

Biblical History and Archaeology of the town of Capernaum

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ABSTRACT: This work focused on the town of Capernaum. The town is relevant because it is where Jesus exercised most part of his ministry. The aim of the study was to see if there are archaeological finds there, whether texts or inscriptions that would shed light to a better understanding of the historical Jesus. Two major excavated structures seen in Capernaum are the synagogue and the house of Peter. Also, two major titles given to Jesus in the gospels were isolated, namely, Jesus as exorcist and as Son of Man. The method used for the research is archaeologico-historical investigation. There was no written text or inscription found that pointed to those titles. The study therefore concluded by asserting that the early church gave those titles to Jesus.

KEYWORDS - Archaeology, Capernaum, Galilee, Synagogue, Women, Historical Jesus

I. INTRODUCTION

The quest for the historical Jesus will be inadequate without making a mention of his ministry, and the mention of his ministry brings to focus the territory of the ministry. In consideration of this fact, the town —Capernaum becomes almost a household name. In this paper, I want to do a study of the ancient town Capernaum. I intend to do a synopsis of the major archaeological finds there, prominent among which are the synagogue and the house of Peter. The aim of investigating the archaeological excavations in Capernaum is to see if any of the finds would help to come to a clearer understanding of the historical Jesus, especially the titles given to him in the canonical Gospels.

II. AIM

This paper will have two major parts. My aim in the first part is to identify the town of Capernaum where Jesus resided and exercised most part of his ministry. In the second part, effort will be made to see if in any way(s), archaeological finds help to shed light on the titles given to Jesus in the canonical gospels. The method to be used in the study is that of an archaeological and a historical investigation, and the style of writing is descriptive and evaluative.

By the term archaeology, we want it to be understood as the study of ancient cities and things found in them. The things can be animals, plants, rocks, human parts and things that must have been used by human beings. The focus on human beings and on human cities has so far dominated archaeological studies in Israel/Palestine. This has made, especially, biblical archaeology to appear restricted, inexhaustive and even myopic. Scholars however, call for a more inclusive approach that involves specialists in various aspects of life. Levy (1995) thinks of —multidisciplinary projects that include specialists in archaeozoology, archaeobotany, geology, epigraphy (p.xii). The reason for the multidisciplinary approach in doing archaeology is that human beings live in environments where a lot of factors come into play, all at the same time. This is the human reality and the human context. So, a holistic archaeology would mean studying the human being in his or her particular context. This is called —contextual archaeology. As Levy reflected, the first thing in contextual archaeology is a consideration of the factors that make life possible. He further pointed out that —human ecosystems are composed of the atmosphere, hydrosphere, lithosphere, and biosphere (p.xii). To identify and decipher the type or components of the air, the water, the rocks and living things whose fossils are found in Capernaum will say something meaningful about the ancient town of Capernaum. To study the Galilean town of Capernaum, I shall be conscious of Cornfeld's (1976) remark that:

- The study of archaeology leads the biblical student, nevertheless, to an unavoidable risk. He may find out that the biblical events did not occur the way described, or that many happened in different historical order, thus upsetting the chronological sequence set forth by the writers of the Bible (p.1).

He further cautioned that —[the student] cannot and does not set out to prove that —the bible is true in line with the traditionalist approach of the believer who accepts the biblical text literally, including the short antiquity of man upon the earth (p. 1-2). Despite this, we can say that both the biblical text and archaeology can give to each other mutual information, concerning the historical Jesus, and the town of Capernaum where he did his ministry.

Discussing this paper, I will start by identifying the land of Galilee before Capernaum. Next, I will discuss the archaeological finds in Capernaum. In the second part I will interpret the gospel texts set on Capernaum, so as to come to a new, or better understanding of the historical Jesus, in support of or in disagreement with how he has thus far been seen. All biblical quotations are taken from The Catholic Study Bible: The New American Bible, henceforth to be referred to as NAB.

III. IDENTIFICATION OF GALILEE



In the first century C.E., Galilee was in the northern part of Palestine, today known as Israel. In the Roman period, it belonged to the entire kingdom ruled by Herod the Great (37 – 4 B.C.E.), with Samaria falling into the Centre of both Judea and Galilee. It is important to note that as far back as in 722 B.C.E., the Assyrians under Tiglath-pileser III attacked and conquered the Northern Kingdom, and Galilee was the first to become a vassal state of Assyria, with the headquarter at Megiddo (then called tell el- Mutesellim, an Arabic expression which means —the governor's Tell). This accounts for how the place came to be speaking Aramaic which was the western dialect, as opposed to Syriac which was the eastern dialect of the same language spoken by Jesus and his apostles just like many other Palestinians in the first century C.E. When King Herod the Great died, his kingdom was divided among his three sons by the Romans, and these began to rule as prince governors: Archelaus became the governor of Judea with the capital city at Jerusalem, Antipas the governor of Galilee with the capital city as Sepphoris (called Zippori in Hebrew and later to be transferred to Tiberias, a city on the lake), and Philip the governor of Gaulanitis (known as Golan today) with its capital as Baniyas (later to be called Caesarea Philippi). At the death of Philip, his own section was annexed to Syria by the Romans. Biblically, it is the entire region that was allocated to the tribes of Zebulun by Joshua, situated on the plain of Esdraelon (Jezreel) or Southern Galilee, and Naphtali Northern Galilee (Jos 19:10-15, 32-39). Galilee is sometimes called —Galilee (—district) of the Gentiles (Isa 8:23). Levine (1992) edited a book which is fundamentally a collection of articles based on The Galilee in Late Antiquity. The book importantly informs us that Galilee was important for two major factors. First, it was the centre of Jewish life after the destruction of the city of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. Second, it was a region of prime importance in early Christian history. Levine gave the information concerning scholars who have become interested in doing up-to-date research on Galilee. They include Americans, Israelis, Europeans, Jews, Christians, historians, archaeologists, students of New Testament and rabbinic literature, and scholars who focus on the sociological and cultural aspects of Galilee. In all, the book contains twenty essays which discussed a lot of issues such as the early Christians, Jewish-Christian conflict, first-century social and economic conditions, the Roman military and rule in Galilee, the role of the rabbi in Jewish society, the sages and the synagogues and so many other issues that make the book both a literature with a diversity of interests and yet a literature of a unity of interests, in so far as it concerns Galilee

in antiquity. What can be said is that, in sum, the book is a collection of essays about Galilee's culture, religious movements, politics, and its socio-economic structure. These issues are of significance to anyone, student or scholar, who embarks on a historical investigation into the life of Galilee in both before the birth of Jesus and a few centuries after his birth. In a more particular way, the ministry of Jesus put Galilee on the spotlight. To discuss Galilee without considering its relationship with Jesus and vice versa leaves a fundamental historical gap. To discuss the person of Jesus without a more-than-in passing mention of Galilee smacks of inadequacy. This is the reason Freyne (2004) devoted time, energy and scholarship to reconstruct the social, geographical, and religious landscape of first-century Galilee. He contended that in discussing the person of Jesus, he (Jesus) must be understood specifically as a Jewish Galilean, rooted in local traditions, rather than the Hellenized or politically rebellious context he is often viewed. Freyne's contribution will be discussed later in this work when it comes to examining if there are any finds in Capernaum that will help to substantiate the titles given to Jesus in the Gospels.

Geographically, Galilee is bounded on the south by the valley of Jezreel, on the east by the sea of Galilee, on the north by Lebanon and Syria, and on the west by the town of Acco (Ptolemais) on the coast of the Mediterranean sea. Compared to southern Palestine, it is high, cool and green. As Negev (1986) remarked —it is well watered by the winter rains and with numerous and abundant springs (p.149). Major roads that emanate from Caesarea and Acco (that is from the East of the Mediterranean Sea) to the Lakeshore city of Tiberias would have posed a great advantage to the inland villages, facilitating commerce and the transportation of agricultural products for the people. The expressions —Northern Galilee and —Southern Galilee is a geographical division made by nature.

The essays contained in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha* on the geography of Galilee indicate that Galilee has such gifts of nature as springs, mountains, the Great Valley and the Sea (Lake) of Galilee. Galilee is dotted with many springs. For this reason, the area was not well inhabited by people. Granting that it was not well populated, much did not happen there, and because much did not take place there, it was not relevant concerning biblical history. However, the appearance of Jesus in history changed the social, cultural and economic statuses of Galilee.

Apart from the mountains, another major feature that characterizes the geographical location of Galilee is that, toward the eastern part is located the Rift Valley. This valley divides the area into Upper (Northern) Galilee and Lower (southern) Galilee. Both parts can boast of wide valleys which facilitate agriculture. Special feature of Palestinian farming is the cultivation on the slopes, with ridges strategically and intentionally designed to check the menace of erosion. It is not surprising then that agriculture was the mainstay of the economy of the area. It is in this region, - Israel and Jordan - that the earth crust went so deep, causing the most profound level of the earth in the world below sea level. The Rift Valley goes from Turkey (Asia) to East Africa. Another major gift of nature that characterizes Galilee is the Chinnereth or the Sea of Galilee (which is also known as the Sea of Tiberias) or simply the Lake of Galilee. The sea is said to have a length of 20 km or 12 miles and a depth of 210 m or 700 ft, being fed with water by River Jordan. More than 20 species of fishes are said to live in the lake. The water of the lake is wholesome and so enhances the breeding of fish. This reality accounts for the reason why the fishing occupation was popular in Palestine at the time of Jesus and why the lake region enhanced business. From any angle one looks at it, Galilee is blessed: The land is good for cultivation; the climate is good for habitation; the lake is good for fishing; and, the place is good for commerce. Therefore, in the first century C.E., the place would have attracted a lot of people from different places for business transaction. The indigenous people would have had access to Aramaic the conversational language of the area at that time, Greek the language of education at that time because of Greek influence, and of course their native Hebrew which was the language of worship. The fishing industry brought many people to the area. This in turn caused multiple growth such as economic and socio-religious growth. The fact that people flocked around the area explains why Jesus's ministry was concentrated around that area. However, the ministry of Jesus was mostly in Lower Galilee. Antipas was the governor then. Having said this, I will now try to identify the town of Capernaum, the city on the north west shore of the Lake of Galilee, and where Jesus did most of his ministry.

IV. CAPERNAUM



Capernaum is located at a mile from the north west of the sea of Galilee. From its western location going to the north one can count two miles before the place from where the River Jordan feeds the Lake with water. The Gospel of Matthew tells us that: —Jesus left Nazareth and went to live in Capernaum by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtalil (Matt 4:13). In the Bible, Capernaum is reproached together with Chorazin and Bethsaida for their lack of repentance despite the work Jesus did in them (Matt 11:20-24; Luke 10:13-15). The town Capernaum is bounded by Chorazin on the north, by Bethsaida on the north east, by the lake on the east, and by Tabgha on the south. The town is located at the border between the territories of Herod Antipas (Galilee) and Herod Philip (Gaulanitis) and Bethsaida. This means it was a neighboring town to Migdal (Magdala) in the territory of Philip (Gaulanitis) where there was a tower for smoking fish (salty). The name ‘Migdal’ means —tower. This was the system for preservation of fish at the epoch. And since it was a border crossing, Horsely (1995) remarked that —it housed a garrison of —royal troops under Antipas (p.193). It gets its name from the Hebrew word kefar which means —a small village, and Nahum or Hum. The combination gives —the village of Nahum or kefarnahum. The name suggests it must have been a small village. Horsely believes that it was a town of not more than —one thousand inhabitants (p.194). Be that as it may, even if many people may not have inhabited in it, the agricultural, water and commercial assets must have attracted many people to the town. These contributed in no small measure to the culture formation of the place. Illan (1995) distinguishes between —Exogenous and —Endogenous factors that lead to culture formation. The former concerns external factors such as the trooping in of people from other places while the latter refers to internal factors such as the gains accruing from agricultural resources. In the case of Capernaum, internal factors must have contributed a lot.

Capernaum is the place where Jesus met and called the first disciples the two sets of brothers Peter and Andrew, and James and John. Peter lived there. Jesus lodged there from time to time. It is the only town called —the town of Jesus (Matt 9:1). This town was identified in 1865 by C. Wilson based on the finds, mainly synagogue and the house said to be Peter’s.

V. EXCAVATIONS

a) THE SYNAGOGUE



The synagogue in Capernaum has been identified as the biggest of all synagogues excavated in Galilee. The structure is like a double rectangle. The two long walls face north and south, while the short walls face west and east. With three entrance doors on the south, one enters from there, and still faces south or toward Jerusalem. As Finegan (1992) observed, the synagogue was built in conformity with the —basilica form or the Greco-Roman

assembly hall' (p.101). Finegan further stated that just as Jewish architectural plans were influenced by the Greco-Roman styles so also —Jewish architectural plans influenced Christian ones. This is shown in the fact that in the Byzantine period Christian churches were built in the form of basilicas, with an orientation to the east (p.101). The entrance is preceded by a flight of steps. This means that the platform is elevated, just like that of Chorazin. It is built in consonance with the Mishna prescription which states that —A synagogue should be built in prominent part of the town such as the top of a hill, close to the seashore or near spring (Negev, 1986, p.360). In Capernaum, the synagogue is at the centre of the town. Scholars do not agree on the dating but it is considered to be —a Galilean style of synagogue, considering the architectural design and style of decoration. It is constructed with white limestone as opposed to the one of Chorazin which is built with black basalt.

In the inside one sees two aisles. It must have had a moveable torah shrine. Built as a two-storied house, it has an open court yard upstairs and a gallery. A special feature of the synagogue is its internal decorations. These comprise motifs of plants, animals, geometric shapes, mythological beings. Religious motifs include the menorah (the seven-lamp candlestand, the shield or star of David (called the hexagram because it has six points), the seal of Solomon (called the pentagram because it has five sides). It is also important to mention the Corinthian capitals seen in the synagogue.

The Gospel of Luke mentions a centurion who is said to have built the synagogue (7:5). If one follows this information, a question concerning the dating of the synagogue arises. Many scholars are of the conviction that apart from the one at Masada there is no synagogue that can be dated in Palestine before the third century of the Common Era. Finegan (1992) teaches us that the following excavations made in 1974 on the Western wall of the synagogue —the western wall shows a wall constructed of black basalt at the base, one top of which is another wall made of limestone blocks which are not in alignment with the basalt stones (p.104). With this he surmised that a new synagogue must have been built on top of another, which according to him can be dated to the time of the Ptolemies (that is, before the Roman period) judging from the coins excavated on the site. Two dates can be possibly ascribed to the synagogue: Considering the architectural plan, it can be dated 3rd century C.E., but when one considers other archaeological finds such as coins, it can be dated about the 4th century C.E. or even later.

Discussing Palestinian synagogues in general, Negev (1986) asked two striking questions. First, he asked whether there was a gallery or balcony for women? Second, he asked whether there was a permanent place for the Torah shrine (p.360) Responding to the last question, one could say that initially there was no permanent place for the Torah shrine.

b) THE MOVEABLE TORAH SHRINE



The Torah would have been brought in a procession during prayer. What gives impetus to this inference is that there was no find to indicate that there was a place made specifically for the Torah shrine, otherwise, it would not be called portable. Before giving a response to Negev's second question, it is good to say a few additional things concerning the synagogue.

The word —synagogue comes from the Greek word *synagōgē* which means —gathering or —assembly. The plural *synagoga* means —assemblies. It meant a community gathering. As Horsley (1995) pointed out, —if a

synagōgē was the whole community including social – economic aspects and not specially religious building, in the Jewish diaspora, then we would expect that a synagōgē would be a social – economic as well as a religious congregation even more clearly in Palestinian villages each of which was a semi-autonomous community (pp. 223-224). He remarked correctly that —scholars reading rabbinic texts as with the assumption that the synagogue was specially a religious institution have difficulty determining whether certain passages refer to —the synagogue itself or other community affairs (p.228). In another work which came later, Horsley (1996) made three more important remarks:

- There were virtually no —synagogues buildings until the third century C.E. after in Palestine/Galilee.
- In a traditional agrarian society such as ancient Galilee, where the vast majority of people lived in villages and towns, the religious and social - -economic aspects of community life were virtually inseparable, in contrast with modern Western assumptions.
- The basic meaning of the ancient Greek term —synagōgē (from which the word synagogue derives) and the parallel Hebrew term Knesset is —assembly or —congregation (p.132).

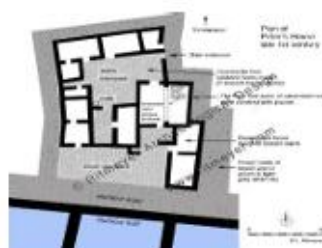
These points are very convincing. A synagogue, viewed as a building is a later development. And synagogue seen as place of worship is a far later development. If a synagogue was a building for the assembly of the entire community to discuss social, economic and religious issues, it means every member of the community, men and women would have been there. If so, it becomes illogical to conceive that after deliberating on social and economic matters, women would have been ushered into a different locale when the time for prayer arrived. Brooten (1982) not only asserted that there were women leaders in the synagogues, she defended the thesis by counteracting the previously prevailing notion that deemphasized the role of women in ancient synagogues.

She used nineteen inscriptions to challenge the ideas about particular women who were recognized and honored by their relatives or their communities with titles such as —head of synagogue, —leader, —elder, —mother of the synagogue, and women of priestly class / priestess or who arrogated such titles to themselves as a remembrance for their contributions in the synagogues. Previously, the opinion of many scholars was that those titles did not suggest that Coelia Paterna, Gaududentia, Rufina and the other women referred to in the excavated inscriptions carried out any functions at all. Brooten argued that —women served as leaders in a number of synagogues during the Roman and Byzantine periods. The fulcrum of her argument reposed on the nineteen Greek and Latin inscriptions in which women bear the titles —head of the synagogue, —leader, —elder, —mother of the synagogue and —priestess (pp.1-2). As Brooten remarked, the dates carried by those inscriptions ranged between 27 B.C.E. to perhaps the sixth century of our era. Moreover, the inscriptions originated from Italy, Asia Minor, Egypt and Palestine. The list of women who were donors in ancient synagogues is provided in the Appendix page by Brooten (pp.157-166). So, if women were useful in this way in ancient synagogues, I do not think there was a gallery meant particularly for women during prayer. Again, considering the portable Torah shrine excavated at Peter's house in Capernaum, my submission is that if the synagogue served the community for everything, and the Torah is considered sacred, it becomes conceivable that, after deliberations on secular matters, the Torah would have been brought ceremoniously in a procession during worship.

c) THE HOUSE OF PETER



Insula Sacra



Plan of Peter's House

Some archaeologists have come to conclude that the house was built in about the first century before the birth of Jesus, and during the Hellenistic era. The Franciscans who excavated the house called it Insula Sacra 1. The

house has undergone many stages of valorization. A large part of the gospel of Mark is set in the house that is supposed to be the house of Peter (1:16—8:21). As Cornfeld (1976) indicated, by the time the Gospel of Mark was written (69-70 C.E.) it would have become a house church (*Domus Ecclesiae*) for the Jewish Christians who were then called —minim|| (p.280). In the 4th century C.E., a wall made of black basalt was built around it. In the Byzantine period, about the 5th c., an octagonal church (eight – sided structure) was built by pilgrims to the Holy Land, over the house of peter.

The structure had two entrances, one on the north and another on the south west. It also had two courtyards each on both poles. The *sallavenerata* (venerated room) is the largest room seen on the northern side, surrounded by other rooms that lead to the courtyards shortly before the walls.

The other rooms would have been different apartments belonging to other inhabitants of the same house.

d) VENERATED ROOM



The walls would have been thatched, thereby making it possible for the bearers of the paralytic to open and lower him from there (Mark 2:1-12). What distinguishes the venerated room from other rooms is that it is wider, and with plastered walls. O'Connor (1998) claims that —prior to the mid – C1 AD the broken pottery found in the floor revealed normal family use; thereafter only storage jars and lamps were found|| (p.218). This inference hinges on the claim that the house was initially used as a private house, but later came to be used as a public house. What makes this claim credible is the many Greek, Aramaic and Latin graffiti found in that room. Some of the graffiti bear different titles for Jesus, such as —the Christ,|| —the Lord,|| etc. Some bear cultic expressions like —Amen|| and —Kyrie Eleison.|| The name of Peter and that of Berenice are even seen in some. The opinion is that Berenice was the name of the woman cured by Jesus in that house. The wall bears multi-colour paintings, with motifs of plants, flowers and crosses. Many archaeologists are convinced that these elements prove that at a time the house became a house church (*domus ecclesiae*).

When the early Christian pilgrims to the Holy Land in the 4th century C.E. saw this, they did not hesitate to associate the house with Peter and Andrew, who would have practised their fishing occupation from there (Matt 5:18-20). Fishing hooks were also said to have been seen there. The 4th century woman pilgrim Egeria in her diary identified it as —The house of the prince of the apostles.|| The basic thing to be understood is that that house was a living house which came to be changed to a house of prayer. Cornfeld (1976) commenting on the faith of the early church or the Jewish Christians says that —their graffiti on the plastered wall of the place of worship testify to their faith in Jesus , the Christ, the Lord, the Most High, and God, and to their veneration of Peter, the local saint|| (p.280). From the Jewish Christians, the house moved into the hands of non-Jewish Christians who built the octagonal church over the house of Peter. This suggests that at a time the octagonal church would have replaced the venerated room as a memorial church for worship.

Notwithstanding all the finds, there are still some questions. Breytenbach (1999) wonders —whether the archaeological evidence allows the firm conclusion that the alleged house of Peter under the octagonal church has been a meeting place for Christians since the first century|| (p.81). He continued by arguing that —the identification between the house and Peter cannot be made on the basis of the epigraphic evidence found on the site|| (p.81). He has no problem accepting that —most likely Peter and Andrew's house had been a place of Christian gathering and teaching even before Mark wrote the Gospel . . . that is why Mark told his story in such a way that this house becomes the place of healing and especially teaching of the disciples|| (p.84). The author's

contention is that the —house of Peter| existed before the Gospel of Mark was written. This is because, it may have been venerated and that was why Mark used it as setting for his account. One cannot really prove, even with all the finds that the house called the house of Peter is the one mentioned by Mark in his Gospel. Breytenbach's opinion is convincing to me to assert that —the tradition that recognizes the place as place of meeting of Christians dates back to the 60s of the first century C.E., when the Gospel was written| (p.84).

At the end of this section, it is important to point out the proximity between the synagogue and the house church of the Christians at that time. Since there is no written information to indicate that there were rifts between the two groups, the presupposition is that they coexisted well. In the last part of this paper, I shall reread the Gospel texts set on Capernaum for better understanding of the historical Jesus. This intention is inspired by the words of King (1990), that —archaeology includes both unwritten and written discoveries. He buttressed his view by saying that what constitutes —unwritten| discoveries are artifacts like pottery, tools, jewelry, weapons, and fortifications. On the other hand, what constitutes —written| discoveries are from excavated materials are inscriptions, texts, seals, and ostraca (inscribed potsherds; that is, broken fragments of pottery with words scratched on them. The objective here is to see if there are finds in Capernaum, especially in the house of Peter, that have inscriptions, texts, seals or words scratched on them that give information or support the two major titles given to Jesus in the canonical Gospels, namely, exorcist or miracle worker or healer and Son of Man.

VI. INTERPRETATION OF THE TEXTS

a) JESUS THE EXORCIST AND MIRACLE WORKER

In Mark 2:21 we read about the exorcizing of the demoniac at Capernaum in the synagogue. This healing followed the proclamation at the beginning of Jesus' ministry: —This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospell (Mark 1:15). The liberation of people who were held captive by the devil is a sure sign of the in-breaking of the kingdom of God. Jesus' rebuking and commanding of the demons: —Quiet! Come out of him| (1:25), is indicative of Jesus' mastery of the devil. This command came because the demon identified Jesus, by calling even his name. As was remarked by Tuckett (2001), —uttering of the other person's name was thought to be the means of overpowering your opponent| (p.890). The feeling of awe and amazement in the people characterizes miracles, yet this does not make Jesus distinct. What makes him distinct is his style which is confirmed by the people. He teaches with authority and exorcizes with command. He is an exorcist with a difference. Seeing Jesus as an exorcist brings one to the conversation about the —Quests of the Historical Jesus.| Starting fro1778 to date there have been three quests.

Boring (1996) is one of the New Testament scholars that have made outstanding contributions to the —Third Quest of the Historical Jesus.| Before saying something about his contribution, it is good to do a brief rundown of the preceding quests. The First Quest of the Historical Jesus was a movement made up of scholars who carried out researches with the aim to differentiate between the historical Jesus and the Christ proclaimed through faith by Christians. This movement dates from 1778 to 1906. The pioneer of this first quest was Samuel Reimarus. His main argument is that Jesus has to be seen as a Jewish preacher who had political expectations and that the disciples later changed his message. After Reimarus, Other scholars such as David Friedrich Strauss (1835), Ernest Renan (1863) and William Wrede also made interventions to the conversation concerning how to reconstruct the historical Jesus. However, Albert Schweitzer's book *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (1906) was a salient debut. He departed from Reimarus' major view that Jesus should be seen from the point of view of a first-century Jewish history. Schweitzer contended that Jesus has to be seen as an apocalyptic Jewish prophet who anticipated the imminent coming of the kingdom of God. The contribution of the First Quest of the historical Jesus resides in the fact that it initiated the use of the scientific or the historical-critical method in the academic study of the person of Jesus.

The Second Quest started from the 1950s to the 1970s as a movement in the study of the New Testament, especially the canonical gospels. This was after the Enlightenment variously called the age of skepticism, the age of reason, the age of intellectual, scientific and philosophical revolution in Europe, between the 17th and 18th centuries. This second quest sought to recover reliable historical information about Jesus after the age of

doubt. The context was this: The German scholar, Rudolf Bultmann contended that considering the fact that little is known about the historical Jesus, Christian faith should concentrate on the kerygma (the proclaimed Christ) rather than on the reconstructed life of Jesus. For this reason, Ernest Käsemann, Bultmann's student, launched the Second Quest by arguing that it was both possible and necessary to distinguish the historical Jesus from later church traditions. The salient features of this second quest are basically bipartite. First, it used the scientific method, that is, the historical-critical method in the study of the Gospels. Second, it applied four criteria referred to as the criteria of authenticity to assess the sayings and actions of Jesus so as to know whether they are historical or not. The four criteria are: the criterion of multiple attestation, the criterion of embarrassment, the criterion of coherence, and the criterion of coherence. It is important to note that during the Enlightenment period, being also the age of philosophy, reason and doubt, the miracles of Jesus were played down and alleged to have been invented by the early church. The prominent proponents of this second quest are Ernest Käsemann, Günther Bornkamm and James M. Robinson. The strength of this second quest lies in the fact that it renewed interest in the quest of the historical Jesus and opened the base for the third quest. This became necessary because of the demerit of the second quest, that is, its insistence on only elements that met the historical criterion. This opened the way for the Third quest.

The context and the main argument of the scholars who became the advocates in the third quest is that Jesus should be seen as a Jewish teacher and prophet living under Roman rule. The major teachings of this third quest emphasize Jesus' identity as a Jew and the importance of the Judaism of the first-century C.E. Furthermore, the third quest makes ample use of archaeological finds, ancient history, and Jewish literature, especially, the Dead Sea Scrolls and the literary works of the Jewish historian, Josephus. The issues that are striking in the Third Quest are the person of Jesus, his message, his ministry and his intention. The main scholars who have been advocates of the third quest are E.P. Sanders, N.T. Wright, John P. Meier, James Dunes D.G. Dunn and Geza Vermes. It is based on this note that it becomes relevant to make reference to Boring (1996) who is one of the New Testament scholars that have shown interest in the Third Quest.

He indicated the intricacies, the nuances and the complexity of the way people had pictured the —historical Jesus. He points out the inadequacies found in the different ways scholars express it, such as, —Jesus of history and the Christ of faith, —the historical Jesus and the historian's Jesus, —Jesus as Jesus really was, —Jesus as seen in purely historical terms, —Jesus as seen within various perspectives of faith and theology. In the bid to reconstruct Jesus, Boring proposed a three-point outline, namely, the excavated Jesus, the reconstructed Jesus, and the theologized Jesus. According to him, the —theologized Jesus is the perception one has about Jesus judging from what theologians and Bible scholars have said. Notwithstanding the fact that the expression —historical Jesus is complex and fraught with deficiencies, it has come to be taken to refer to the man Jesus who lived in Palestine more than 2000 years ago, died, rose and was confessed as the Risen One in the Gospel without prejudice to how he is seen by historians or interpreted by theologians. Boring's poignant remark is that historians, scholars or experts of any other fields of study do not have the capacity of saying who Jesus was or is. It is the —apostolic faith, echoed in the four canonical gospels, accepted and canonized by the Church which he variously called the —dominant church, —the orthodox church and —canonical Christianity that can say a theological interpretation about Jesus is true or false. The archaeology of Capernaum does not shed any light to the title of —exorcist or —miracle worker or —healer given to Jesus in the gospels. There is no text or inscription that portrays that. In the absence of any finds, I infer that the titles seen in the Gospel are echoes of how the early Christians and the early church saw Jesus.

b) JESUS THE SON OF MAN

Another title given to Jesus in the canonical gospels is —Son of Man. In Mark 2:1-12, we read about the healing of the paralytic. It is supposed to have taken place in Peter's house (the venerated room) where he was immersed in a crowd. The bearers of the paralytic had to open the roof of the wall to be able to bring in the sick man. The show of faith is significant: —When Jesus saw their faith . . . (12:1). This is very striking to note that the factor necessary for healing for Jesus is —faith. This helps us to understand the historical Jesus. In this situation, it is the faith of the carriers of the paralytic. This shows how much Jesus honours faith that produces works of love. The healing of the paralyzed man gives Mark the opportunity to identify Jesus as the —Son of

Man: —But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority to forgive sins on earth (v. 10). This is one of the titles of Jesus that has provoked no small debate, whether Jesus identified himself as the Son of Man or it was the early church who placed it on Jesus' mouth.

Reddish (1990) remarked that in the book of The Similitudes of Enoch, Enoch the great grandfather of Noah is the one called the Son of Man (1 En 71:14), and also in Chapters 1 – 70. In the book of Daniel, —one like a son of man (7:13) is both the —Messiah (p.168) and the —righteous one, (p.172) as was observed by Reddish (p.187). That the title —Son of Man is used at all for Jesus shows how the early church considered him. This title then is a faith affirmation like the titles of exorcist, miracle worker and healer. Concerning this title also, there is no archaeological find in Capernaum, either in form of text or inscription that corroborates this. Therefore, my assertion is that the early church gave the title to Jesus. This shows that the early church saw Jesus not just as an exorcist, miracle worker or healer, Jesus is a *jamais vu* exorcist. This fact points to the preeminent role of the Church in saying who Jesus is and who or what he is not.

VII. CONCLUSION

In this article I tried to conduct a study of the ancient town of Capernaum. The work has two parts and yet forms an ensemble. Part one focused on the identification of Capernaum. It is a town in Galilee, and Galilee itself was the northern region of the first century C.E. Palestine, and is still the northern region of the present-day Israel. Capernaum is identified as a town located on the Lower or Southern part of Galilee, at a point where it enters into a triangular neighbourhood with Chorazin on the north and Bethsaida on the east. This is the region where Jesus exercised most of his ministry. The method used is archaeological and historical.

The most outstanding archaeological finds in Capernaum are the rectangular synagogue and the house of Peter. As the house of Peter, it was the residence of Jesus. The synagogue must have served the community for social, political, economic and religious gatherings. The house equally passed into stages of development, from a private house to a house church, and then to a memorial church. Archaeological finds in it show that the early church worshipped Jesus there as the —the Christ and —the Lord, while Peter was venerated as the Prince of the Apostles.

In the second part of the study, I interpreted some texts in the gospels that are set on Capernaum. The aim here was the search for better and closer images of the historical Jesus. I isolated only two major titles often given to Jesus, namely, exorcist and Son of Man. There were no archaeological finds in Capernaum and in Peter's house, in form of texts or inscriptions that indicate that these titles were given to the historical Jesus from the beginning of his ministry in Palestine. In the absence of archaeological finds that support those two titles, I assert that it makes more sense to say that it was the early Christians and the early Church that gave the titles to Jesus, especially, when one considers the fact that the Christians and the Christian communities existed well before the texts of the gospel were written. What the gospel says about the person of Jesus is only an echo, a reflection and a validation of what the early church acclaimed him to be. This shows that it does not belong to any person or group or specialist outside of the church to interpret or define or say who or what Jesus is or who or what he is not.

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