

THIS IS A CONTINUATION OF MY POST FROM YESTERDAY ON WHETHER PETER COULD HAVE WRITTEN 1 PETER, BASED ON THE QUESTION OF HIS POSSIBLE LITERACY. READ THE FIRST POST FIRST, OR THIS ONE WON'T MAKE AS MUCH SENSE!

In pursuing this line of inquiry, we might ask what we can know about Peter as a person, prior to his becoming a disciple of Jesus. The answer is that we do not know much at all. The Gospels are consistent only in portraying him as a fisherman from the village of Capernaum in rural Galilee. We can assume that since he was a common laborer, he was not from the landed aristocracy; and since he was from rural Galilee, he would have spoken Aramaic. What can we say about his home “town” of Capernaum?

The historical and social insignificance of the place can be seen by the fact that it is not mentioned in any source, including the Hebrew Bible, prior to the writings of the New Testament. In the Gospels it is portrayed as a fishing village on the “sea” of Galilee (Matt. 4:13; 8:5; 11:23; 17:24; Mark 1:21; 2:1; 9:33; Luke 4:23, 31; 7:1; 10:15; John 2:12; 4:46; 6:17, 24, 59). It is sometimes called a πόλις, although, as we will see, that designation is certainly wrong. Josephus mentions it only because he fell off his horse nearby and was taken there (Life 72); he calls it, more accurately, a “village” (κώμη). The rabbinic literature mentions it as a place of the minim (Midr. Qoh. 1.8.4; 7.26.3). There is no other literary evidence about the first-century town.

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