

87 Bethsaida

Names (also known as)

Khirbet et-Tell

Etymology

Greek - From Aramaic - *bet-sayda* – “house or place of fishing”.

Location/Description



Bethsaida was a city in Galilee on the NE coast of the Sea of Tiberias (John 1:44; 12:21).

Probably located at Aradj, about a mile east of where the Jordan River enters the Sea of Galilee on the north.

Located in the land of Geshur (Josh. 13:11-13), the territory of King David’s third wife, Maacah (2 Sam. 3:3).

Scriptural references

New Testament

Matt. 11:21; Mark 6:45; 8:22; Luke 9:10; 10:13; John 1:44; 12:21.

Brief history

Bethsaida of Gaulanitis, afterward called Julias. This is where it is felt to be the ‘desolate place’ that Christ fed the five thousand (cp. Lk 9:10-17) and cured ‘those that had need of healing’

Originally a small town, but Philip the tetrarch, called it Julias (after Julia, the daughter of the Emperor Augustus – Josephus Ant.18.2.1).



2009 aerial photo of the excavation of Bethsaida

It was the birthplace of Peter, Andrew and Philip (John 1:44), although Peter and Andrew resided at Capernaum where their fishing business was located. Peter’s house was near the synagogue (Mark 1:21,29).

Christ upbraided the inhabitants of Bethsaida for not receiving his teachings (Luke 10:13).

It was located just 3 miles from Chorazin, its companion in Christ’s curse (Matt. 11:21). The cursed city was destroyed during the 4th century AD.

Jesus walked on water on the journey to Bethsaida (Mark 6:45-51). It was here on the northern tip of the Sea of Galilee, in the hill country where the five thousand were fed – John’s fourth ‘sign’ (Luke 9:10-17).

Christ restored sight to the blind man (Mark 8:22-26), as it was on the road to Caesarea Philippi, visited next by him (Matt. 8:27).

Archaeology Findings

The ruins cover approx. 20 acres on a hill.

The most significant find at Bethsaida to date, is a ninth century BC gate.

Sources:

The Eight Signs of John – Bro. John Ullman, Logos Publications, 1981

Unger’s Bible Dictionary, Moody Press

Jewish Virtual Library – Holy Sites, Bethsaida
www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org

www.biblewalks.com/Bethsaida

(Compiler – Stephen Macfarlane)