

What is the significance of Caesarea in the Bible?

<https://www.gotquestions.org/Caesarea-in-the-Bible.html>

Caesarea, often called Caesarea Maritima to differentiate it from Caesarea Philippi, was an important port city in the first century AD and the site of numerous events in the book of Acts. Caesarea Maritima is located about 30 miles north of modern Tel Aviv on the Mediterranean coast. In ancient times, it boasted one of the world's largest artificial harbors and was a center of Roman governance in the region. In the New Testament, it is mentioned only in the book of Acts.

The first biblical figure associated with Caesarea was Philip the Evangelist, who shared the gospel in Caesarea after a "great persecution" expelled many believers from Jerusalem (Acts 8:1, 40). Eventually, Philip settled down in Caesarea, living there with his family and hosting other believers at his home (Acts 21:8).

Paul the apostle, another famous evangelist, traveled through Caesarea several times. Early in his ministry, when his life was threatened in Jerusalem, the believers there helped him escape through Caesarea to Tarsus, undoubtedly aboard a Caesarean ship. After his second missionary journey, Paul passed through Caesarea on his way to Syrian Antioch, using his time in Caesarea as an opportunity to visit Jerusalem, about 52 miles away (Acts 18:22).

On his famous (and final recorded) trip to Jerusalem near the end of the book of Acts, Paul stayed in Caesarea with Philip the Evangelist for several days, meeting with Agabus the prophet and enjoying fellowship with local believers (Acts 21:8-16). The disciples in Caesarea begged Paul not to go to Jerusalem but eventually traveled with him when

they realized he could not be dissuaded (Acts 21:12-16). Later, Paul was imprisoned in Caesarea for years, facing several trials there before various Roman officials, with whom he was able to share the gospel numerous times (Acts 23-26).

Two more significant biblical events took place in Caesarea Maritima. First, Caesarea was the home of Cornelius the centurion. Peter visited Cornelius in his home, and Cornelius and his household were converted, an incredibly important occasion when salvation was publicly and irrefutably extended to the Gentiles. Caesarea was also the location of Herod Agrippa I's death at the hand of an angel of God (Acts 12:23).

The construction of Caesarea is fascinating and worthy of further study. It was originally a small Phoenician town known as Straton's Tower, and it was aggressively developed by Herod the Great into a major port city. Herod oversaw the construction of a massive artificial harbor, one of the largest in the world at the time, called Sebastos. Both the city of Caesarea and the harbor of Sebastos were named after Herod's patron, Augustus Caesar (Sebastos being the Greek equivalent of Augustus). In addition to the artificial harbor, Herod built magnificent theaters, a palace, and an aqueduct.

Caesarea continued to have a storied history into the early Christian era, hosting major figures in the early church and preserving Christian literature in its libraries. It became a flourishing, multi-ethnic community and an important center for education, writing, and intellectual discourse. Eventually, Caesarea suffered attrition during the Middle Ages through conflict between Christian and Muslim forces, and it was ultimately destroyed in the thirteenth century by a Mamluk army. More recently, Caesarea was the site of a major archaeological discovery: the "Pilate Stone," discovered in 1961, confirms the prefecture of Pontius Pilate during the time of Christ. As a monument to

man's achievements, both Caesarea Maritima and the Roman Empire that sponsored it are long gone. However, the gospel of Jesus Christ, which impacted this famed city, lives on around the world and continues to change lives today.