

Abyss

The New Testament and the Abyss

In the New Testament, the sea symbolizes chaos, evil, and evil beings. The depths of the sea were seen as the home of demons—a place called the Abyss, according to Jewish tradition. Luke records Jesus' casting out of demons who beg not to be sent into the Abyss: When Jesus sends them there anyway, they enter a herd of pigs that plunges into the sea ([Luke 8:21](#)).

John also referred to the Abyss in his revelation ([9:1,11; 11:7; 17:8](#)). He describes it as the abode of the evil one—Satan ([Rev. 20:1-3](#)). He writes that someday the devil himself will rise from the sea ([Rev. 13: 1-11](#)).

At one point during his ministry, Jesus compared the fates of Korazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum to that of Sodom and Gomorrah, saying that Capernaum would go down to the “depths.” Most likely, the people understood this as a reference to hell itself. To them, Jesus' miracles on the sea meant more than simply that he had power over the forces of nature—they also symbolized his power over evil.

The Orthodox Triangle

Certainly not all people who lived in this fertile area were religious or even Jewish. But it is clear that most inhabitants of the sea's northwestern side were very religious—a fact supported by the many synagogues discovered there.

Jesus conducted his ministry here, and the Bible indicates that most of his miracles were performed in three towns of this area: Capernaum, Korazin, and Bethsaida. These three cities are sometimes called the “gospel (or orthodox) triangle” because they form a triangle, with the points about three miles apart.

Galilee was not a backwoods region; the international trade route, called the Via Maris or the Way of the Sea, ran through this area near Capernaum. Israel had always lived in the land that connected great empires. The whole world knew of them because the trade routes passed through their country. As the nations of the world passed by, Israel could obey God's command and be his witnesses ([Isa. 43:10-12](#)).

Jesus chose Capernaum as his home to fulfill the prophecy that the Messiah would live in Galilee by “the way to the sea” ([Matt. 4:12-17](#)). But he also chose this crossroads area for ministry so that his message could be heard by people from around the world.

The main towns in this area included:

Capernaum—Located on the shore of the sea, this major town was home to fishermen, farmers, a Roman garrison, and a customs house (where tax collectors worked). Capernaum had a large synagogue, the remains of which are beneath the ruins of a later synagogue. Many of the New Testament stories about Jesus took place here. Jesus' disciple Matthew, a tax collector, came from this town ([Matt. 8:5-17; 9:1-34; 17:24-27, 18; Mark 1:21-34; 2:1-12; Luke 7:1-10; John 6:16-71](#)).

Korazin—Korazin was a village located three miles north of Capernaum. Although this was one of the towns where most of Jesus' miracles took place, the Bible records no specific visit of Jesus to this town. It was large and prosperous and had a synagogue. Its economic pursuits included the processing of olives.

Bethsaida—Peter, Andrew, and Philip were successful fishermen from Bethsaida ([John 1:44; 12:21](#)). This town was located on the northern end of the sea near the mouth of the Jordan River. Jesus fed the five thousand ([Luke 9:10-17](#)) and healed a blind man ([Mark 8:22-26](#)) here. The ruins of this village are being uncovered for the first time, revealing a prosperous town constructed of basalt, a black rock common to the area.

