

What is the significance of Galilee in the Bible?

<https://www.gotquestions.org/Galilee-in-the-Bible.htm>

1

Galilee is most notable for being the home of our Lord Jesus Christ. More specifically, Lower Galilee is where Jesus grew up and spent the better part of His earthly life and ministry.

Galilee occupies the northernmost territory of the land of Israel. Lebanon borders it on the north, the Jezreel Valley on the south, the Upper Jordan River and Sea of Galilee on the east, and the Plain of Acre on the west. With the highest elevation in Israel, Galilee enjoys the coolest climate with abundant winter rains and numerous springs to keep the land well-watered.

The territory is divided into two sections—Upper and Lower Galilee—with a deep valley running between. Upper Galilee climbs to heights more than 3,000 feet above sea level, while Lower Galilee contains broad valleys with rich soil well-suited to agriculture and farming.

The first mention of Galilee in the Bible refers to the location of Kedesh, a city of refuge in the hill country of Naphtali (Joshua 20:7; 21:32; 1 Chronicles 6:76). In the allotment of land among the tribes of Israel, Galilee is associated initially with the tribes of Naphtali, Asher, Issachar, and Zebulun (Joshua 19). Later, the tribe of Dan moved to the outskirts of Upper Galilee (verses 40–48).

The name Galilee derives from two Hebrew words meaning “circuit” or “district.” The region has been called Galilee since at least the seventh century BC. In the Old

Testament, Galilee lacked significance in the story of the Israelite people, but by New Testament times, the area came into the spotlight as it had grown into a major population center.

Abundant streams flow from the northern highlands to supply the well-watered and fertile terrain of Lower Galilee, making it the ideal setting for densely populated settlements. Also, the Sea of Galilee is in Lower Galilee. As the only substantial freshwater lake in the region, the Sea of Galilee added a flourishing fishing industry to the region's other lucrative commercial activities including the exportation of olives and grains.

Upper Galilee is sometimes referred to as "Galilee of the Gentiles" in Scripture (Matthew 4:16), probably because it hosted various non-Jewish inhabitants, including Phoenicians, Syrians, and Sidonians. Jews living in other parts of Israel often looked askance at the Galileans as backward, unsophisticated people; sometimes their contempt for Galileans was recorded in Scripture (e.g., John 7:52). Not helping matters was the fact that the Galileans had a distinctive dialect, readily discerned by the Judeans (Mark 14:70).

Jesus' boyhood years were spent in Nazareth, a town in Lower Galilee. Most of the Gospel narratives are also set in Lower Galilee. With several major roadways of the Roman Empire crossing through Galilee, the land provided Jesus and His disciples with a strategic initial mission field to launch the gospel message into the world.

Numerous recorded miracles of Jesus took place in Galilee (Matthew 4:23-25; 28:16; John 1:46; 7:41-42). His first miracle—turning water into wine at the wedding in Cana (John 2:1, 11; 4:46)—happened in Galilee. And from the shores of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus

called the first of His disciples to become “fishers of men” (Mark 1:16). Peter, Andrew, James, and John were all working as fishermen earning a living on the Sea of Galilee when Jesus called them up for service (Matthew 4:13–22).

More than 700 years before our Savior walked the land of Galilee, the prophet Isaiah foresaw the region as the gateway of salvation and peace for the nations through the preaching of Jesus Christ: “Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the nations, by the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan” (Isaiah 9:1). We know the person spoken of here refers to Christ because this same passage is cited in Matthew 4:13–15 and applied to Jesus. The lands of Zebulun and Naphtali had been devastated by the Assyrian army but were uniquely honored by the presence of the Messiah and His loving ministry, which brought light, joy, and salvation to the people of the world.