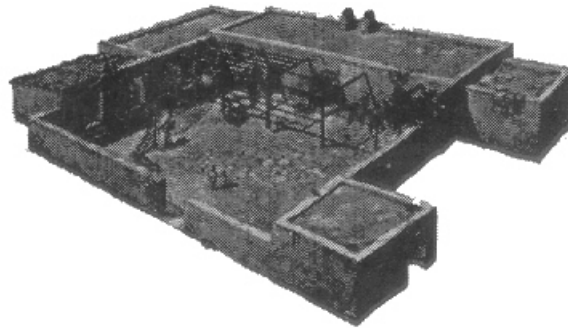


The City Of Andrew And Peter: Bethsaida

Mentioned in the Gospels more often than any other town except Jerusalem and Capernaum, archaeologists believe they have identified New Testament Bethsaida. Birthplace of the apostles Peter, Andrew and Philip it was also the site of Jesus' miracle restoring a blind man's sight (Mk 8:22–26) and feeding the multitude (Lk 19:10–17). Along with Capernaum and Corazin, Bethsaida made up the triangle of villages where Jesus apparently performed the majority of His miracles. It was these same three cities which Jesus condemned for their unbelief (Mt 11:21).

Excavations at the site began in 1987, known by the locals as Et-Tell. One of the largest ancient tells in Israel (over 20 acres), it has a commanding view of the entire Sea of Galilee. Over a half mile from the sea today, evidence suggests in antiquity the sea extended further north.

Archaeologists have found remains of a fishing community from the time of New Testament Bethsaida (probably from Aramaic meaning "House of Fisherman"). While located in a region of Gentile towns, excavation results suggest Bethsaida was predominantly Jewish in culture. A residential quarter including a few simple courtyard-type houses has been uncovered. Constructed of the region's well-known and familiar basalt stone, some structures have been preserved in a new archaeological park.



The fisherman's house.

One house, called the "Fisherman's House" contained anchors, fishing hooks and a needle for mending nets. Another house, called the "Wine Maker's House" yielded a wine cellar with four jars, pruning hooks, an oven and two basalt grinding stones.

Bethsaida's location on the east side of the Jordan River, places it in region predominantly Gentile in makeup. Throughout antiquity, the Jordan River served as a natural border between different political entities. During the New

Testament period Bethsaida and the region east of the Jordan was a different jurisdiction and potentially taxed differently than towns to the west. Could Peter and Andrew have moved from Bethsaida (Jn 1:44) to Capernaum, the first city on the west side (Mk 1:29), to avoid the additional taxation on their fishing profits?

An important city during the later half of the first century AD, Bethsaida was one of the initial objectives of the Roman army durin...

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