

EXPLORATION: BIBLE

By Chip Thompson

Capernaum was the Hometown of Jesus (Matthew 9:1).

Below is an aerial photo of the ruins of ancient Capernaum where Jesus lived during his ministry years. Several Christian churches were built over the home where Jesus lived in Capernaum (which was the home of Peter's mother-in-law).

The modern octagon shaped building in the picture below was built over the ruins of a first century Jewish home that was destroyed in 70 A.D. by Roman Emperor Vespasian. On top of the ruins of this home was built a rectangular church building that was destroyed by Emperor Hadrian in about 135 A.D. By the fourth century there was a large octagonal Byzantine Church built over these ruins. Why did early Christians venerate this as a holy place? The answer is simple, JESUS lived here.



By the 4th century A.D., a huge octagon church and a huge Jewish synagogue dominated the landscape of this small fishing village. [Photo, YouTube, Sergio & Rhoda in Israel, U.S. Copyright, section 107, Fair Use Act]

Why build TWO HUGE buildings in this small village? The answer is: Rivalry! By the 4th Century Christianity had become the dominant religion in the Middle East and Judaism was trying to complete.

So, what happened in Capernaum that caused Christians to venerate this place? As recorded in the gospels, Jesus performed amazing miracles in this first century Jewish home.

Matthew 8:14-16 says, "When Jesus had come into Peter's house, He saw his wife's mother lying sick with a fever. So, He touched her hand, the fever left her, and she arose and served them. And, when evening had come, they brought to Him

many who were demon-possessed. He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick."

On another occasion, at this same home, some men brought a paralyzed man on a stretcher. When they could not enter the house because of the crowd, they carried the paralytic onto the roof, removed the roof tiles, and lowered the man down. The Bible says, "When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, 'Son, your sins are forgiven.'" [This caused a stir, because only God can forgive sins.] Then Jesus said, "Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk' But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins—He said to the paralytic, 'arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.' Immediately he arose, took up his bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!" (Mark 2:1-12).



This 5th century White Synagogue was built on the foundations of a 1st century synagogue in which Jesus preached one of his most famous sermons. [Photo by HMdb.org, U.S. Copyright, section 107, Fair Use Act]

In John chapter 6, the Bible tells us Jesus entered the synagogue in Capernaum and taught the people. When the people asked Jesus, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."

When the people asked Jesus to prove he had come from God (like Moses who fed Israel with manna from heaven), Jesus said, "The bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world... I am the bread of life." The Jews therefore complained about Him, because He said, "I am the bread which came down from heaven."

Then Jesus replied, "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has eternal life. I am the bread of life... I am the

living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever." The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, "How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?"

Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, 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... He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him... This is the bread which came down from heaven—not as your fathers ate the manna and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever." These were unpleasant words, and the text says, "From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more" (John chapter 6).



Here Pastor Rodney, of the Ephraim Church of the Bible, is standing next to the platform where Jesus would have taught the people in the 1st Century Synagogue in Capernaum. [Photo by Chip Thompson, 2016]

So, what was Jesus saying? Was he encouraging cannibalism? Obviously, NO. What Jesus was trying to explain to the people was the fact that He is literally our eternal life. The only way we can receive eternal life is to have Him living inside of us. We must, so to speak, ingest Jesus.

According to God's Word, when you place your trust in Jesus, his Spirit comes to dwell inside you. Paul wrote, "You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you" (Romans 8:9-11). And this my friends IS ETERNAL LIFE.