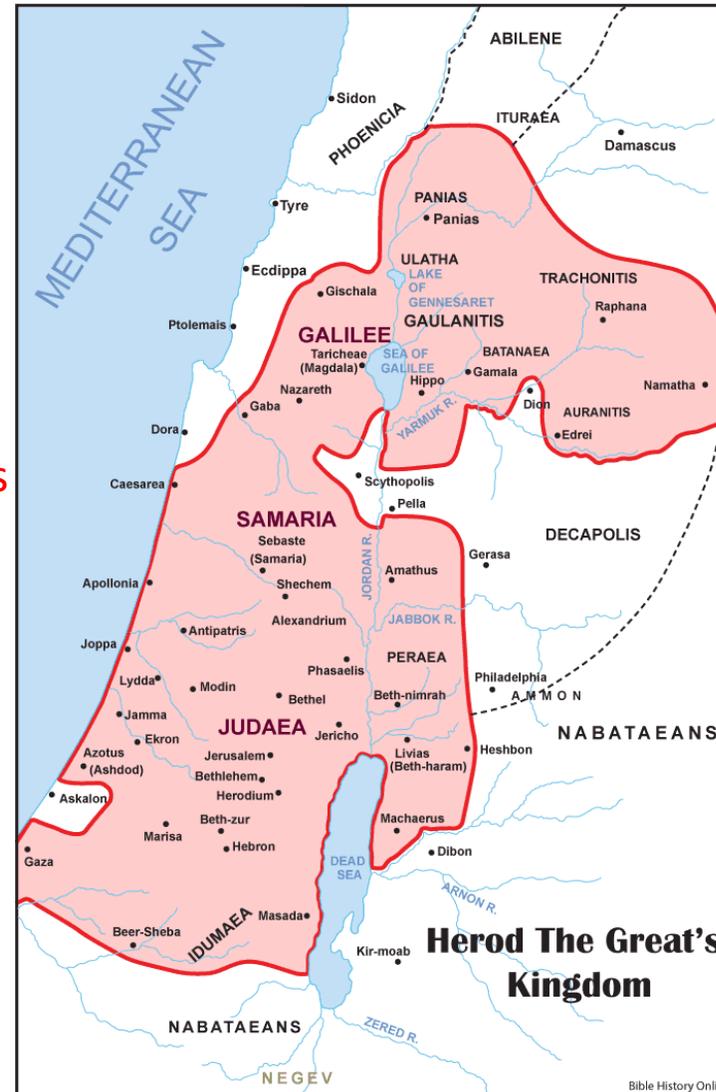
130s CE – Bar Kochba Revolt. Jerusalem transformed into pagan Roman Aelia Capitolina. **Jews banned from Jerusalem and Judea.** Romans erase “Judea” from the map and replace it with Greek geographic term “**Palestina**”

130s – 313 CE: **Christianity illegal in the Roman Empire.** *Underground religion and worship. No central Christian authority. Many different versions of what it means to be a follower of Jesus.*

313 – Constantine legalizes Christianity.

324 - Christianity becomes the official religion of the Roman Empire.

Standardized as “Byzantine Christianity”. **Jews and Judaism persecuted**



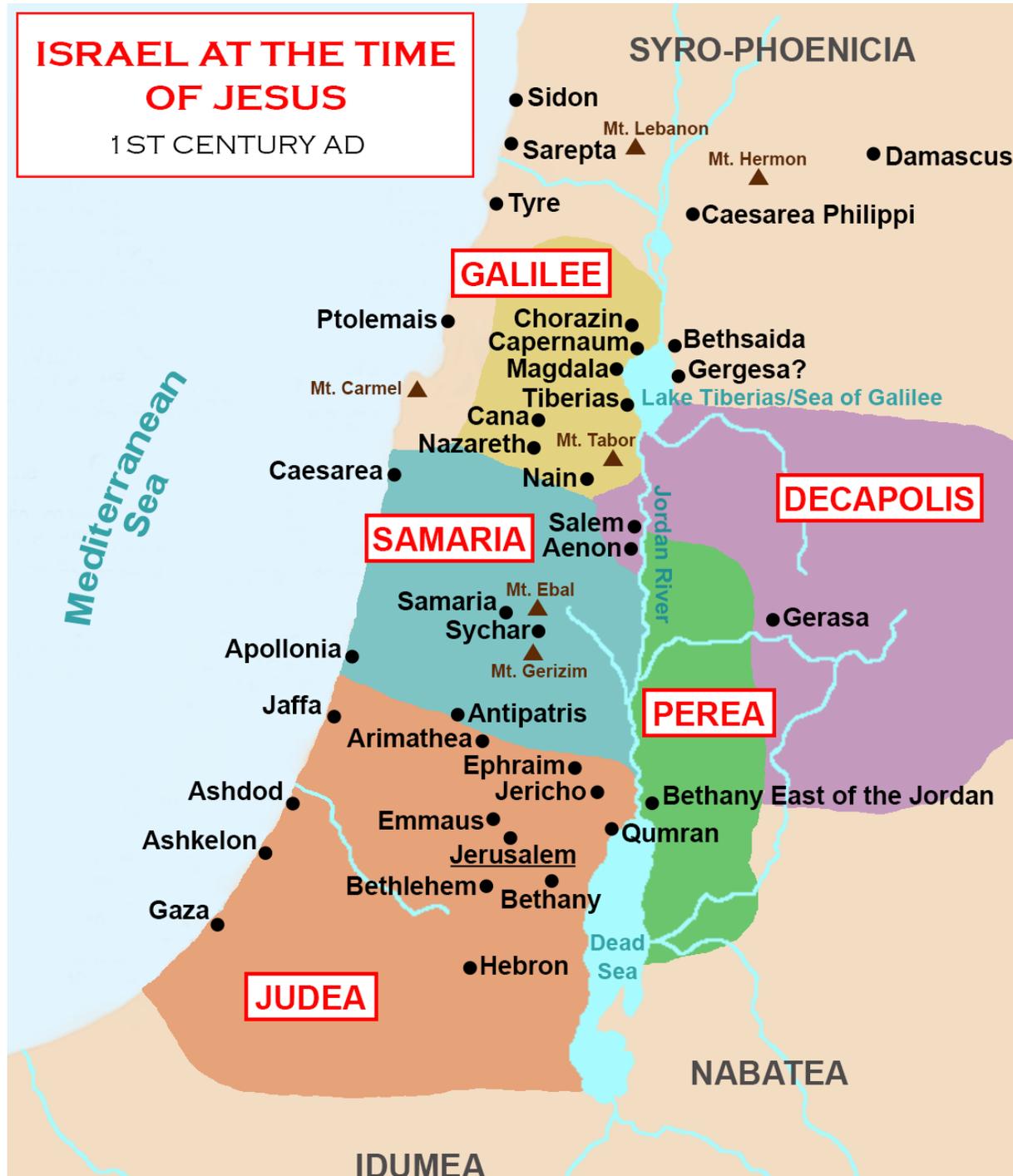
630s – Muslims conquer Israel

# The Roman Empire at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE



# ISRAEL AT THE TIME OF JESUS

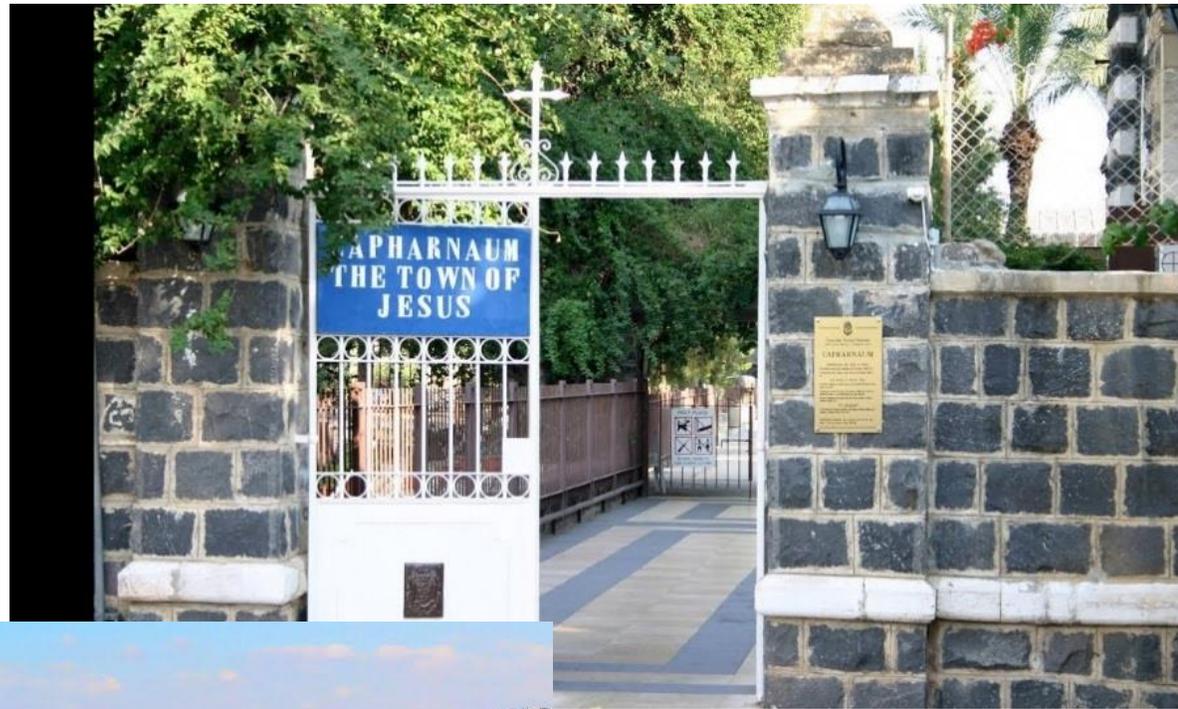
1ST CENTURY AD

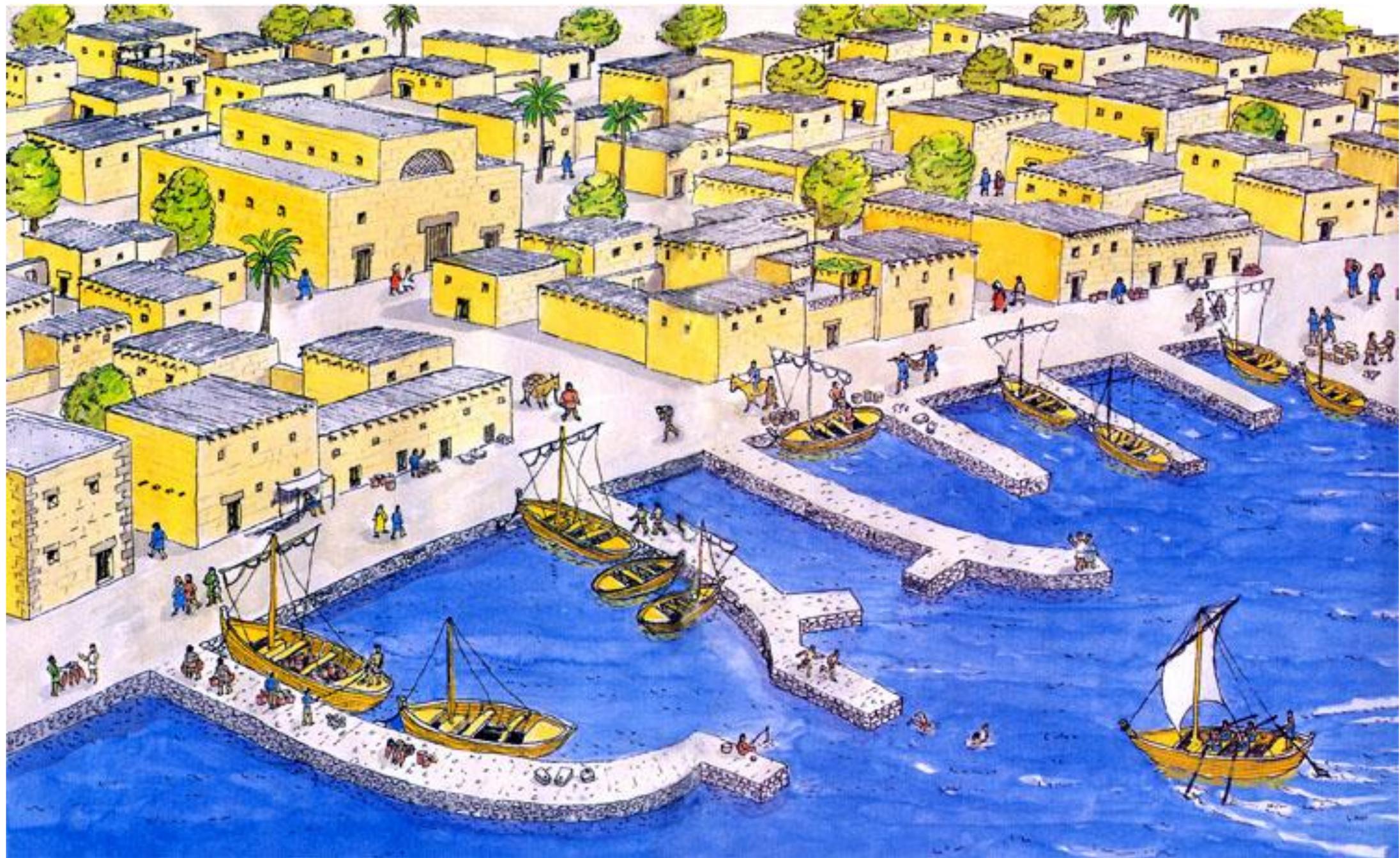


## Three Main Layers of Power & Influence

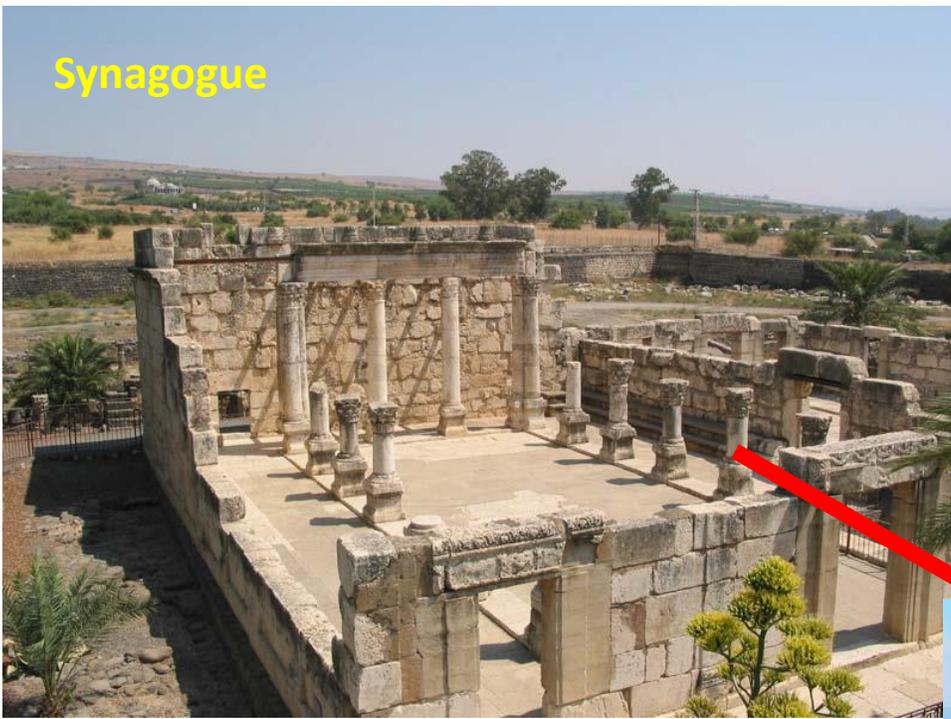
1. Roman Empire (army, ultimate authority and power)
2. Herodian rulers and officials (taxes, duties, regulations)
3. Local Jewish Communal Leadership (synagogue, town)







Synagogue



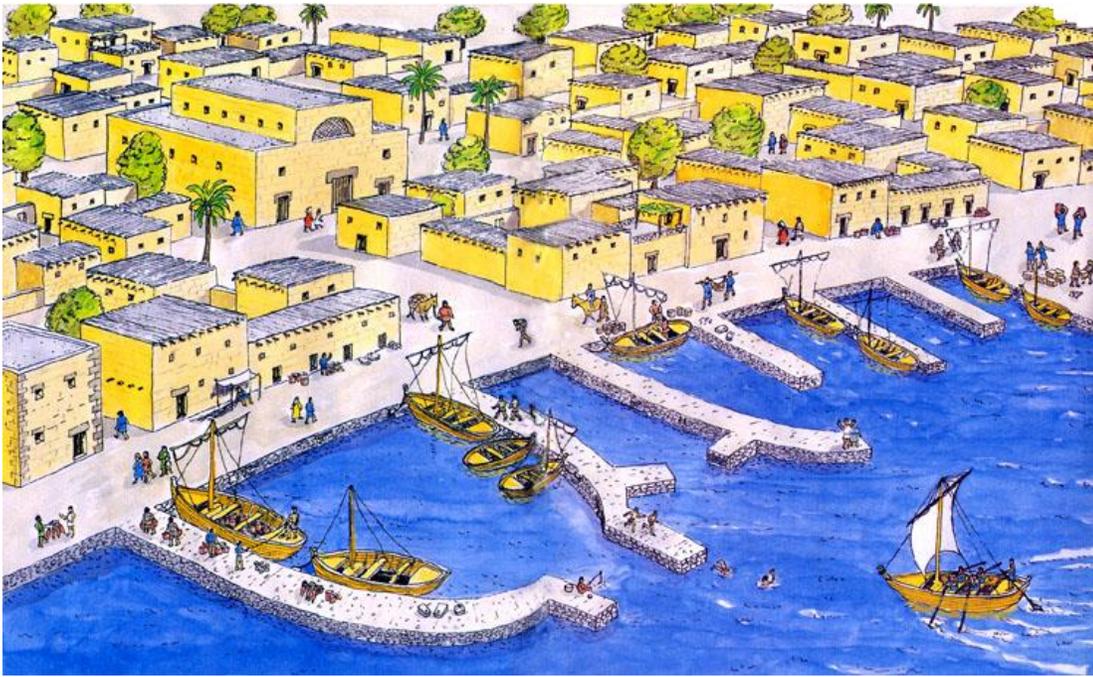
Church



House of Synagogue Leader Jairus?



## Jesus lives in Capernaum – heals Simon’s mother-in law, a (prominent?) member of the local Jewish community

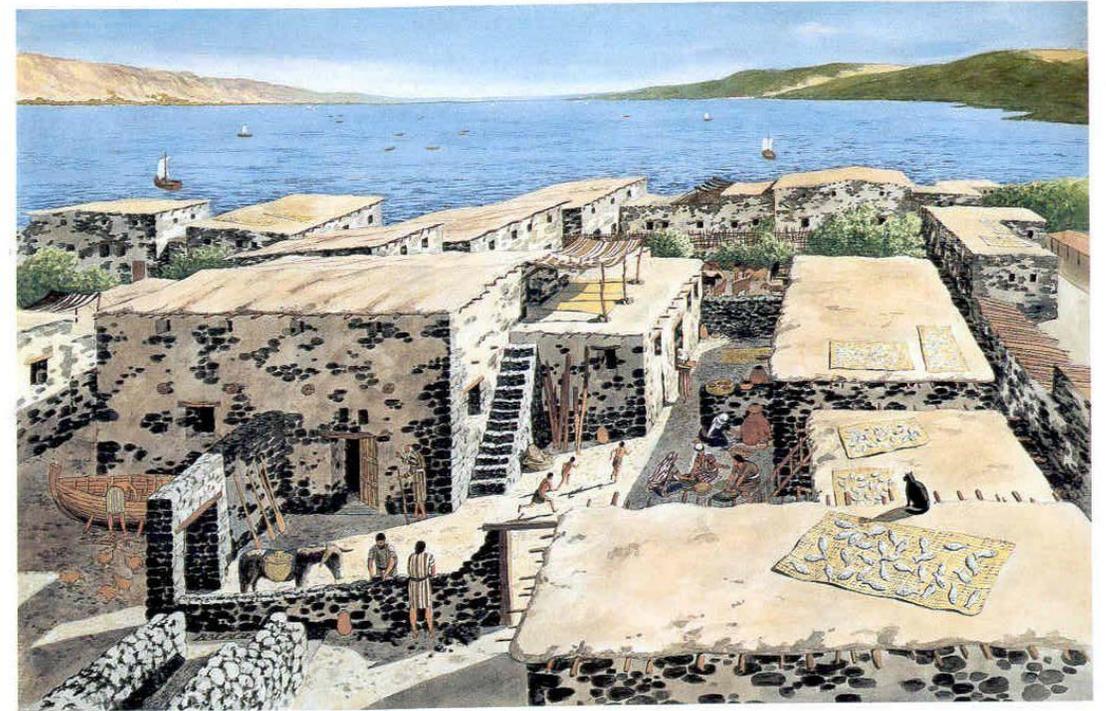


### Matthew 4

12 When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he withdrew to Galilee. 13 Leaving Nazareth, **he went and lived in Capernaum**, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali

### Luke 4

38 **Jesus left the synagogue and went to the home of Simon. Now Simon’s mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Jesus to help her.** 39 So he bent over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. She got up at once and began to wait on them.



Reconstruction of a First-Century Courtyard House at Capernaum

### Mark 1

1 A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that **he had come home.**

## The Church at Capernaum

The church at Capernaum was built atop what had been a house in a residential area of Jewish Capernaum built in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE. **Maybe the house of Simon/Peter's Mother-in Law?**

Late 1<sup>st</sup> century CE – Archeology seems to indicate that part of the house was no longer used as a residence but as some sort of communal gathering place

4<sup>th</sup> Century – Archeology indicates that the communal gathering room was expanded and renovated

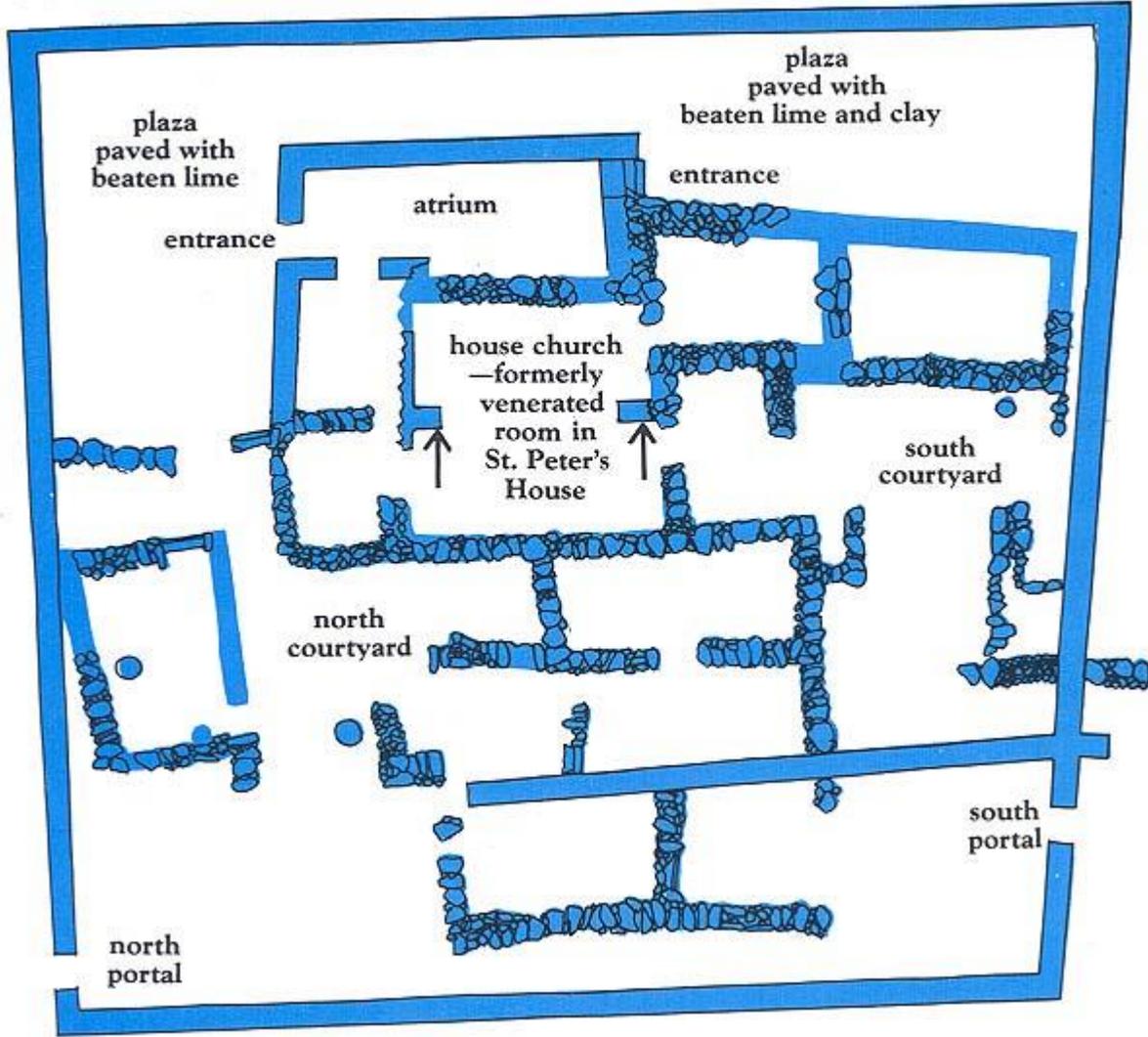
5<sup>th</sup> Century – Eight sided Byzantine church built on top of the house

1990 – Modern Catholic church built on stilts above the historic house/church site



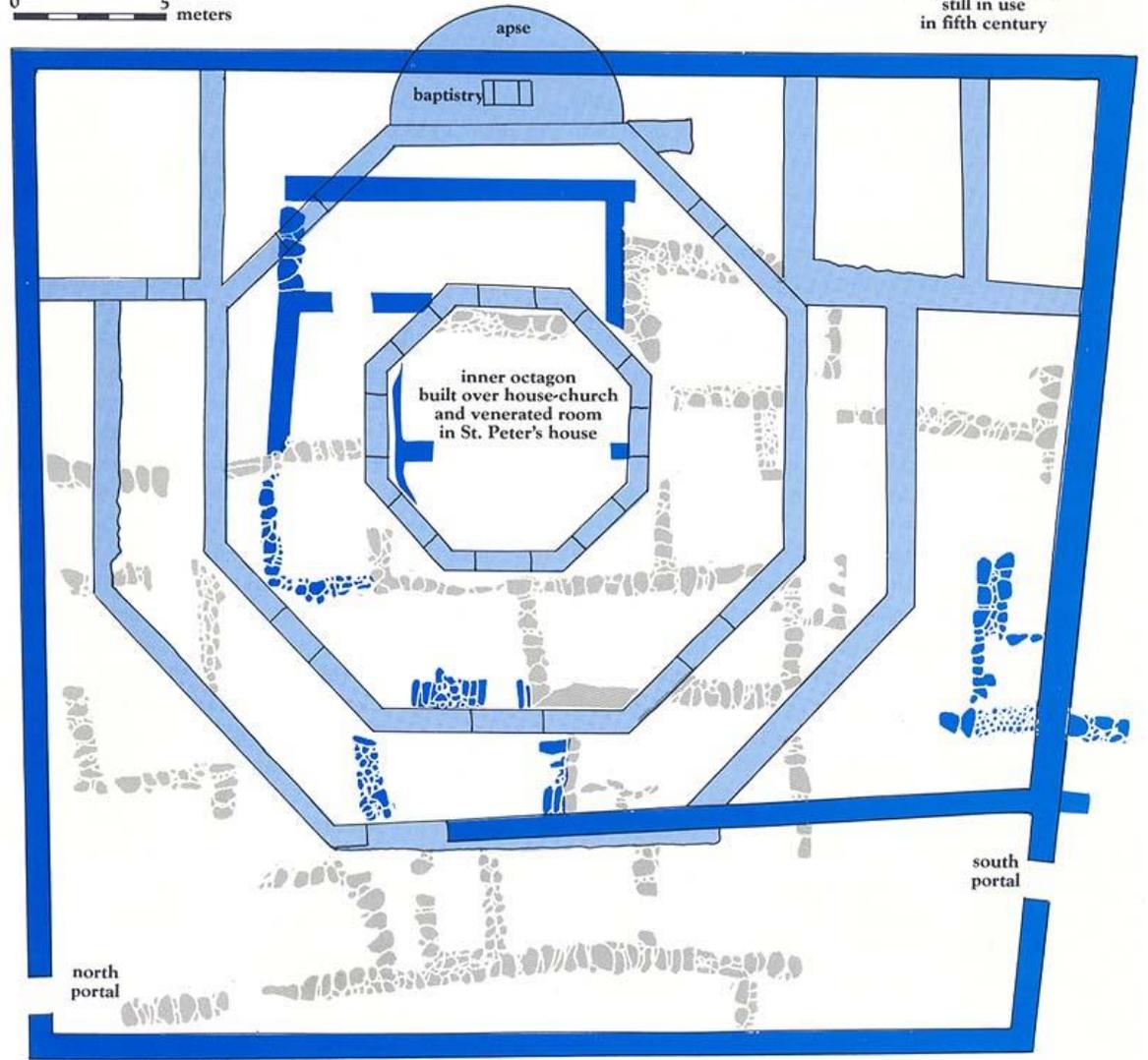
wall  
of sacred  
enclosure

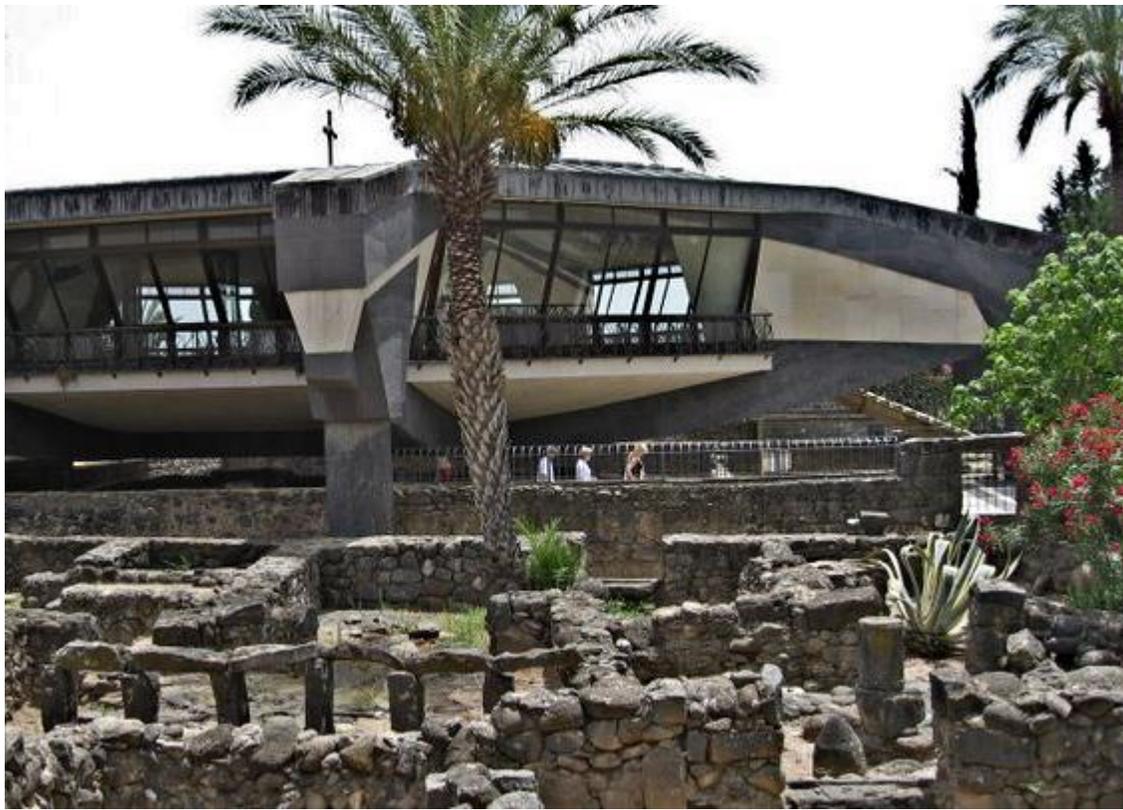
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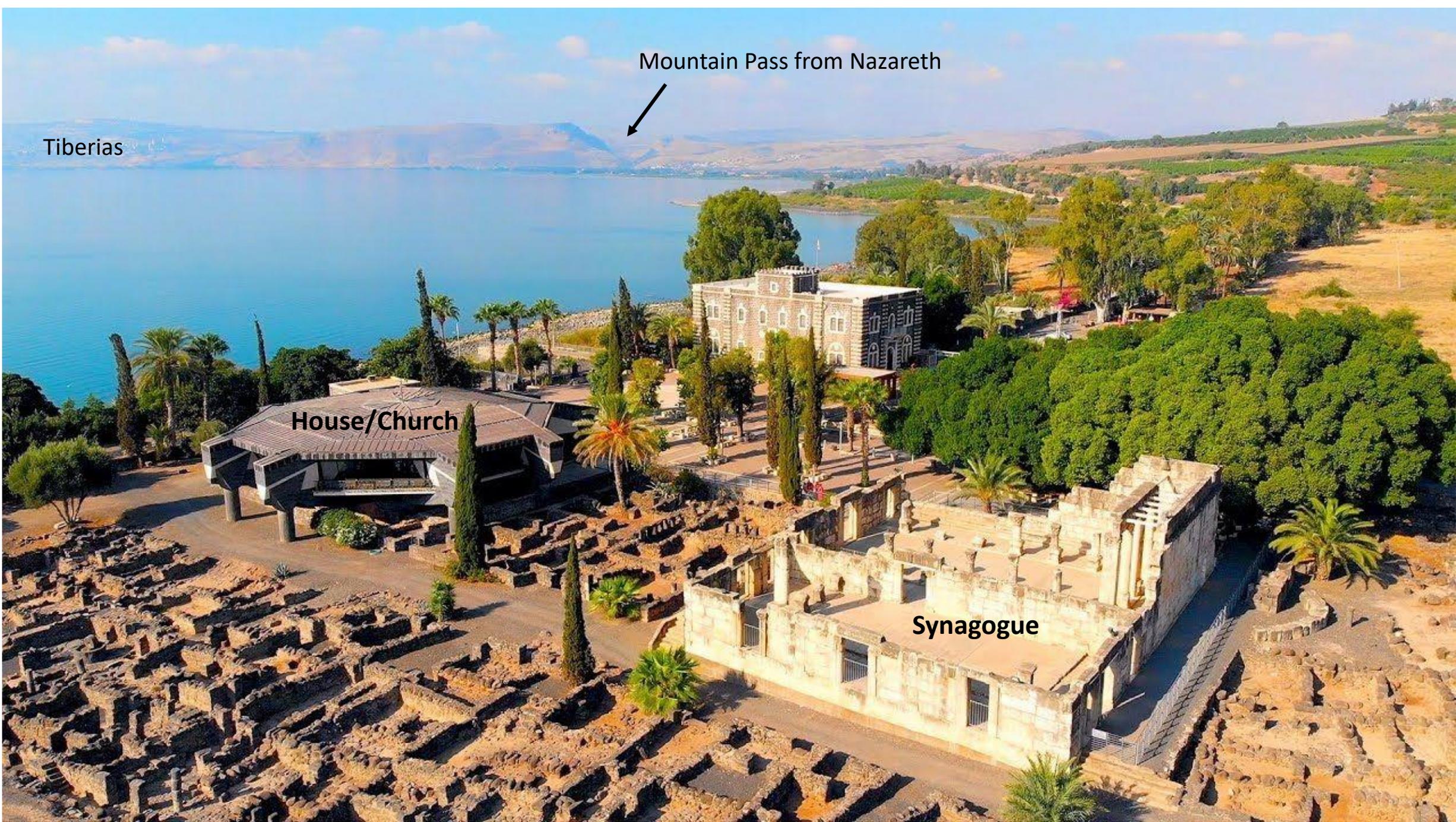
fourth century wall  
still in use  
in fifth century





Modern Catholic Church built in 1990 atop historic house/church





Tiberias

Mountain Pass from Nazareth



House/Church

Synagogue

## Jesus heals daughter of synagogue leader

### Mark 5

<sup>22</sup> Then one of the synagogue leaders, named Jairus, came, and when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet. <sup>23</sup> He pleaded earnestly with him, "My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live." <sup>24</sup> So Jesus went with him.

### Luke 8

<sup>40</sup> Now when Jesus returned, a crowd welcomed him, for they were all expecting him. <sup>41</sup> Then a man named Jairus, a synagogue leader, came and fell at Jesus' feet, pleading with him to come to his house <sup>42</sup> because his only daughter, a girl of about twelve, was dying.

### Mark 5

<sup>35</sup> While Jesus was still speaking, some people came from the house of **Jairus, the synagogue leader**. "Your daughter is dead," they said. "Why bother the teacher anymore?"

<sup>36</sup> Overhearing what they said, Jesus told him, "Don't be afraid; just believe."

<sup>37</sup> He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James. <sup>38</sup> **When they came to the home of the synagogue leader**, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. <sup>39</sup> He went in and said to them, "Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep." <sup>40</sup> But they laughed at him.

After he put them all out, he took the child's father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. <sup>41</sup> He took her by the hand and said to her, "*Talitha koumi!*" (which means "Little girl, I say to you, get up!"). <sup>42</sup> Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished. <sup>43</sup> He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat.



It has been suggested that the large house between the synagogue and what is thought to have been the home of Simon/Peter's mother-in-law was the house of synagogue leader Jarius (Yair).

## Jesus in the Synagogues of the Galilee



Luke 4 16:When [Jesus] came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, **he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom.** He stood up to read 17:and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written

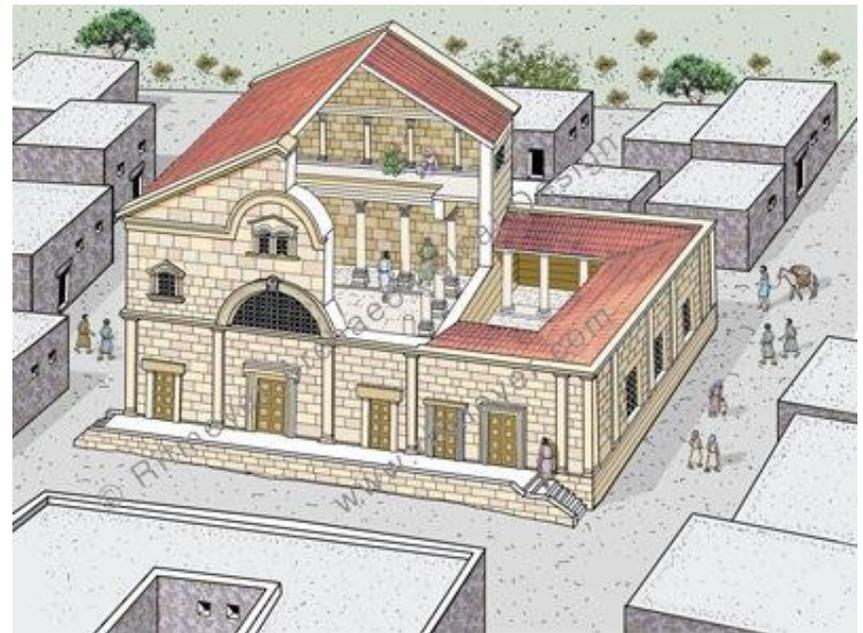
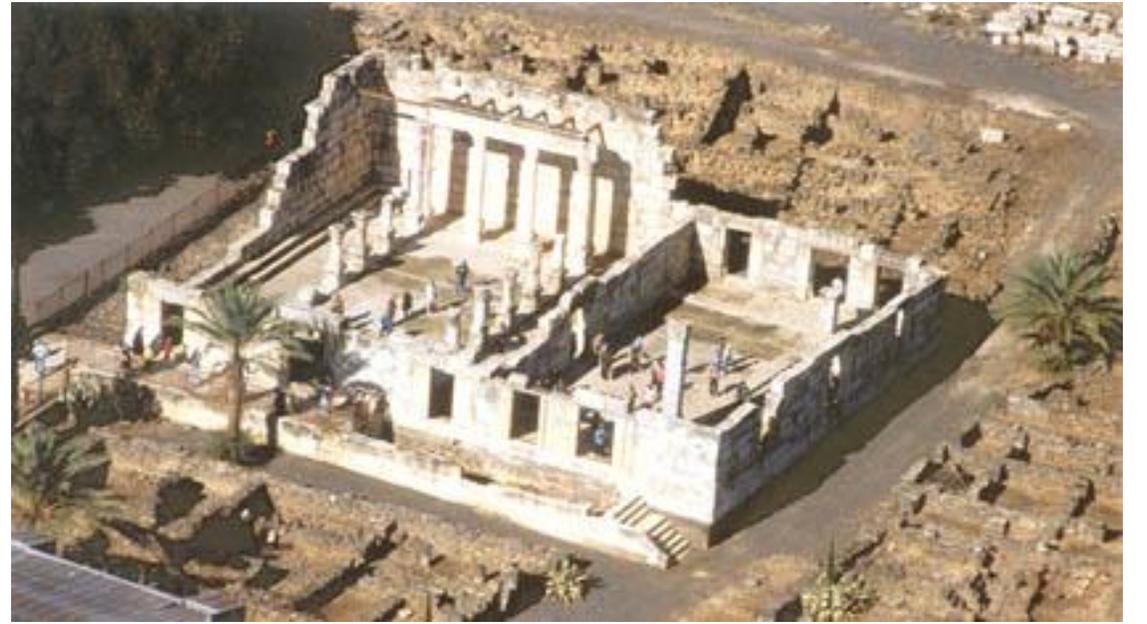
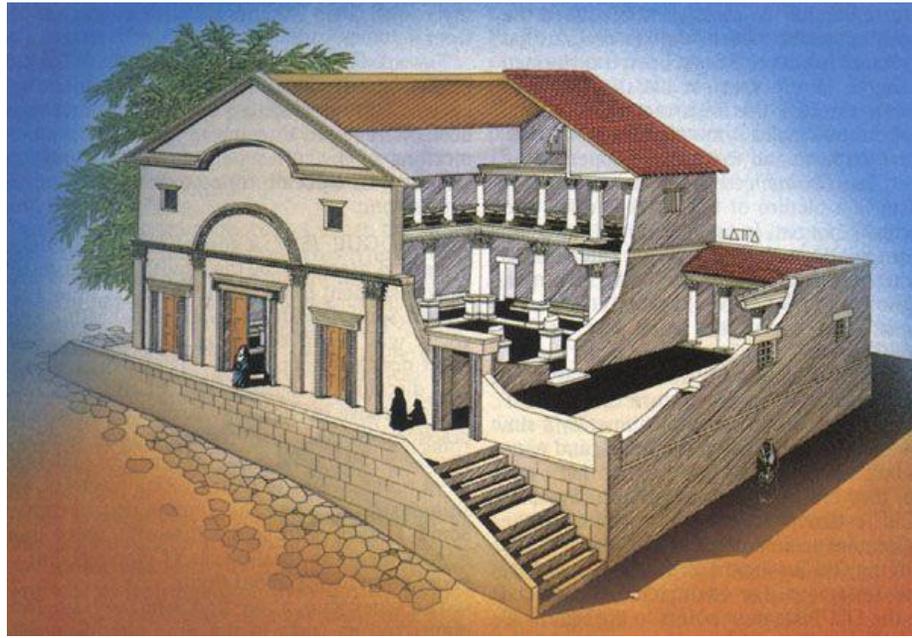
Mark 1 21: They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, **Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach.**

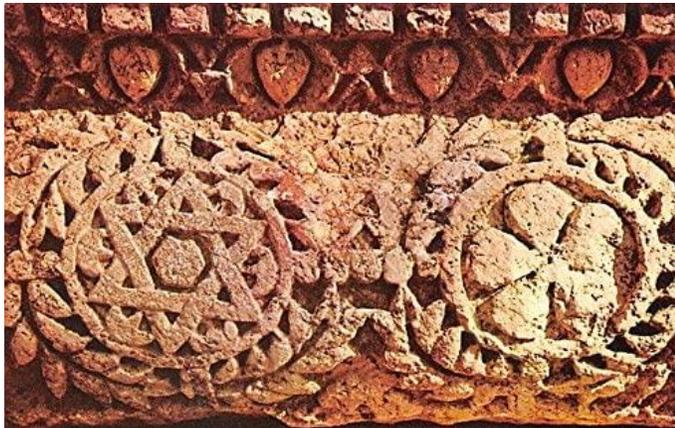
Luke 4; 4: But he said, “I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent.” 44 **And he kept on preaching in the synagogues of Galilee**



John 6: 59 He said this while **teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.**







ΗΡΩΔΗΣ ΜΟΝΙΜΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΙΟΥΣΤΟΥ  
 ΤΕΚΝΟΙΣ ΕΚΤΙΣΑΝ  
 ΤΟΝ ΚΙΟΝΑ

"Herod, the son of Monimos, and Justus, his son, together with  
 their children erected  
 this column."

## Jesus Heals Servant of Roman Centurion

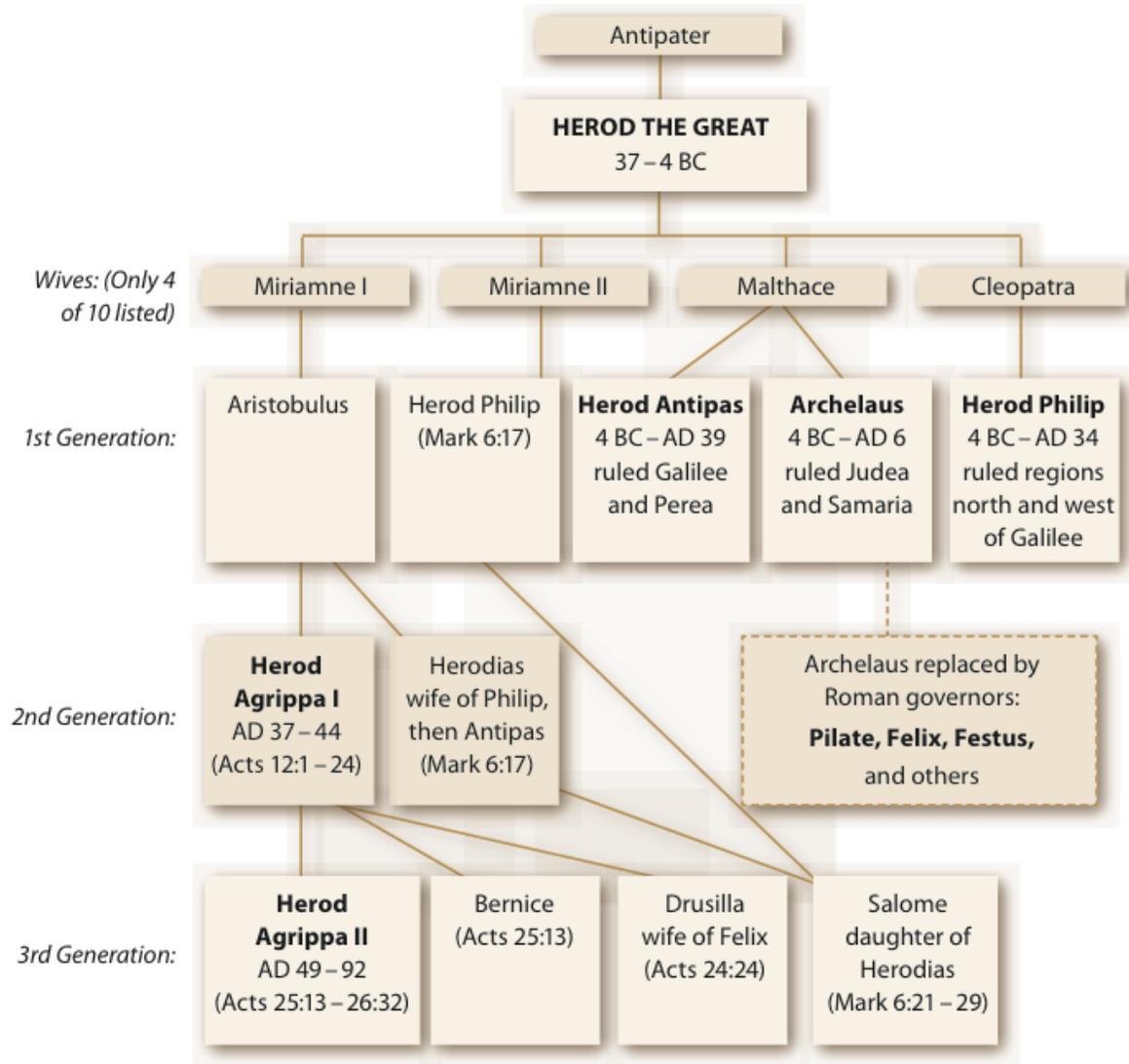
Mathew 8 <sup>5</sup> When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. <sup>6</sup> "Lord," he said, "my servant lies at home paralyzed, suffering terribly." <sup>7</sup> Jesus said to him, "Shall I come and heal him?" <sup>8</sup> The centurion replied, "Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. ...." <sup>13</sup> Then Jesus said to the centurion, "Go! Let it be done just as you believed it would." And his servant was healed at that moment.



Luke 7

7 When Jesus had finished saying all this to the people who were listening, he entered Capernaum. 2 There a centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. 3 The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. 4 When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, **"This man deserves to have you do this, 5 because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue."** 6 So Jesus went with them.

**Figure 4.8—The Herodian Dynasty**  
*Partial listing; rulers in bold type*



## Jesus heals and befriends Herodian officials

### John 4

**46** Once more he visited Cana in Galilee, where he had turned the water into wine. And there was a certain **royal official** whose son lay sick at Capernaum. **47** When this man heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and begged him to come and heal his son, who was close to death.

**48** "Unless you people see signs and wonders," Jesus told him, "you will never believe."

**49** The royal official said, "Sir, come down before my child dies."

**50** "Go," Jesus replied, "your son will live."

The man took Jesus at his word and departed. **51** While he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living. **52** When he inquired as to the time when his son got better, they said to him, "Yesterday, at one in the afternoon, the fever left him."

**53** Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live." So he and his whole household believed.

### Mark 2

**13** Once again Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd came to him, and he began to teach them. **14** As he walked along, he saw **Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector's booth**. "Follow me," Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed him.

**15** While Jesus was having dinner at Levi's house, many tax collectors and sinners were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. **16** When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw him eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they asked his disciples: "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

**17** On hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

**How is Jesus able to preach and operate openly in Capernaum for about a year while his older colleague and cousin John is being arrested and then executed?**

### Three Main Layers of Local Power & Influence

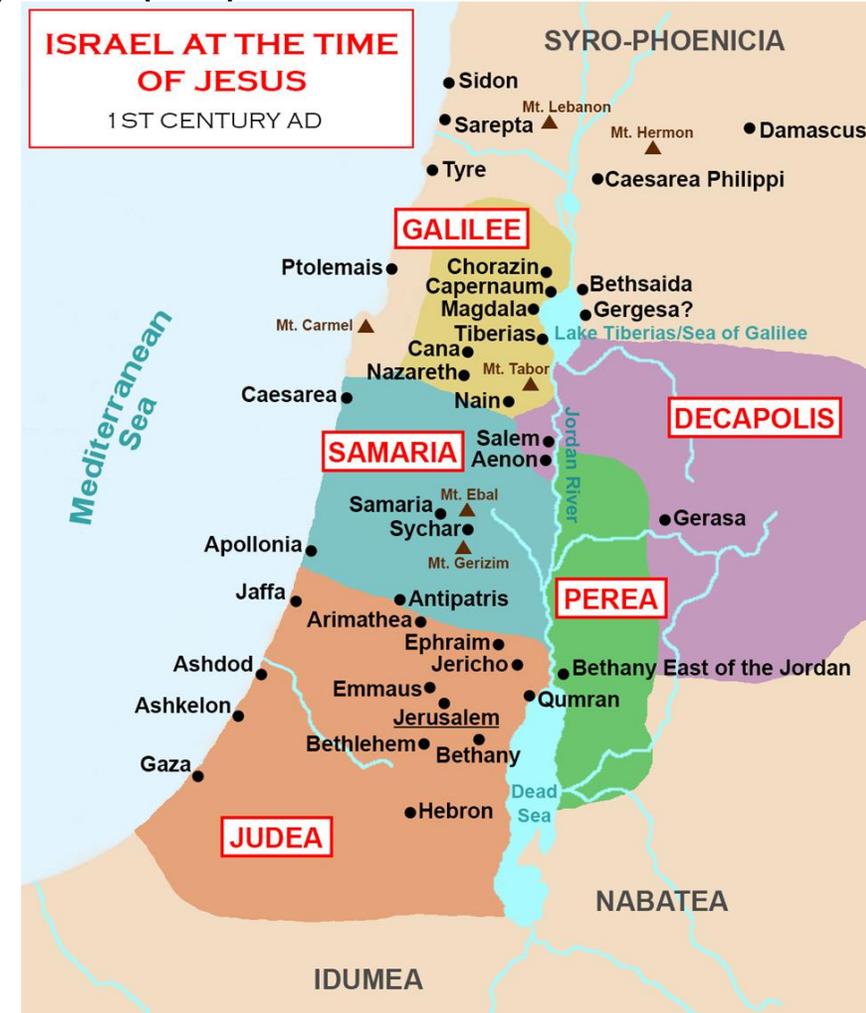
- ✓ 1. Roman Empire (army, ultimate authority and power): Roman Centurion (God fearer/יְרֵאָה)
- ✓ 2. Herodian rulers and officials (taxes, duties, regulations): Tax Collector, Royal official
- ✓ 3. Local Jewish Communal Leadership (synagogue, town): Simon's mother-in-law, Jairus (Yair)

Synagogue Leader

They are able to protect Jesus until the stakes get too high and they no longer have the power to run interference and protect him.

**Execution of John “The Baptist” by Herod Antipas ruler of the Gallilee who is “looking to meet ” Jesus (apparently Jesus now a “wanted” man”)**

It is no longer safe for Jesus in Capernaum and the Galilee. Jesus and his disciples cross the border and leave the Galilee controlled by Herod Antipas. They cross the border and head to **Bethsaida** and **Caesarea Phillipi** in “Gaulanitis” ,the Tetrarchy of Herod Phillip where there is apparently no warrant for his arrest. The Transfiguration takes place there near Caesarea Phillipi- and from there Jesus heads to Jerusalem (under direct Roman rule) for the final confrontation.



The Catholic Church sees the Pope as the heir of Peter (Simon) so Capernaum as the home of Peter/Simon's wife's family is very significant. Capernaum is also on the northern shore of the Kinneret where Matthew (16;18) relates Jesus saying to Simon/Peter: *And I tell you that you are Petros (rock) and on this rock (petra) I will build my church...* For the Catholic Church, this "Primacy of Peter" has been a bedrock of their claims to being THE legitimate and authentic church. Other Christian groups do not accept this interpretation.





THE LATE FOURTH CENTURY A.D.  
"WHITE SYNAGOGUE"  
BUILT UPON THE REMAINS OF THE  
"SYNAGOGUE OF JESUS"