

Geography and Historical Names of Lake Tiberias

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Lake Tiberias (Buhayrat Tabariyya)

Lake Tiberias is the lowest fresh water body on Earth, and has an important religious value for Christians, Muslims and Jews.

The area around this lake was inhabited and ruled by many civilizations: Canaanites, Aramites, Pharaohs, Babylonians, Akkadians, Sumerians, Ammonites, Hittites, Edomites, Hurrians, Phoenicians, Persians, Romans, Hebrews, Arabs.....

In the past, the vicinity of the lake was well populated, and several of the great trade routes of Asia Minor converged at the lake.

The paper will look deep in the current and old names of this lake, trying to find the origin of each name and the circumstances and events that played a role in the naming.

Location

Lake Tiberias is located in south-west Asia, in the Middle East, between Syria (east) and historical Palestine (west).(Fig1)

Coordinates

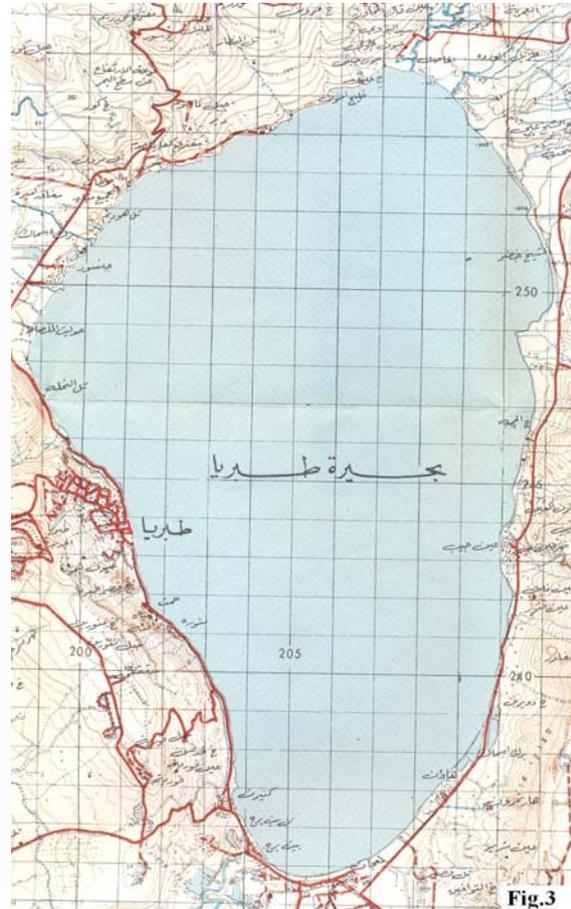
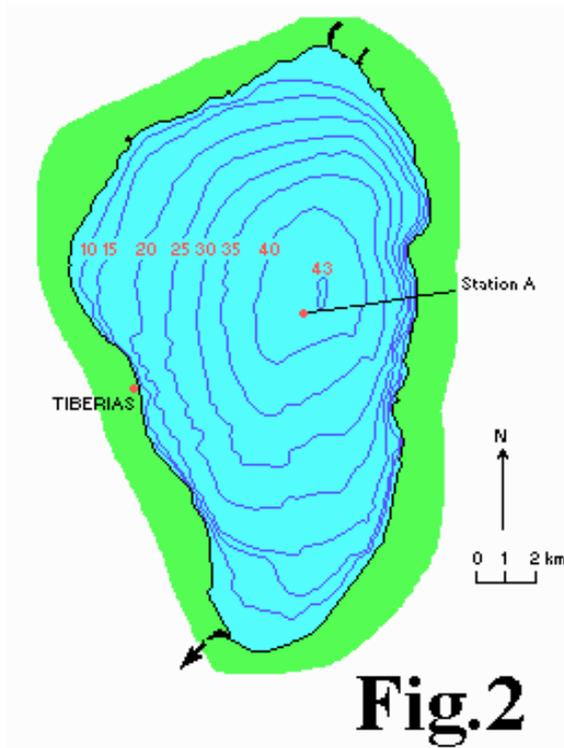
Longitude	35° 30' 59''	35° 38' 59''
Latitude	32° 42' 20''	32° 53' 44''



Size

Lake Tiberias is a small lake, with a surface area of only 166 square kilometers; its surface is at 209 m below sea level. The depth of the lake varies from season to season and year to year depending on the amount of rain and the rate of water pumped from the lake. In average its depth is about 26 m. However, the maximum depth is 43 m (Fig2). The lake extends 21 km in

north-south direction, and 8-13 km in east-west direction. The coast length is 53 km, and the catchment area is about 2,730 sq.km. Jordan River is the main water inflow to the lake entering from north, and it is also the main water outflow running out to the south. (Fig3, 4)



Formation

Lake Tiberias is a part of the Jordan Rift, which is itself a part of the Afro-Asian Rift, the biggest rift on the earth surface; since it extends about 7000 km (5600 km in Africa, 1200 km in Asia), from north Syria through Jordan, the Red Sea, up to the Lakes Plateau in Africa, This rift has formed through the last 50 million years, while the Jordan rift, including Lake Tiberias, formed 27 million years ago.

During a former geological epoch, the Lake Tiberias (and the Dead Sea) was part of a great inland sea extending from Hula marshes (25km) north Tiberias Lake, to a point some 64 km. south of the Dead Sea.

The Names Of Lake Tiberias

*Girgashite(Jirjashiyyun)

This is the oldest known name of the lake. It is derived from the name of an old Canaanite tribe which inhabited the area. This name, Girashite, is mentioned in the bible.

Genesis: [10:16](#) the Jebusite, the Amorite, the Girgashite.

[15:21](#) the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites."

Deuteronomy: [7:1](#) When Yahweh your God shall bring you into the land where you go to possess it, and shall cast out many nations before you, the Hittite, and the Girgashite, and the Amorite, and the Canaanite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite, seven nations greater and mightier than you.

Joshua: [3:10](#) Joshua said, "Hereby you shall know that the living God is among you, and that he will without fail drive the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Hivite, and the Perizzite, and the Girgashite, and the Amorite, and the Jebusite out from before you.

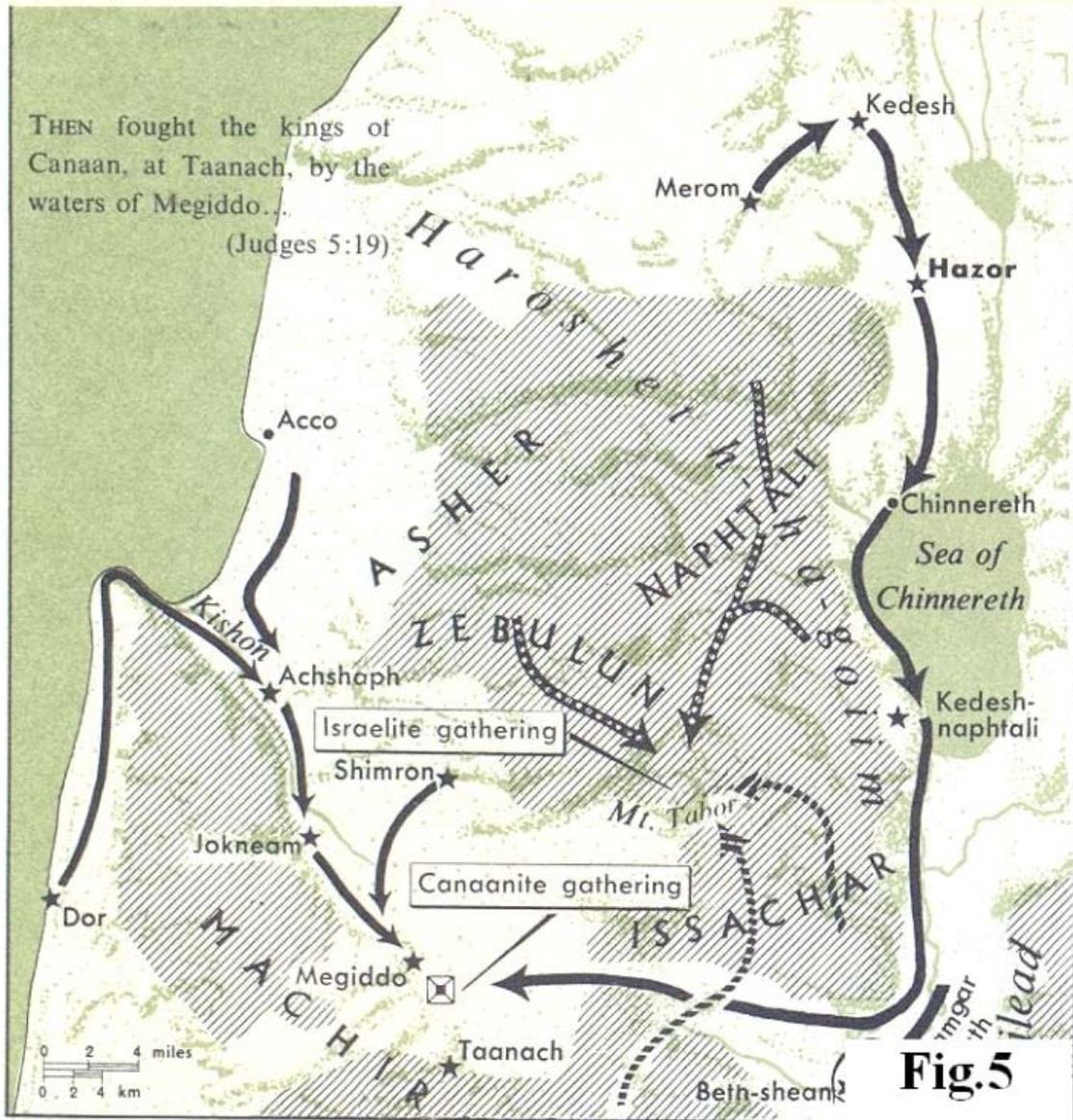
[24:11](#) "You went over the Jordan, and came to Jericho. The men of Jericho fought against you, the Amorite, the Perizzite, the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Girgashite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite; and I delivered them into your hand.

Nehemiah: [9:8](#) and found his heart faithful before you, and made a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, and the Perizzite,

and the Jebusite, and the Gergashite, to give it to his seed, and have performed your words; for you are righteous.

***Kinneret(kinnara,kinaret,kinnareth,kinnereth)**

Kinnert(kinnara) is a Canaanite word which means harp, it was initially a name of a Kanaanite town at the north west coast of the lake.(Fig5)



Kinneret is mentioned in the Bible as:

Chinnereth

Deuteronomy: 3:17 the Arabah also, and the Jordan and its border, from Chinnereth even to the sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, under the slopes of Pisgah eastward.

Numbers: 34:11 and the border shall go down from Shepham to Riblah, on the east side of Ain; and the border shall go down, and shall reach to the side of the sea of Chinnereth eastward.

Joshua: 13:27 and in the valley, Beth Haram, Beth Nimrah, Succoth, and Zaphon, the rest of the kingdom of Sihon king of Heshbon, the Jordan's bank, to the uttermost part of the sea of Chinnereth beyond the Jordan eastward.

Joshua: 19:35 The fortified cities were Ziddim, Zer, Hammath, Rakkath, Chinnereth
The fortified cities were Ziddim, Zer, Hammath, Rakkath, Chinnereth
Chinnereth

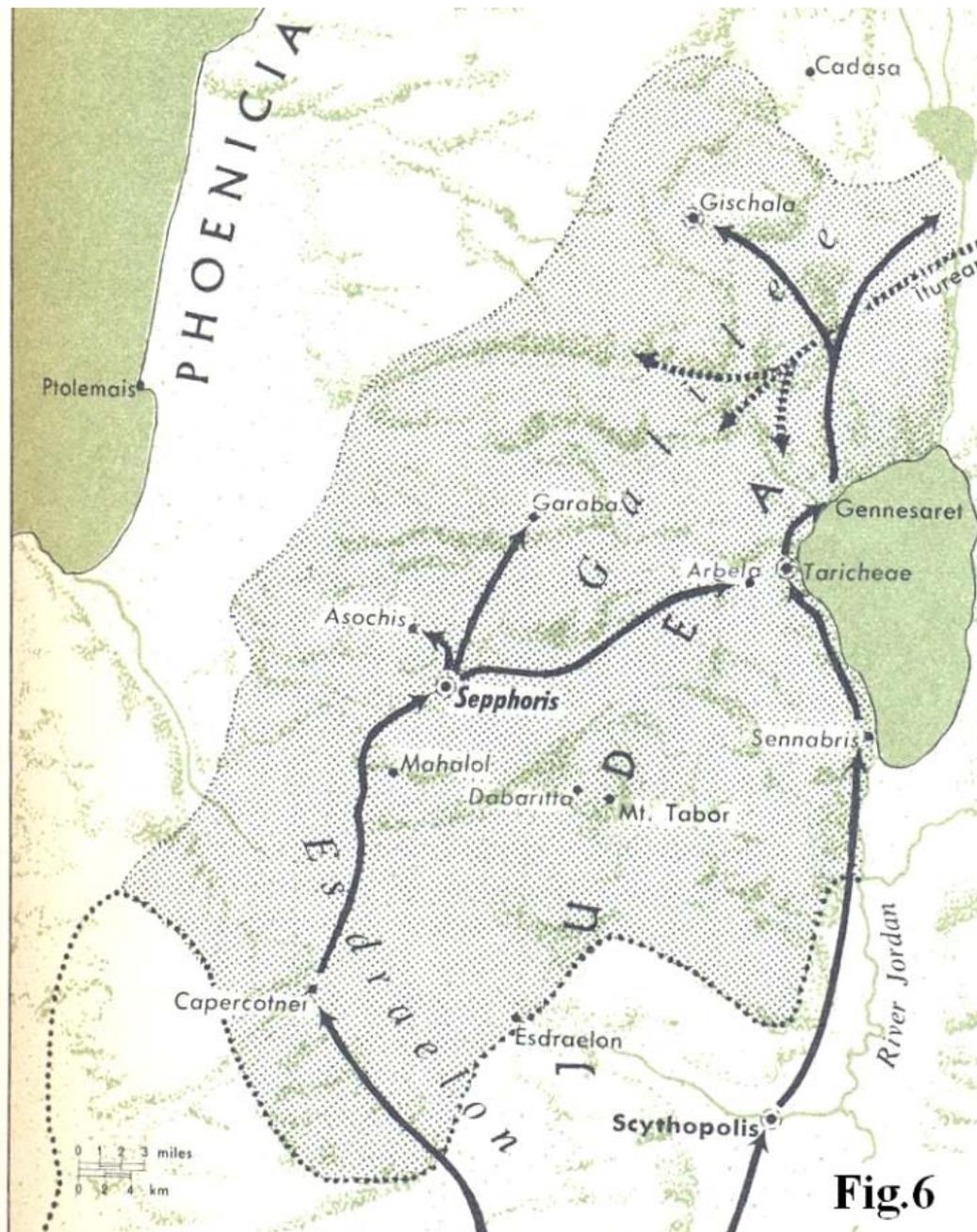
Joshua: 11:2 and to the kings who were on the north, in the hill country, in the Arabah south of Chinnereth, in the lowland, and in the heights of Dor on the west.

Joshua: 12:3 and the Arabah to the sea of Chinnereth, eastward, and to the sea of the Arabah, even the Salt Sea, eastward, the way to Beth Jeshimoth; and on the south, under the slopes of Pisgah.

Kings 1: 15:20 Ben Hadad listened to king Asa, and sent the captains of his armies against the cities of Israel, and struck Ijon, and Dan, and Abel Beth Maacah, and all Chinnereth, with all the land of Naphtali.

***Gennesar(Gennesaret,Geennesartyh)**

Gennesar is a plain at the north west of lake Tiberias , it means "The Garden of princes" or" The Paradise". The plain is now called "Sahl al- Ghwayr" means "al-Ghuwayr(Low) plain". (Fig6).



Gennesart

Matthew: 14:34 When they had crossed over, they came to the land of Gennesaret

5:1 Now it happened, while the multitude pressed on him and heard the word of God, that he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret.

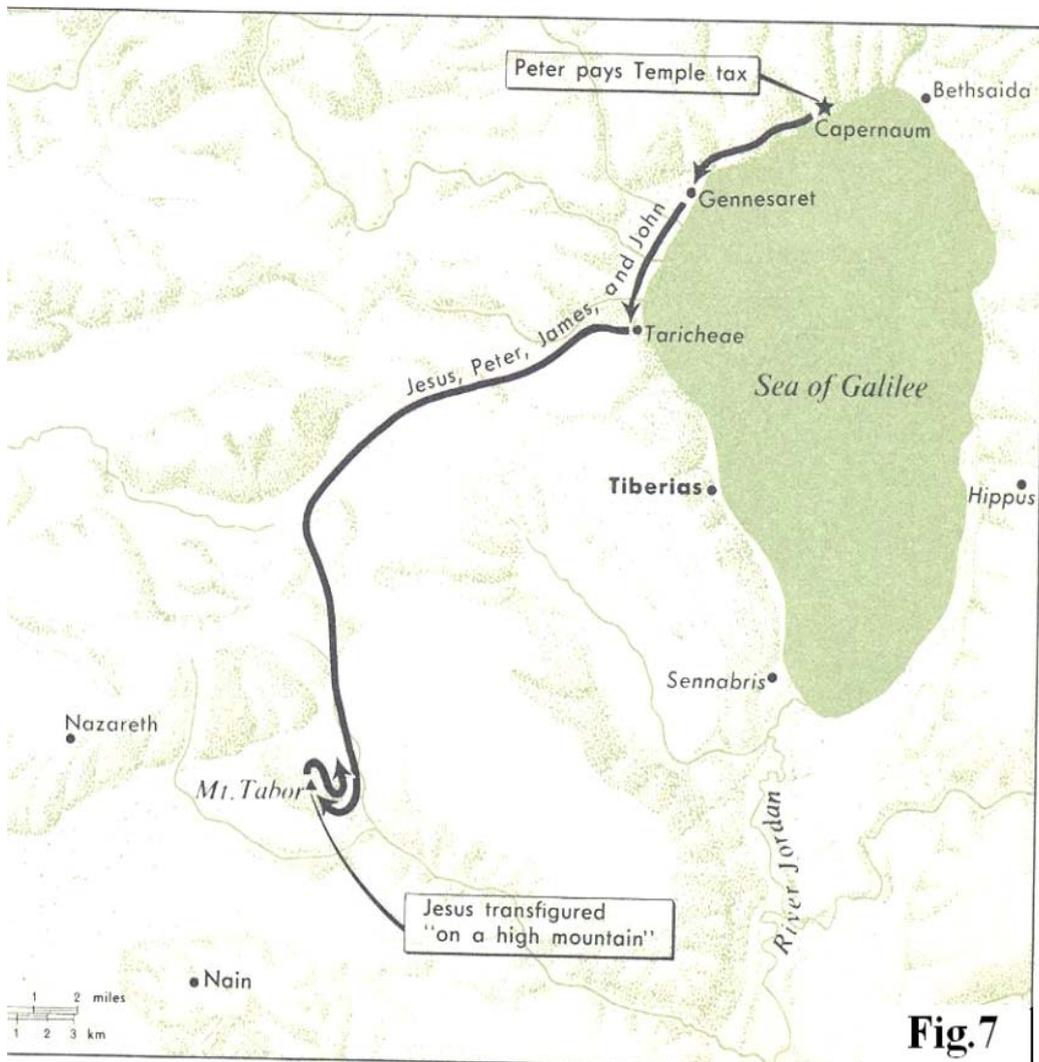
Mark: 6:53 When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret, and

moored to the shore.

Luke: 5:1 Now it happened, while the multitude pressed on him and heard the word of God, that he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret.

*Taricheae

A city at the west cost of the lake, it is called now "al-Majdel or Majdala". The city was famous for its glass industry.(Fig7)



This name is mentioned in the bible:

Matthew: 4:18 Walking by the Sea of Galilee.

Mark: 1:16 Passing along by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen.

***Tiberias: (Buhayrit Tabariya)**

In the first century, Herod Antipas established a city beside the lake on the ruins of an old Canaanite city called Rakkath (Joshua 19:35) (Raqqameans the beach). The city was called Tiberias in honor of the Roman Emperor Tiberias (ruled the Empire 14-37 Ad). The lake name was changed later into Tiberias. Jossphus Flavivs (38-100ad) mentioned that this city was built over the ruins of an old city. (Fig3)

This name is mentioned in the Bible:

John: 6:1 After these things, Jesus went away to the other side of the sea of Galilee, which is also called the Sea of Tiberias.

21:1 After these things, Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias. He revealed himself this way.

***Lake of Jesus**

Because he has sanctified it with his miracles, with his frequent navigations from one shore to the other, by his excursion along its shores where he distributed to the multitude gathered there from all surrounding countries his divine teaching. (Fig8)

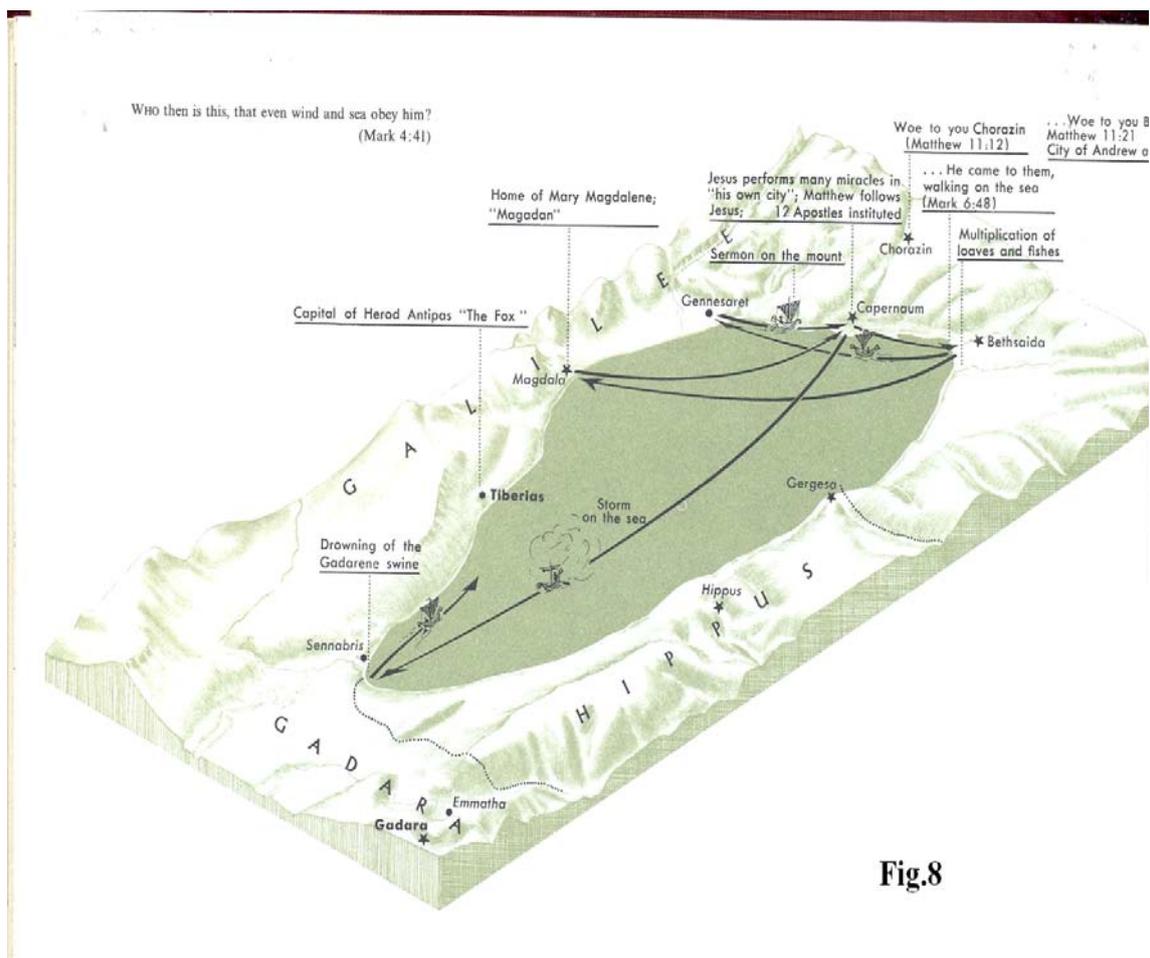


Fig.8

Matthew: 14:22 Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat, and to go ahead of him to the other side, while he sent the multitudes away. 14:23 After he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into the mountain by himself to pray. When evening had come, he was there alone. 14:24 But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, distressed by the waves, for the wind was contrary. 14:25 In the fourth watch of the night, Jesus came to them, walking on the sea.* 14:26 When the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, "It's a ghost!" and they cried out for fear. 14:27 But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying "**Cheer up! It is I! Don't be afraid.**" 14:28 Peter answered him and said, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the waters." 14:29 He said, "**Come!**" Peter stepped down from the boat, and walked on the waters to come to Jesus. 14:30 But when he saw that the wind was strong, he was afraid, and beginning to sink, he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!" 14:31 Immediately Jesus stretched out his hand, took hold of him, and said to

him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?"

14:32 When they got up into the boat, the wind ceased.

14:33 Those who were in the boat came and worshiped him, saying, "You are truly the Son of God!"

14:34 When they had crossed over, they came to the land of Gennesaret

Mark: 6:45 Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat, and to go ahead to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he himself sent the multitude away.

6:46 After he had taken leave of them, he went up the mountain to pray.

6:47 When evening had come, the boat was in the midst of the sea, and he was alone on the land. 6:48 Seeing them distressed in rowing, for the wind was contrary to them, about the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea,* and he would have passed by them, 6:49 but they, when they saw him walking on the sea, supposed that it was a ghost, and cried out; 6:50 for they all saw him, and were troubled. But he immediately spoke with them, and said to them, "Cheer up! It is I! Don't be afraid." 6:51 He got into the boat with them; and the wind ceased, and they were very amazed among themselves, and marveled.

John: 6:16 When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, 6:17 and they entered into the boat, and were going over the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not come to them. 6:18 The sea was tossed by a great wind blowing. 6:19 When therefore they had rowed about twenty-five or thirty stadia, they saw Jesus walking on the sea,* and drawing near to the boat; and they were afraid. 6:20 But he said to them, "It is I. Don't be afraid." 6:21 They were willing therefore to receive him into the boat. Immediately the boat was at the land where they were going.

6:22 On the next day, the multitude that stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other boat there, except the one in which his disciples had embarked, and that Jesus hadn't entered with his disciples into the boat, but his disciples had gone away alone. 6:23 However boats from Tiberias came near to the place where they ate the bread after the Lord had given thanks. 6:24 When the multitude therefore saw that Jesus wasn't there, nor his disciples, they themselves got into the boats, and came to Capernaum, seeking Jesus. 6:25 When they found him on the other side of the sea, they asked him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?"

6:26 Jesus answered them, "Most certainly I tell you, you seek me, not because

you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves, and were filled

Matthew: 8:23 When he got into a boat, his disciples followed him. 8:24 Behold, a violent storm came up on the sea, so much that the boat was covered with the waves, but he was asleep. 8:25 They came to him, and woke him up, saying, "Save us, Lord! We are dying!"

8:26 He said to them, "Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?" Then he got up, rebuked the wind and the sea, and there was a great calm.

8:27 The men marveled, saying, "What kind of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

Mark: 4:35 On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let's go over to the other side." 4:36 Leaving the multitude, they took him with them, even as he was, in the boat. Other small boats were also with him. 4:37 A big wind storm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so much that the boat was already filled. 4:38 He himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion, and they woke him up, and told him, "Teacher, don't you care that we are dying?"

4:39 He awoke, and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" The wind ceased, and there was a great calm. 4:40 He said to them, "Why are you so afraid? How is it that you have no faith?"

4:41 They were greatly afraid, and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him

Luke: 8:22 Now it happened on one of those days, that he entered into a boat, himself and his disciples, and he said to them, "Let's go over to the other side of the lake." So they launched out. 8:23 But as they sailed, he fell asleep. A wind storm came down on the lake, and they were taking on dangerous amounts of water. 8:24 They came to him, and awoke him, saying, "Master, master, we are dying!" He awoke, and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water, and they ceased, and it was calm.* 8:25 He said to them, "Where is your faith?" Being afraid they marveled, saying one to another, "Who is this, then, that commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him?" 8:26 They arrived at the country of the Gadarenes, which is opposite Galilee.

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