

What is the significance of Caesarea Philippi in the Bible?

<https://www.gotquestions.org/Caesarea-Philippi.html>

Caesarea Philippi was a city in the time of Christ located in the foothills of Mount Hermon, about fifteen miles north of the Sea of Galilee. The natural spring near Caesarea Philippi is the largest source of the Jordan River. Caesarea Philippi is mentioned only in the New Testament gospels of Matthew and Mark, both recording the same incident.

One of the villages around Caesarea Philippi was the setting for Jesus' famous statement to Peter, "On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it" (Matthew 16:18). This passage contains the very first use of the word church in the New Testament. Leading up to this statement, both Matthew 16:13 and Mark 8:27 recount Jesus asking the disciples, "Who do people say I am?" When they replied with a variety of answers—John the Baptist, Elijah, one of the prophets—Jesus pressed further with, "Who do you say I am?" Peter spoke up: "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16). That statement of truth would become the foundation for Jesus' church. And it all started in Caesarea Philippi.

Caesarea Philippi was so named by Herod Philip, whose father, Herod the Great, had built a temple there. Philip took a special interest in the village and enlarged it, attaching his name to that of Caesar. The name Philip gave the town also served to distinguish it from another town called Caesarea (Acts 10:1). While Caesarea was located in Judea on the border of the Mediterranean Sea, Caesarea Philippi was in Galilee within the land allotted to the tribe of Naphtali. The gospels record Jesus going to Caesarea Philippi only once, possibly because it was sparsely populated and situated on the northernmost

border of His travels.

We can only speculate why Jesus traveled to Caesarea Philippi when He spent most of His time preaching to large crowds in bigger cities. It was a beautiful location, perfect for getaways, and it may be that Jesus wanted to spend some time with His disciples in relative peace. Also, Jesus' mission took Him "throughout all Galilee" (Matthew 4:23, ESV) as He taught in "all the towns and villages" in that region (Matthew 9:35). He could not overlook Caesarea Philippi.

Our Lord's visit to Caesarea Philippi is a reminder that Jesus is keenly aware of the poor, the marginalized, and the overlooked (Matthew 11:28). His birth was first announced to a group of humble shepherds (Luke 2:8-12), and one of His most world-changing declarations was made to a group of unlikely disciples in a burg called Caesarea Philippi. Jesus continually demonstrated the truth of Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 1:27-29: "God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him." Caesarea Philippi was not eternally significant in any way until the Son of God chose it as the place where He declared the beginning of His church.