

# *Where They Walked*

*by Pastor Eugene Kock*

**A SIX SESSION BIBLE CLASS COURSE WITH INCLUDED DVD**

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## INTRODUCTION

*“Then Jesus made his way through the towns and villages.” Luke 13:22*

Everyone enjoys a vacation of traveling to new and exciting places. Many stops include museum visits and educational venues that give the traveler a greater appreciation of the people and places of the region. ***Where They Walked*** is designed to give your Bible students greater knowledge and understanding of the land of the Bible. The six cities included in this course are filled with rich biblical history and powerful insights into the Scripture.

Author and narrator Pastor Eugene Kock is a retired pastor who has led numerous trips to the Holy Land. His love and respect for this region is evident as he takes the Bible class student into a fascinating study of the archeology, people, and architecture of these cities. He then leads the student into the Scriptures where they discover the significance that these cities played in the Bible.

This course includes a DVD prepared by Pastor Kock. This DVD offers short four minute introductions to each city and is to be shown prior to each session. This will help give your students a greater appreciation and visual sense of the area before it is discussed in class.

Each session also includes a number of discussion questions throughout. Because of the “discussion” nature of the questions it was felt that a teacher guide was not necessary. However, they should incite some lively discussion.

**NOTE:** Lesson pages include a number of photographs. Feel free to print the lessons in black and white or full color. Each lesson is designed to take about one hour, however the Jerusalem lesson may be extended to perhaps two class periods because of the wealth of information included in the nine pages.

### TO SUPPLEMENT THE COURSE

The following DVD will give your class a greater appreciation of Herod’s Temple as it is discussed in the Jerusalem lesson. Through computer animation you can see the magnificence of the size and symbolism portrayed in this great structure.

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## Where They Walked

# CAPERNAUM

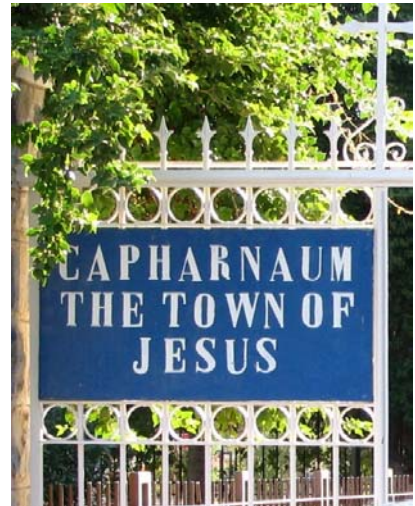
*"His own town" (Matthew 9:1).*

- *Kfar Nahum in Hebrew, "Nahum's Village"*
- *Located on northwest shore of Sea of Galilee*
- *Mentioned 16 times in New Testament only*

If one were to ask a Christian to name some of the important cities in the life of Jesus, the answers would probably include Bethlehem (where he was born), Nazareth (where he

lived most of his life), or Jerusalem (where he suffered, died, and rose again). Obviously these are all important places in our Lord's earthly ministry. But there is another city of great importance that also needs to be considered. That city is Capernaum. Capernaum is the Greek name for the Hebrew site *Kfar Nahum*, "Nahum's Village." Many of the events that occurred during Jesus' ministry of Jesus took place in and around Capernaum. Visitors today enter Capernaum through an iron gate with a sign that reads:

**"Capernaum, the Town of Jesus."** It's a fitting sign, for in Matthew 9:1 we read, *"Jesus stepped into a boat, crossed over and came to his own town."* Capernaum truly was a very special city!



## CAPERNAUM THEN AND NOW

Capernaum is in the portion of Israel called Galilee. It is located on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee. The northern portion of the Jordan River enters the Sea of Galilee about 3 miles to the east of Capernaum.

At the time of Jesus, Capernaum was a significant city with a population between 5,000 and 10,000 people. A very important road of the day connecting Galilee to Damascus called the Via Maris (*Way of the Sea*) passed nearby. This trade route connected Egypt and Syria. Capernaum was also important for the fishing industry on the waters of the Sea of Galilee. Taxes were collected here, and fishermen were charged even on the fish they caught in the sea. John 4:46 indicates that a Roman official and a centurion with his accompanying soldiers were housed in this community. Jesus' comments in Matthew 11:23 might indicate that the people of this city thought quite highly of themselves and their city.

## ARCHEOLOGY

There are presently no people living at the site of this ancient city. Although most of the remains of Capernaum have not been unearthed, two very special places have been uncovered. The most striking ruins are those of an ancient synagogue, built in the second or third century A.D. The two-story building is about 65 feet in length. The building is artistically unique because it is made of white limestone that is in stark contrast to the black basaltic stone that is so prominent in the area. What is even more impressive is that it is believed to have been built on the foundation of the very synagogue used in Jesus' day.

There is an interesting history behind that synagogue. In Luke 7:1-6 it says, *"When Jesus had finished saying all this in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. There a centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, 'This man deserves to have you do this, because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue.' So Jesus went with him."* It is awe-inspiring for visitors to stand in the ruins of this ancient synagogue and to realize that the Lord Jesus may have once preached in this place. It was also in this synagogue that Jesus spoke about himself being the Bread of Life (John 6:25-59). Jesus went to the synagogues and *"taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law"* (Mark 1:22).

The other remarkable find is that of the house believed to have belonged to the apostle Peter. This home is less than 200 feet south of the synagogue. It is here that Peter's mother-in-law would have been healed (Matthew 8:14,15). Many think that this house could have been the headquarters from which Jesus worked during his three-year stay in Capernaum. At one time it might have served as a home church. Sometime after our Lord's resurrection, a church was built over this site. It was later destroyed, but its remains were uncovered by archeologists. In the 1990s a very modern Catholic church was built on this spot. Some refer to it as the "spacecraft church" because of its contemporary design. Part of the floor of the church is glass, allowing visitors to look down into Peter's probable ancient home.



Home of St. Peter

**Discussion: Agree/disagree: Is it important for archeologists to find things dealing with biblical truth? Why or why not?**



Ruins of Synagogue

## JESUS AND CAPERNAUM

Many references are written about Jesus' connection with this city. It achieved importance because the people of Nazareth, Jesus' original hometown located about 20 miles southwest, rejected him. They wanted to take Jesus outside the city of Nazareth and throw him off a cliff to kill him. Although he had visited Capernaum before, Jesus now made it the headquarters of his ministry.

The message of Jesus' Word would be heard not only by the residents of the city but also by the merchants passing through Capernaum on the Via Maris. At least six men working near or in Capernaum became his disciples. Peter (originally from Bethsaida

and later from Capernaum, as mentioned in John 1:44 and Matthew 8:14), Andrew, James, and John were all fishermen from the area who followed Jesus. Philip also came from this area as did Matthew, who served as the town tax collector.

The most important reason for Jesus' move to Capernaum was that it was in fulfillment of biblical prophecy. In Matthew 4:13-16 we read, "*Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali—to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah: 'Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way to the sea, along the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.'*" Zebulun and Naphtali were located just north and west of Capernaum. And the sea spoken about is right in front of the city, just a few hundred feet from the supposed home of Peter.

This city served as the headquarters of Jesus' ministry for about three years. He traveled to and from this city during this period. From here he would sail on the Sea of Galilee and return again. The Sermon on the Mount was preached just a few miles west of Capernaum.

**Discussion: What advantages/disadvantages did Jesus have in moving from Nazareth to Capernaum? Is it easier to share your faith with a stranger or with a friend?**

## MATTHEW: ONE MAN FROM CAPERNAUM

*"As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. 'Follow me,' he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him"* (Matthew 9:9). Matthew was a tax collector and among the most hated people of that day. Tax collectors were numbered with prostitutes and thieves as the worst of the worst. As a Jew, Matthew had sold himself out to the detested Roman Empire. Matthew was the face of the enemy because he collected taxes that were often inflated for the tax collector's benefit, and the people knew it. The very nature of the tax system was one filled with dishonesty. Why would a person like Matthew do such a thing? There was a lot of money to be made in this evil system. By being willing to do such a despised job, Matthew became a man of means.

Capernaum, where Matthew had his tax booth, was also where Jesus had his headquarters. We are not told how and when Matthew first heard about Jesus. Was he part of the many crowds that heard him preach? Had he witnessed one of the many miracles in Capernaum? Had other followers of Jesus talked with him? It should be remembered that Peter, Andrew, James, John, and Philip were also residents of the Capernaum area and likely knew who Matthew was. Might they have witnessed to Matthew? What we do know is that when Jesus invited him to follow, Matthew was ready to leave everything behind. Being a man of means was not satisfying for him. The gospel invitation, however, was filled with hope and purpose. So Matthew became a man not of means, but of meaning. As a man of meaning, he was used by God to share the gospel message. We read in Matthew 9:10 that he invited some of his fellow tax collectors to a meal to meet Jesus. One can only wonder what the conversation at that table was like. God used Matthew to write the first gospel of the New Testament.

**Discussion: Is it wrong or sinful to have riches? How does God want us to use our riches? Are we tempted to be people of means, rather than people of meaning? As a Christian, what meaning do you have in your life?**

## MIRACLES PERFORMED IN CAPERNAUM

One of the miracles that Jesus performed upon returning to Capernaum is referred to as the healing of a paralytic. The power and miracles of Jesus had so filled the community that four men who were carrying this paralyzed man were not able to get to Jesus because of the crowd. They decided to go up on the rooftop of the house where Jesus was speaking. Removing the clay and branches

there, they made an opening through which they lowered the paralyzed man and his bed. The first thing Jesus said to the man was, “*Son, your sins are forgiven.*” One wonders if this is what the man or the four who lowered him wanted to hear. Others questioned Jesus’ ability to forgive sins, and so he answered, “*Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, ‘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 authority on earth to forgive sins... He said to the paralytic, ‘I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.’*” (Mark 2:1-12) Here we see Jesus portrayed as not only a compassionate Savior dealing with our bodily illnesses, but more important, as one who is concerned about our eternal welfare. To spend eternity in heaven, we need our sins forgiven. Jesus lived and died for us for this very reason.

**Discussion: What does this story teach us about the empathy Jesus has toward our illnesses? What does this miracle teach us about priorities?**

In Luke 8:49-56 we read of an even more astonishing miracle. Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue, had a daughter who had died. Jesus told him not to be afraid, to just believe and the girl would be healed. Upon arriving at her home, people were already wailing because of the girl’s death. Jesus asked them to stop, saying she was not dead, just asleep. Although others laughed at him, Jesus said to the girl, “*My child, get up!*” The girl stood up.

Much can be learned from this miracle. Although others may mock us for our belief in the resurrection and our belief that death is but a sleep, Jesus showed that he has power over death. This is our hope; it is based on what Jesus has done for us. We too will rise from the grave to be with Jesus forever.

**Discussion: Why is the resurrection of Jesus the cornerstone of our faith? What might be our response to those who make fun of our Christian beliefs about our resurrection? Why can death be referred to as sleep?**



Capernaum from the Sea

There were other miracles that took place in this city. Very early in Jesus’ ministry, while preaching in the Capernaum synagogue, Jesus was approached by a man possessed of an evil spirit that Jesus quickly cast out (Mark 1:23-26).

The account of the coin in the fish’s mouth also occurred in Capernaum. Peter was asked if Jesus properly paid his taxes. When Peter approached Jesus, the Savior told Peter that everything we have, including the taxes given to the government, are really the Lord’s. Yet so he would not offend anyone, Jesus told Peter to go to the shoreline and cast his fishing line into the water. Immediately he reeled in a fish holding a four-drachma coin in its mouth. It was just enough to pay the disputed taxes (Matthew 17:24-27).

Luke 4 reports a very similar incident when Jesus came into Capernaum. A certain royal official (or nobleman in King Herod’s court) came to Jesus to heal his son. Again, Jesus did so at that very moment.

Mark sums up Jesus’ work in this town when he writes in chapter 1, “*That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. The whole town gathered at the door, and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was*” (verses 32-34).

## “WOE TO YOU, CAPERNAUM”

Capernaum and the nearby cities of Bethsaida and Korazin had been blessed with seeing many of the miracles that Jesus performed. They also had the unique opportunity to hear firsthand Jesus’ preaching and teaching. Unfortunately, most of the people in these cities rejected Jesus and his message. Because they were given such a special opportunity to believe in Jesus, a harsh judgment was placed on them. In Matthew 11:23,24 we read of the woe that Jesus pronounced over Capernaum: *“And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths. If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you.”* As noted, today there are no people living in Capernaum, just the black basaltic stone that serves as a reminder of the woe that Jesus pronounced.

**Discussion: What can we learn from the judgment that was passed on Capernaum, Bethsaida, and Korazin?**

## OTHER REFERENCES TO CAPERNAUM

John 2:12      Jesus stayed overnight in Capernaum with his mother, brothers, and disciples.  
John 6:16-21      Jesus’ disciples were sailing to Capernaum when Jesus came to them walking on the water.  
John 6:22-24      The crowds followed Jesus to Capernaum.