



The Half Shekel Journals of 2023 by Pastor Ed Rice
#2306 Sun 19 Mar Capernaum, Peters Fish, Jordan Baptism

It is not surprising that Capernaum is called “The City of Jesus”, he spent more time here, and it gets more mention in the Bible than any other town of Galilee. Here he begins his teaching ministry with his disciples: Matthew 4:13 Mark 1:21, John 2:12.

*Mt 4:13 And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in **Capernaum**, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim:*

*Mr 1:21 And they went into **Capernaum**; and straightway on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue, and taught.*

*Joh 2:12 After this he went down to **Capernaum**, he, and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples: and they continued there not many days.*

Here Jesus marveled at a centurion's great faith: Matthew 8:5-7, 10.

*Mt 8:5 And when Jesus was entered into **Capernaum**, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him,*

6 And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. 7 And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him. ... 10 When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.

Hear people were astonished at his doctrine, and unclean spirits identified him as the Christ: Mrk.1:22 - 24.

Mr 1:22 And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the



scribes. 23 ¶ And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, 24 Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.



Here he was “In the House” and they broke up the roof to get their friend healed of his palsy: Mark.2:1-3.

*Mr 2:1 And again he entered into **Capernaum** after some days; and it was noised that he was in the house. 2 And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there*

was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them. 3 And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four.

Here is where he did the miracles that made Nazareth take notice: Luke 4:23.

*Lu 4:23 And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in **Capernaum**, do also here in thy country.*



Here he talked with power on sabbath days: Luke.4:31-32, 7:1.

*Lu 4:31 And came down to **Capernaum**, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the sabbath days. 32 And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power.*

*Lu 7:1 Now when he had ended all his sayings in the audience of the people, he entered into **Capernaum**.*

Here, being “in the House”, he settle disputes about who would be greatest in the kingdom: Mark.9:33-35.

*Mr 9:33 And he came to **Capernaum**: and being in the house he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? 34 But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest. 35 And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all.*

Here, a certain noble man’s son was healed by Jesus' remote command:

Jhn.4:46.

*Joh 4:46 So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at **Capernaum**.*



Here they landed their ship after Jesus walked on water: John 6:17.

*Joh 6:17 And entered into a ship, and went over the sea toward **Capernaum**. And it was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them. ... Joh 6:24 When the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither his disciples, they also took shipping, and came to **Capernaum**, seeking for Jesus.*

Here he did so many wondrous works that Sodom would have repented, had they seen them: Mat.11:23, Luke.10:15.

*Mt 11:23 And thou, **Capernaum**, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.*

*Lu 10:15 And thou, **Capernaum**, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell.*

Here he sent Peter fishing for the fish with a piece of money in his mouth: Mt.17:24.

*Mt 17:24 And when they were come to **Capernaum**, they that received tribute money came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay tribute?*

Here he gave the challenging teaching “I am the Bread of Life”: Jn.6:59-60,66-68.

*Joh 6:59 These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in **Capernaum**. 60 ¶ Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it? ... 66 From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. 67 Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? 68 Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.*

Here we stood 1,993 years later!

Capernaum is from the Hebrew, *kaphar* = village, *nachuwim* = comfort, i.e. Village of Comfort. Today it is a quaint show town with ample tour bus parking, beautiful gardens, and walkways that lead to each archaeological wonder, as well as little alcoves where groups can meet and talk about, ... “The City of Jesus.”

Eli was exuberant as he gathered us around the sign that announced this visit to “The City of Jesus.”



Capernaum was not mentioned in the Old Testament it was only a simple fishing village through those years, likely growing in size until it became the most talked about town in Galilee when Jesus walked there. Much of the archaeology we see here is from from the fourth century, when caravans of traders and travelers passed through Capernaum and its Via Maris route that connected Damascus in the north, to Egypt in the south. But the first century Capernaum was likely home for 1,500 people and we have found many of the buildings which were built from the black basalt rock of the first century. It contrasts sharply with the white ashlar stones (large square cut stones) used in the fourth century reconstruction.

Eli surveyed the crowd for a moment then announced, “Let’s first pay a visit to Saint Peter’s house.” The rain began again, but it was just a very light mist as Eli gathered us at a supporting beam under a large octagonal Catholic Church.

There was not a dated placard that said, “Saint Peter slept here!” But it was pretty close to that. Over 26 years ago in one of the earliest BAR (Biblical Archaeology Review) documented discoveries, Italian excavators, working in Capernaum, uncovered a mundane simple dwelling deduced to be a first century home. Remarkably it was found under the ruins of an octagonal Byzantine Martrium Church (a church or shrine built over the tomb or home of a Christian martyr).

As excavations continued, it was discovered that the simple home with a few small rooms clustered around an open courtyard, changed functionally into a communal meeting area with plastered floors, plastered walls, and plastered ceilings. Pottery findings also changed from household cooking pots and bowls to larger storage pots and oil lamps. The simple residence had transformed into a gathering place for the earliest Christian gatherings. The rooms old stone walls were buttressed by a new two-story arch that supported a new stone roof. Also graffiti on the walls in multiple languages, said “Lord Jesus help” and “Christ have mercy”. This simple first century home was transformed into a church that survived for more than 300 years before it was replaced in the fifth century by a well built octagonal martrium church, whose inner sanctum was built directly over the very place called Peter's house, which was transformed into the central hall of the earlier church.

Most of us are quite satisfied that that substantiated the placard “Peter slept here”, and that is witnessed by Matt.8:14–17 to authenticate that Jesus slept here.



14 And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever. 15 And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them. 16 When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick: 17 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses (Mat.8:14-17).



As Eli lead us from Peter's house to Capernaum's synagogue, the rain let up, and so did the crowds in the synagogue.

Now as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his

brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. 17 And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. 18 And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him. 19 And when he had gone a little further thence, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets. 20 And straightway he called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him. 21 And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue, and taught (Mk.1:16-21).



Eli held his book so we could see the layout of the town and the synagogue in the artist conception of the stark foundations that now lay excavated before us. He flipped the page and showed us the perceived layout of the synagogue. We wandered through looking at the placement of the columns, the benches, and the “bema”¹ (the podium or platform from which of the Torah and Prophets were read). In the Galilean type synagogue, the Torah shrine would be constructed in the wall closest to Jerusalem. The Basilica construction here put an extra emphasis on a Jerusalem orientation by incorporating an apse (a domed, vaulted recess) on the wall, facing Jerusalem, and an entrance, atrium, and narthex, or waiting room, on the opposite side. Thus the elements in the front of the synagogue are the *aron ha-kodesh*, or the holy ark or niche containing the Torah scrolls, the “*amund*” or prayer desk facing the ark, and the “*bema*” or reading desk, from where the Torah scroll is read.

Jesus was here in this very synagogue when he gave the controversial teaching “I am the bread of life” of John 6.

Since I just used “synagogue” seven times in as many sentences, I am reminded of an excellent point elaborated by F. W. Grant in his 1834 book “The Prophetic History of the Church”

The “synagogue” is the Jewish word for their gathering, as the Christian word everywhere used is “assembly.” ... If I speak of the “assembly,” of

course it could not possibly be confounded with walls, with bricks and mortar; yet that is one notorious

1 Oxford Dictionary, s.v. “Bema”, historically the *bema* is the platform from which of the orators spoke in ancient Athens, particularly where the Olympic awards were judged, consequently, the judgment where “every man’s work shall be made manifest” of 1Corinthians 3:12–15, is called by many the bema seat judgment.

abuse of the word "church."

Then, again, if I speak of the Christian assembly as it is in Scripture, i. e., the "assembly which is Christ's body," I cannot think of anything else than the gathering of all His members. ...

Now, let us mark, there is a difference between the Jewish and the Christian words. The word for the New Testament assembly, "ecclesia," is derived from two words meaning "called out." It is not merely a gathering; it is a gathering of people who are distinctly "called out" from others. On the other hand, "synagogue" is a mere "gathering together." It is no gathering out; and this very precisely distinguishes the Jewish from the Christian gathering. ...

The rest of his chapter, and the whole book is available and recommended reading via our website², take full advantage.

We left Capernaum to rendezvous with Peters-Fish for lunch. It was a whole cooked Tilapia with its eyeball present and staring at the approaching fork. It took effort to get meat out of all the bone, brain, and tail, but it was well worth the effort. The Sea of Galilee supports native fish Tristramella Sacra (long jaw), and Tristramella Simohis (short jaw) Tilapia. Hundreds of thousands of Tilapia (Saint Peter's fish, same genus different species³) are released into the sea of Galilee to replenish stocks hit by drought, and over fishing. The sea's fresh water sources, the Jordan, the Dan, and the Hasbani Rivers, replenish the sea, but drought and extensive use of the water for domestic and agricultural use have drawn down the sea's levels, and its fish population extensively.



Those who had "Peters-Fish" for lunch, found it disappearing faster than we could measure its jaw length. It was a delightful lunch.

After lunch we assembled at the Jordan River Baptismal Site. There are two tourist sites used for baptisms in the Jordan River, one called "Betheny Beyond The Jordan" near Jericho, and this site near the Sea of Galilee. Matthew 3 clarifies that, "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the

wilderness of Judaea," and there, in his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins, is where he was baptizing those who came to him from Jerusalem, and all

2 www.GSBaptistChurch.com/theology/grant_prophetic_history_church.pdf

3 Remember there are seven classifications of living things, Kingdom, Phylum, Class, Order, Family, Genus, Species with a memory mnemonic Ken Plays Chess On Fridays Getting Suspended. But wait there is more, there are seven classifications of visible light, Red, orange, yellow, Green, Blue, indigo, violet, RoyGBiv for an effective memory mnemonic. The capitals, RGB are the trinity of primary colors, ingredients in all visible light. God made our eye and molecules of earth's atmosphere more sensitive to Blue so for us, the sky resonates in it. Purple, is made of infrared and ultraviolet; it is majestic because it contains the beginning and the ending of the visible color spectrum, kind like the Alpha and Omega of the Greek alphabet. Scarlet hangs out at the far edge of visible light, just before it slips into the infrared and becomes invisible to the human eye. Blue, purple, and scarlet are the colors in God's Tabernacle, he did that on purpose. Learn more via the authors upcoming book "God Tabernacles with Men" coming to an internet near you.



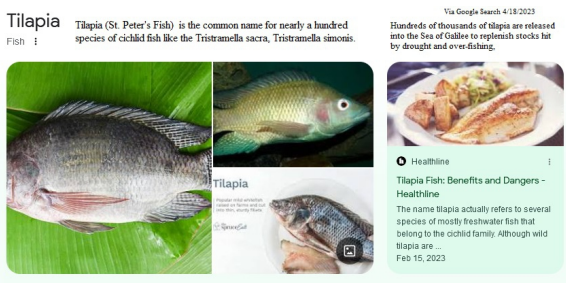
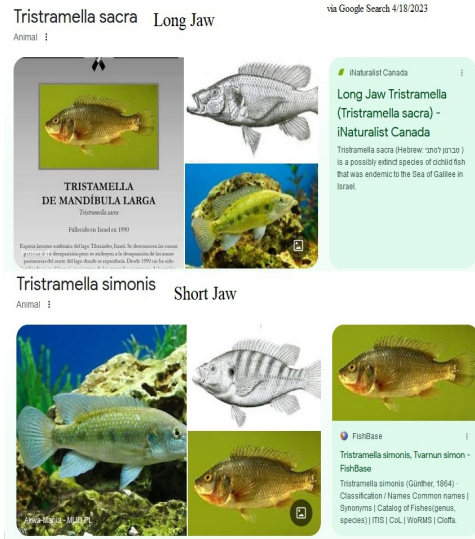
Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan. “Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him” (vr.13). So, Jesus was likely baptized nearer to Jericho than up here near the sea, but the Betheny site is a muddy little trickle of water today, and this one is more pristine. The Betheny site is also nearer to the Mount of Temptation⁴ area.



Baptismal in the Jordan River is a full blown tourist attraction and displays just about every error about baptism, and none of its Biblical truths. A genuine convert to Christ is to follow the Lord in public believers baptism, and then regularly be present at the Lord's table to publicly observe communion. These are two ordinances of the local church. They are not sacraments, there is no magical or mystical aspect to these ordinances. Baptism by immersion is a convert's initial public admission, before God and everybody, that they are born-again, blood-bought, justified and redeemed to God through Christ, converts. And the Lord's table

observance that Baptists call communion, is a public testimony declaring, I am still in perfect communion with my Lord and Savior, and in sweet communion with these believers, in this local church. Both baptism and communion are ordinances administered by the local Bible believing church. These are basic Bible doctrines. By them Baptists are named, and for them no little Baptist blood has been spilled.

Consequently, many of us are passionate about guarding their authenticity and practice within the local, autonomous, independent, Biblical, New Testament church. Understandably so.



When hordes of “Christian's” rush to the Jordan river to get baptized in “holy water” and gather some of it in a carry home bottle, a Baptist, who knows about the convictions of a Baptist, will be concerned about all the false teaching that is on display at the Jordan River Baptismal site.

Baptist were once called anti-baptists, and

4 The Mount of Temptation is believed to be the mountain in the Judean Desert where Jesus was tempted by the devil for 40 days and 40 nights. The mountain is approximately 1,200 feet high in a location 11km North West of the West Bank town of Jericho. Entry to the top of the mountain is via a 1300m long cable car ride which takes visitors over the top of the remains of the old city of Jericho, where the walls came tumbling down. Recent archaeological digs have uncovered the remains of the ancient city proving the Biblical narrative to be true, yet again! At the top of the mountain is the Greek Orthodox Monastery (Monastery of the Temptation) which can be accessed by a stone stairway built into the mountainside. The Panoramic view is breathtaking from the top of the mountain – but not a ride for the faint hearted. From <https://holy-land-tours.com/mount-of-temptation/> accessed 6/9/2023

re-baptizers, by those who were burning us at the stake for our Bible beliefs. Baptist have always held to believers baptism with no pedobaptism⁵, no infant baptism, no baby baptisms, no “christenings”. Consequently, the Holy Bible Believing Baptists have always been at odds, with all Roman Catholic or Orthodox; all Episcopalians, higher or lower, all Protestants, Presbyterian Calvinists, or Methodist Wesleyans, and all Pentecostals, Charismatic holiness or not.



Further, Baptist and New Testament Bible believing churches have never been denominational, i.e. no one church, or leader, usurps authority over any group or association of churches. Each church is a local, independent, and autonomous body of believers. Further Baptists do

not divide congregations into Clergy and Laity, Pastors are male, are not Clergy, and do not wear black dresses. Such Baptist distinctives are found in the Holy Bible, and Baptists have the Holy Bible as their sole authority. Any church contending with these Baptist truths would do us a service by taking “Baptist” off of their church signs.

So, bless his righteous heart, Pastor Lee Pickett tried to squeeze all of that into a “short” baptismal message as he baptized our friend Scott Wood with a genuine believers baptism. The more the crowd grew the more time it took to get all of that Bible detail in, and the more Scott’s knees turned blue, ... and the more the talupia nibbled on his toes.

I think Brother Lee covered everything about a Baptist's baptismal, then repeated it all every time the crowd doubled. That brought about three solid explanations of what believers baptism was all about. Praise the Lord.

As we mingled in the site's foyer and gift shop area, Pastor Pickett and Eli were discussing a possibility of visiting a diamond cutting demonstration, but after a very full schedule they decided to relax our pace a little and go from the Jordan River Baptismal Site back to supper at the Lake House Hotel in Tiberias. Here is a short write up of what we missed at the National Diamonds and Jewelry Co.



The ND&J National Diamonds and Jewelry Co a well-known and respected member of the Israel Diamond Exchange in Ramat Gan that specializes in manufacturing diamonds and precious stone jewelry,

5 Pedobaptism is the practice of baptizing infants or young children; infant baptism is also called christening by some “faith traditions”; still today Wikipedia supposes most Christians belong to denominations that practice infant baptism.

brings you the experience of visiting and buying from the largest diamond exchange in the world, right here in our luxurious showroom in Tiberias. In our showroom, you'll find thousands of models of diamonds and colored stones at the highest level of quality in the world and at the lowest "dealer to dealer" wholesale prices. From www.visit-tiberias.com accessed 6/7/23



Pastor Steven Khoury serves as Pastor at The First Baptist Church in Bethlehem and Calvary Church in Jerusalem. He is also the President of Holy Land Missions which provides health and financial aid to needy families and supports evangelical Arab ministries in the Holy Land. As a Christian Arab, he serves as a bridge between Jews and Christians in Israel as well as between Jews and Arabs. He has reached thousands of Arabs with messages of hope and taught Biblical truths. He has spoken at conferences alongside or with: Franklin Graham, James Dobson, David Jeremiah, Ravi Zachariah, V.P Mike Pence, and has been interviewed on numerous broadcasts including FOX News, CBN, and more. He has authored a number of books.

Steven & Shari Khoury /www.holylandmissions.org/

After the Baptismal service, Pastor Dewy Stewart met with Missionary Steven and Shari Khoury, old friends of his. It was a joy to meet them and they had a wealth of knowledge about ministry in Israel. Pastor Stewart went to dinner with them, but promised we would have more time with them on the morrow.

Our buffet supper at the hotel was delightful, we were exhausted and tomorrow we had a 0700 “wheels up” and a full day's agenda in upper Galilee.

