

## The Sea Of Galilee



When we visited Israel in January of 2012, I loved the days we spent in Galilee and at the Sea of Galilee. One of our most precious times of worship occurred as we sang worship songs, led by Roger using a borrowed guitar, as the tour boat sat quietly during a rainstorm on the water.

The Mark 4:35-41 account of Jesus calming the storm on the Sea of Galilee has always been one of my favorite Bible stories. I love the setting, the boat, the very human panic of the disciples in the storm, and their bewildered reaction to Jesus' display of power and sovereignty over the wind and the waves. The Mark 4 account, paralleled in the eighth chapters of the gospels of both Matthew and Luke, bears the marks of the personal reminiscence of an experienced seaman, one who has seen the events firsthand, including additional details not mentioned in the other accounts such as the time of the day, the other boats traveling with them, and Jesus' position in the boat. We know from early church historians that the Gospel of Mark is the testimony of Simon Peter, an experienced fisherman, seaman, and leader amongst the disciples.

### Mark 4:35-41

<sup>35</sup>On that day, when evening came, He said to them, "Let us go over to the other side." <sup>36</sup>Leaving the crowd, they took Him along with them in the boat, just as He was; and other boats were with Him. <sup>37</sup>And there arose a fierce gale of wind, and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up. <sup>38</sup>Jesus Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" <sup>39</sup>And He got up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Hush, be still." And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm. <sup>40</sup>And He said to

them, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?" <sup>41</sup>They became very much afraid and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?"

Let's look at the scene. Jesus has been teaching and healing in the Galilee region near the town of Capernaum, along the northwestern shore of the lake. Capernaum is the home of four of the disciples – Peter, Andrew, James, & John, all experienced fishermen. The Sea of Galilee is the largest freshwater lake in Israel, about 13 miles long and 8 miles wide, bounded by the Galilee region on the west and the land of the Gerasenes (today's Golan Heights) on the east. At approximately 700 feet below sea level it is the lowest freshwater lake on Earth. The area is very bountiful, with palm trees, flowers, and fruit orchards. At this early point in His ministry, the healing miracles performed by Jesus have swelled the throng of his followers into the thousands. He has just had a difficult and trying morning. His own family has come down from Nazareth and attempted to kidnap him, because they think he is out of his mind. The Pharisees have accused him of being possessed. In the early afternoon, He leaves the house in Capernaum and goes down to the shore of the lake to teach. In order to avoid the press of the crowd as related in Mark 4:1, Jesus teaches from a boat, with the people gathered along the seashore and the hillsides. To be continued next week. Here is a link to last week's post now archived on Galilee's website. <https://goo.gl/M5kTKK>

Comments on the pictures: When we toured Israel in 2012, we visited Capernaum and the nearby Church of the Beatitudes where it is believed that Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount. As we walked down the hillside towards the Sea of Galilee and our bus, it was very evident that the hillside forms a natural amphitheater. I could see a fishing boat a long way off in the distance (picture) and was shocked at how well I could hear the engine. It really helped me to envision how Jesus could have been heard by thousands of people as he taught from a boat anchored near the shore.