

# EXPLORATION: BIBLE

## Important Archaeological Finds of the Bible #3—The Tale of Three Cities

“Jesus came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: “The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, by way of the sea... Galilee of the Gentiles: The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light” (Matthew 4:13-16).

After the rejection of Jesus in his hometown of Nazareth, He lived in Capernaum on the sea of Galilee. It was in this region that Jesus taught and performed miracles. Here He taught the “Sermon on the Mount” (Matthew chapters 5-7). Twice, in Matthew chapters 14 & 15, Jesus fed thousands with just a few loaves and small fishes. It was here that Jesus, during a raging storm, walked on water and calmed Sea of Galilee (Matthew 14:22-33). On several occasions Jesus publicly healed multitudes of hurting people (Matthew 4 & 8 & 12).

It was in Capernaum that Jesus preached his famous “Eternal Life Sermon.” In John chapter 6, When the people asked, “What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?” Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent” (vs 28-29).

Then, “Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst’ (vs 35) ... ‘And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.’ But ‘the Jews complained about Him, because He said, ‘I am the bread which came down from heaven’” (vs 40-41).

Then Jesus told them, “Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me. Not that anyone has seen the Father, except He who is from God; He has seen the Father. Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has eternal life” (vs 45-48). He said, I am “the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die... If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.” The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, “How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?” (vs 50-52).

Jesus said, “Most assuredly... unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed... This is the bread which came down from heaven.... He who eats this bread will live forever.” These things He said in the synagogue as He taught in Capernaum” (vs 53-59).

Then sadly, John records, “From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.” (vs 66). They rejected Jesus, the Bread of Life. But, when Jesus asked the twelve disciples, “Do you want to go away as well?” Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (vs 67-68).

**QUESTION: Was Jesus teaching cannibalism?** The obvious answer is NO, but the illustration is clear. As bread sustains physical life, even so Jesus is spiritual life. Simply looking at bread or even making a loaf of bread will not sustain life, you must eat it. Even so, just admiring or even doing good works in the name of Jesus does not produce eternal life (see: Matthew 7:21-23), you must ingest Jesus. If anything is more important to you than Jesus, then you will never have eternal life. Jesus is the bread from heaven, only He can give us eternal life.

Later, “Jesus began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent: “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes... And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hell; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day” (Matthew 11:20-24).

Today there are thriving cities on the beautiful Sea of Galilee. Tiberius was a thriving city in the days of Jesus and, as you can see, it is a thriving city today.

### TIBERIUS ON THE SEA OF GALILEE



(Photo by Chip Thompson)

**So, what happened to the three cities that Jesus cursed? Notice the stark difference between the above picture of Tiberius and the ruins of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum.**

### THE RUINS OF CHORAZIN



(Photo by Chip Thompson)

### THE RUINS OF BETHSAIDA



(Photo: <http://www.elarajexcavations.com> – Fair Use Act)

### THE RUINS OF CAPERNAUM



(Photo: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ifTro-5uRaT8&t=359s> – Fair Use Act)

Each of these cursed cities were destroyed in antiquity and never inhabited again.

Because God is just and because God never changes, you and I will be judged in the same way as the people of old. If we place our trust in Jesus alone as the “Bread of Life” we have eternal life. If we do not place our trust in Jesus alone, the curse of God will be upon us. John chapter 3 ends this way, “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him” (vs 36).