





### Phases or Epochs in the Ministry of Jesus

The ministry of Jesus had distinct phases with recognizable turning points between phases. In most cases, the change from one phase to another also involved a change in geographical location. We have already noted the change from Jesus' Early Ministry in Judea, to his Public Galilean Ministry. Likewise, there were phases and sub-phases in the Public Galilean Ministry.

Individual events and teachings of Jesus are better understood and remembered if associated with the broader phase in which the event or teaching occurred. Chronology is important. As with the chapters of a book, new chapters in Jesus' ministry built on previous ones. There are reasons why one event in Jesus' ministry chronologically occurred before or after another event.

Jesus' Great Public Galilean Ministry is marked on Maps 9-4 and 9-5 and divided into six phases. The first phase is marked here on Map 9-4. The next five phases are marked on Map 9-5. The Great Public Galilean Ministry lasted approximately 18 months. Combining his Public and Private Galilean (Map 9-6) Ministries, Jesus ministered in Galilee for about two years total.

### Geographical Background

Note the following geographical features associated with Jesus' move from Nazareth to Capernaum (*blue arrow*):

- The **International Highway** (Way of the Sea?) in **yellow** from **Legio** (Megiddo) through the **Jezreel Valley**. One branch passes by **Nain** near the **Hill of Moreh** and then goes north around **Mt. Tabor**. Another branch goes north of the **Nazareth Ridge** past **Sepphoris**, then joins with the first branch before descending through the **Arbel Pass** to **Capernaum**, past **Bethsaida** and then off the northern edge of the map. Note how the routes avoid but enclose the Nazareth Ridge.
- The location of these cities: **Nazareth**, **Sepphoris**, **Cana** and **Capernaum**.
- The tribal allotments (**blue CAPITAL text**) of **ZEBULUN** (near Nazareth) and **NAPHTALI** (near Capernaum).

### In the Nazareth Synagogue, Luke 4:14-31

After ministering for some months in Judea (Map 9-3), Jesus returned to Galilee. He healed a Capernaum official's son with a word from **Cana** and then came to **Nazareth** where he had grown up. In the synagogue at Nazareth, Jesus read from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah and claimed to be the fulfillment of Messianic prophecy in that text (Isa. 61:1-2). His exposition included a discussion of God's work among the humble and toward Gentiles. This touched a raw nerve and resulted in an effort to throw Jesus off a cliff, the precursor to death by stoning. Recent Muslim tradition claims that Jesus escaped by jumping off a cliff and landing safely below (giving the label "Mount of Jumping" to a prominent hill near Nazareth). However, the New Testament never records Jesus performing a miracle for his personal safety. Jesus simply "passed through their midst, and went his way." The best assumption is that he said something that calmed the crowd and walked away.

### Move from Nazareth to Capernaum, Matthew 4:12-17

Jesus moved from **Nazareth** to **Capernaum**, where he based his public ministry in Galilee over the next two years. There are practical reasons for this move:

- Hospitality was lacking in Nazareth – "There is no such thing as a prophet in his hometown."
- A number of disciples following Jesus were from the Capernaum area. Peter and Andrew had a house there (Mark 1:29).
- Nazareth is on a ridge (1400 ft. elevation) that the **International Highway** avoids. On the other hand, **Capernaum** sits on the International Highway. From Capernaum, news of Jesus' words and deeds would spread with travelers. Jesus made his ministry more public with his move to Capernaum. Apparently he had previously planned this move (John 2:12).

### Jesus' Galilean Ministry as a Fulfillment of Prophecy

In addition to the practical reasons for Jesus' move from Nazareth to Capernaum, the Gospel of Matthew shows how the move played a role in the fulfillment of Messianic prophecy. Religious leaders in Jerusalem disdainfully referred to the fact that Jesus ministered in Galilee (John 7:52). But Matthew sees Jesus' ministry in **Nazareth** and **Capernaum**, and in the whole **Galilee** region, as a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.

*The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali,  
by the Way of the Sea, and Beyond the Jordan,  
Galilee of the Gentiles; The people who were sitting  
in darkness saw a great light, And to those who were  
sitting in the land and shadow of death, Upon them a  
light dawned (Matt. 4:12-16; Isa. 9:1-2).*

Since both Nazareth and Capernaum were originally settled after the Old Testament period, neither is mentioned in the Old Testament. However, **Nazareth** sits in the land allotted to the tribe of **Zebulun**, and **Capernaum** sits in the land allotted to **Naphtali**. Matthew makes clear that the ministry of Jesus in these districts was a very specific geographical fulfillment of the Messianic prediction of the prophet Isaiah. In addition to the territories of Zebulun and Naphtali, Jesus ministered along the International Highway (the **Way of the Sea**) and in the Decapolis and Perea (**Beyond the Jordan**). Indeed, the people in **Galilee of the Gentiles** saw a great light.



*Capernaum on the shore of the Sea of Galilee.  
Excavated ruins including houses and white limestone synagogue.*