

June 10—Capernaum, Mt. Beatitudes, Boat Ride Galilee, Ancient Boat, St. Peter's fish, Bethsaida, Baptisms, Return Nof Ginosar Kibbutz for night

\$40 = 120 shekel; there is a heat wave: temperature 105 °
Hebrew words: **Ken**: yes; **Lo**: no

We drove a full circle around the **Sea of Galilee** (45 miles).

In Numbers 34, when Moses was given the Promised Land, it was called the Sea of Chinnareth: Sea Kineret (harp—it is harp-shaped). The “Sea” of Galilee is not really a sea, and is not actually in Galilee. It is also called the Sea of the North. The Via Maris (road of the sea) goes by it. The Sea of Galilee is a freshwater lake 150 feet deep and 700 feet below sea level, according to Google. As a source of fresh water it was very important—people were killed in the old days by drinking impure water.

Back in Jesus' day, the news of the world traveled by the Sea of Galilee. From the Mount of Beatitudes it is a ½ hour walk to Capernaum. The Via Maris goes from Megiddo to Damascus. The Kings' Highway goes to Damascus, and Capernaum is on the bridge between the Via Maris and the Kings' Highway. Rumors about Jesus spread to Syria through Galilee. The fishermen, too, sold their fish to all peoples.

Bashan (Golan Heights) has winds blowing in. There are 2 deep canyons (Mt. Arbel and the Gadarenes) that catch the Mediterranean winds, and these winds hit full strength in the afternoons. Sometimes the winds coming in from the desert (Golan Heights) and also from the Mediterranean meet, and then there is a real storm.

If the place designated as the Mount of Beatitudes really is the place, it would make sense, because the slope down to the sea is shaped like a natural amphitheater, and the prevailing winds would also carry a person's voice from the sea to the land. That would be how Jesus could be heard by 5000 people gathered on the slopes.

The Bible says Holy ground, not land. It is a flexible idea. Mt. Moriah is called a holy place. Constantine the Great set up holy places for Christians, or a holy geography. At age 82, his mother, Helena, set up the identifications for various holy places. With more excavations more is always known. The Mount of Olives is a large place. The building honoring the Sermon of the Mount was built in 1935. Churches in Israel are usually built in layers—with a hole to show the “real” place below. On this and many old Christian churches (including the Christian church that is now the Muslim Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem), the 8 sides match the 8 blessings of the Sermon on the Mount. We heard beautiful singing from the people inside the church.

We found a place on the hillside, surrounded by flowers, and with doves cooing all around (there was some mechanical booming music too—reminded me of native-American drums). Pastor Chuck talked about the Sermon on the Mount, and he read all of Matthew 5. As I listened to these familiar words, they suddenly became new again, and touched my soul. These are true things, true relationships, and it pays over and over

to follow the Lord. As I looked at the flowers, and heard the birds, I was reminded that God indeed will care for His people.

Capernaum stood for the Pride of Life—Jesus ends up cursing Capernaum, Bethsaida and Choriazim. Capernaum was indeed destroyed by an earthquake 749 AD.

The Franciscans have been the custodians of the Holy Land sites for the last 700 years (1342 AD). They purchased properties from the Turks (Muslims). This was seen as unfair by other Christian groups, particularly the Greek Orthodox churches (the Franciscans are part of the Roman Catholic Church—the Latin Romans became the Roman Catholics; the Greek speaking Christians—and 50% of the local people in Jesus' day spoke Greek—became the Orthodox Church.

The land around here can be divided among farming, fishing, and shepherding. Today the boulders left over from the volcanoes have been cleared away, so there is more farming possible. The Northern lands depended mostly on fishing. The Golan Heights (Bashan) was for pastures—even today there are some very large cattle raised there. All three (farm/fish/animals) serviced the caravans that came through from the East. News was carried everywhere by caravans.

Capernaum is still ruined, but today it is a Jewish town. Around it are bananas, mangos—and boulders. The Sea of Galilee is in a 20 year drought, but Israel is now desalinizing salt water, and by 2012 it is expected to be cost effective. The size of the Sea of Galilee is today about the same size as it was in Jesus day.

Walking along, we spoke of many things. I learned from Brad Roe (one of our group—Jen McBride's boyfriend) that Mennonites revolutionized mental health treatment after WWII, with their non-violent ways of treating the ill. During and after WWII, many Mennonites chose alternative service, and were given the most dangerous mental patients to care for.

Jeroboam took 10 Tribes after Solomon died. Benjamin had only 2. The Northern area was bigger, and included those main 2 highways (Via Maris and the Kings Highway). Little Judah had safety—(ignored; up in mountains). Isaiah said to trust in the Lord, and not to make treaties. But they did. Assyrians were at war with Egypt, and so they had to conquer and crush the in between areas.

The 10 tribes were not lost before Jesus' day. For instance, Anna, the old woman in the Temple who saw the baby Jesus was from the tribe of Asher.

At the time of the Exile, a Ninevah document said 27, 280 people were taken. The Assyrians also switched populations, creating Samaritans. At that time the land was called the jungles of Samaria, and there were lions and bears. The Samaritans converted to Judaism to stop the killing by the lions and bears (and the killing did stop).

Alexander the Great conquered the land, and shared their culture. Before, Egypt wouldn't LET the people worship Egyptian gods, but the Greeks, with their beautiful

humans, and their power, were willing to share their gods, and this was very tempting to the Samaritans.

Philosophically, the Greeks had no care for the future; the Jews did. The Jews sacrificed to get closer to God; the Greeks sacrificed to keep away from their gods. The only real sin for the Greeks was hubris (pride—like trying to fly to the sun to show you are just as good as the gods) and that was punished terribly. The Jews have one God, with no face to be seen, and many laws. When Moses asked to see God's face, God said "You cannot see my face and live." When comparing the Pharisees and the Sadducees of Jesus' day, it is helpful to see how they reacted to the Greeks. The Sadducees, living in the valleys, were generally rich and also liberal in outlook. They were more like the Greeks. The Pharisees, seeing themselves as set apart for God, lived in the hills. The Greeks did not believe in life after death, and neither did the Sadducees (which is why they were so "Sad, you see").

The Maccabees conquered the land in 103 BC and forcibly made people living in the land convert to Judaism. This came back to bite them later, because Herod's family converted, and that allowed Caesar to consider Herod acceptable as King to the Jewish people. The Jews were the first people to force conversion, according to our guide. Joseph's people were invited at that time to come from Bethlehem to populate Nazareth.

In Jesus' day, Capernaum was a border town. There were Jewish and non-Jewish people there, and also tax collectors and centurions living there. Some people in Galilee became "more Jewish than the Jews"—like today people being called "more Catholic than the Pope". John 8:24—Jesus said unless you believe I am who I say I am, you will die in your sins. I am the Yah in the Hallelujah. The Gospel of Mark mentions Capernaum right in the first chapter. The Synagogues were built one over another—and probably we were seeing the very place Jesus did go to the synagogue (the black walls were of the one in use in Jesus' day; the white walls were from the 3rd or 4th century after Him. Jesus then and now either humbles you, or you raise your hubris, your pride, against Him. Capernaum comes from the City of Naim, or Nahum. Cities with at least 200 families would have synagogues.

In Capernaum we also saw the area where there was a large, 8-sided house. It was presumably built above Peter's home. A church (actually several churches) was built above it, with a hole so people could see down to Peter's time. We also saw some milestones from the Via Maris.

Synagogues were for meeting, discussion, and teaching. The Temple was the only place for sacrifices and priests—teachers and rabbis were in the synagogues. There is an old Jewish saying: the Sabbath kept the Jews, not the Jews keep the Sabbath.

The Jewish Bible was only canonized after the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD.

We took a boat ride on the Sea of Galilee. We sang hymns and songs of praise on the boat. Jesus always saw the need to spread the Good News. Last night, sitting by the Sea of Galilee, we saw stars come out, and hungry fish jumping in the sea. We are called to

be fishers of men—the disciples were called by the authority of Jesus' voice. During one storm on the sea Jesus came walking on the water at about 3 a.m. Peter got out of the boat because of the authority of Jesus' voice. Pastor Chuck was called out of the Navy just a few years away from full retirement—to serve the Lord. The Great Commission includes the phrase "...All authority has been given unto Me; Go..." Another time Jesus was in the boat, taking a nap, when a storm blew up—He calmed the sea, with the authority of His voice.

We saw an ancient fishing boat from Jesus' time. It was very small. That kind of boat may well have been the type Jesus was in, and if so, it could very nearly capsize in a storm. Jesus calmed the waves. Those were the 3 lessons from the Sea that Pastor Chuck shared with us. Then we sang some more, and then we danced the hora (the Happy Song) on the boat.

We ate a Peter lunch—tilapia roasted whole: head, eyes, tail and spines. Later I learned from a non-Christian Jewish person that tilapia is a new name—the older name was always "St. Peter's fish".

After lunch we went to the baptism site on the River Jordan. Several of us were baptized. The best thing was hearing all the individual stories—we are all different. The call to repent of our sins, follow Jesus and accept His forgiveness that He bought with His blood on the cross is open to all people—but we each accept that call individually, and the stories reflect that. It was a good time. Some of us were baptized as believers for the very first time: Mick and Katies Mines, Sue Rogers and Laura Hendrickson. Others were baptized as a reaffirmation of their earlier public proclamation that yes, they choose to follow Jesus. But each had his or her own story to tell, praising God.