

# Tour of the Holy Lands - Capernaum

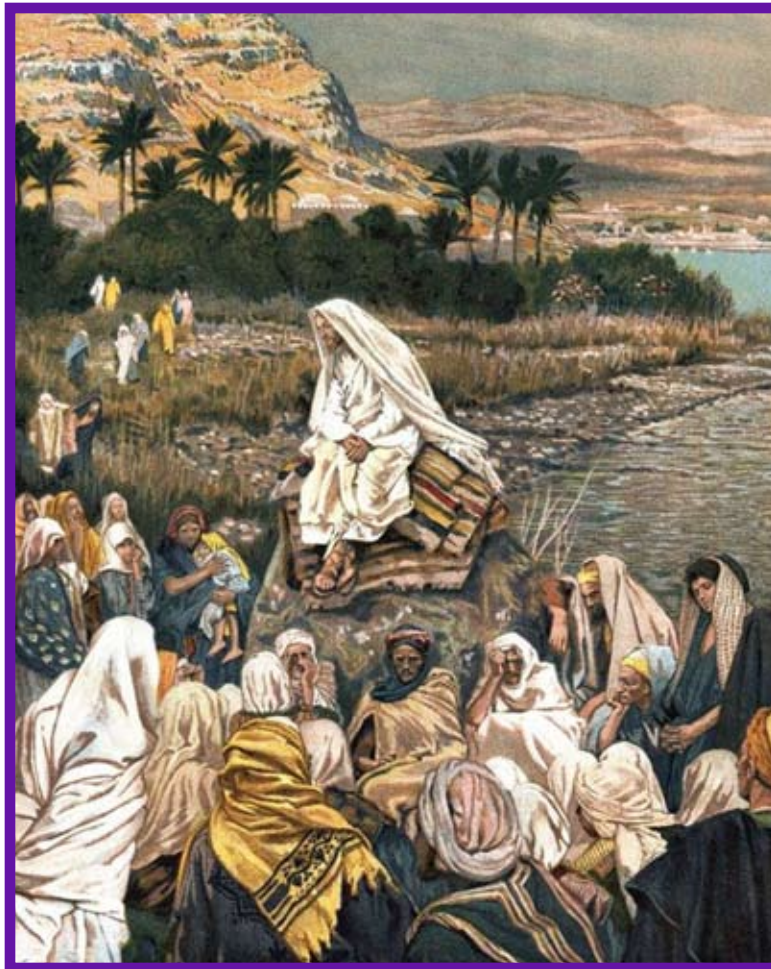


The next morning we left Tiberias and rode to Capernaum, just a few miles up the coast of the lake. Jesus had chosen Capernaum as his home base after the people in Nazareth drove him out of town. We remembered that cliff back in Nazareth. Capernaum was a good choice, in fact, a better choice.





A main caravan road passed through Capernaum. It was called the "Via Maris," meaning in Latin, the "Way of the Sea." A lot of traders must have passed through Capernaum on their way to Egypt or to Mesopotamia.



Some of these traders may have stopped by the lake to listen to the message from the new preacher named Jesus. They would have shared his teachings everywhere they went.



Here is a Roman mile marker that mentions the Via Maris. Mile markers were stone street signs and were widely used along the Roman roads of Jesus' time. This one was put up near Capernaum during the reign of the Roman Emperor Hadrian. If we knew Latin, we could read these mile markers.

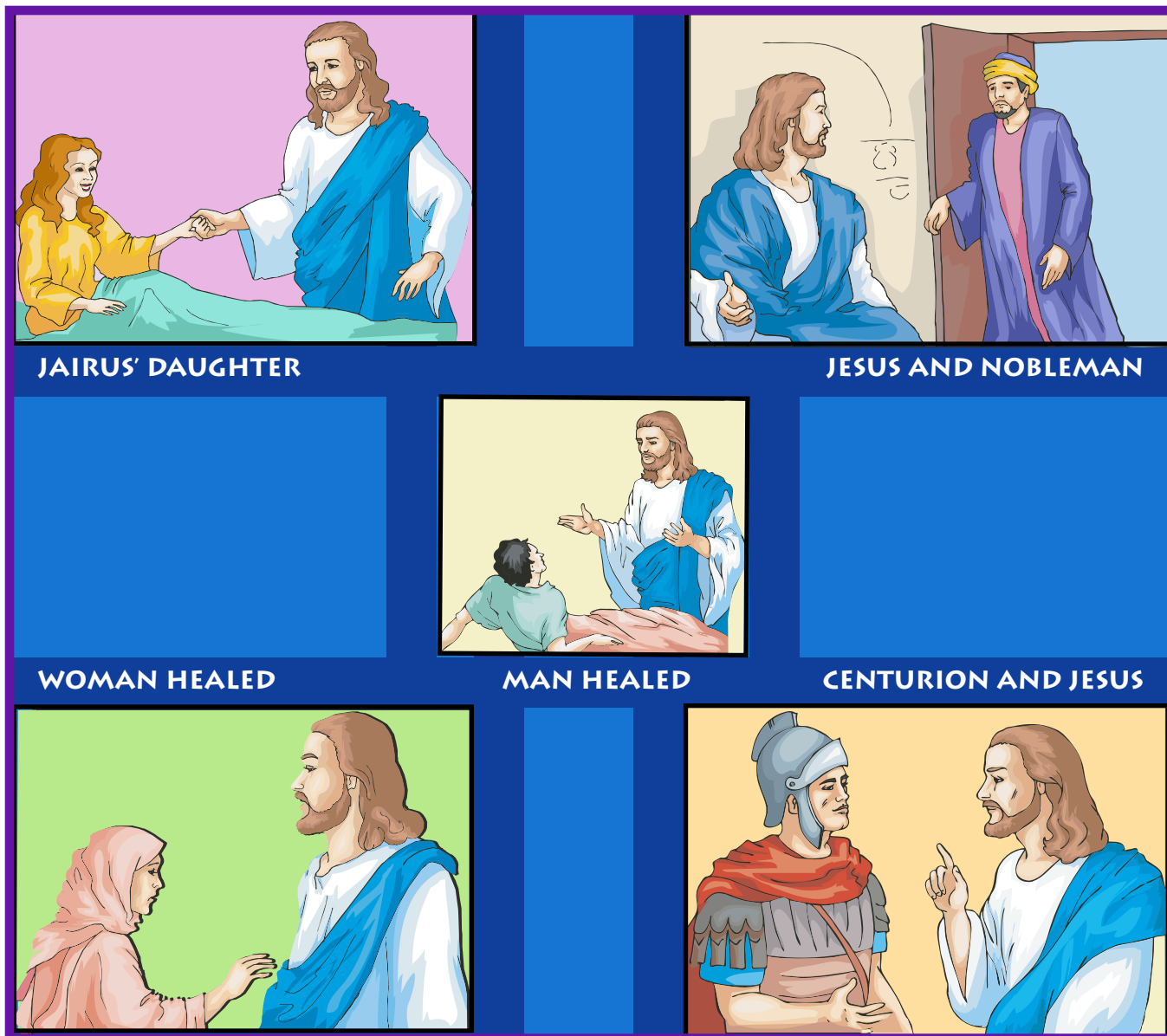






The citizens of Capernaum were hard-working. Here is an ancient stone olive press found in the city. The olive grove owners would hitch a donkey to the pole that went through the middle of the cylinder. The olives would be crushed under the rolling stone and precious oil would drain into a jar. We wondered if the kids in the family were the ones who led the donkey around in the circle.





**JAIRUS' DAUGHTER**

**JESUS AND NOBLEMAN**

**WOMAN HEALED**

**MAN HEALED**

**CENTURION AND JESUS**

The people of Capernaum were open to new ideas. Many brave men, women, and children became followers of Jesus here. We knew our New Testament pretty well, so we could name at least eight to ten people - Jairus, the Nobleman, the Centurion, the four men who carried their friend to the roof, and the woman with the issue of blood. And what about their families? In those days, the wives and children always believed whatever the head of the family did!



Capernaum must have been just as beautiful back then as it is today.





We want to go straight to the synagogue, just like Jesus did. We don't care if it isn't the exact original one. It's pretty close. (Mark 1:21-28; Luke 4:31-37)





This is where Jesus came every Sabbath, which was Saturday. We can imagine how crowded it must have been. The word got around about the powerful speaker in Capernaum who spoke as if he knew God personally.



The Bible tells the story of one Sabbath when something tried to enter the synagogue and spoil things. A mentally disturbed man came to the synagogue. The Bible describes him as having an unclean spirit. In those days, such problems were blamed on thousands of invisible demons in the air. The man was afraid, but Jesus wasn't. He knew there were no demons. The man let out a shriek and tried calling Jesus names, but Jesus shouted, "Hush! Come out of him!" At first the man shook all over, but then a great calm came over him and he wasn't afraid anymore. In fact, he was healed.



We decided that if we were there on that Sabbath day, we would be as puzzled as everyone else. We wish we could have seen the looks on their faces. They asked, "Where does his power come from?" Some of them put two and two together. "There must be a connection between the words he preaches and his actions. What is his message, anyway? He orders unclean spirits out and they're gone."





Even though the people were still full of questions, they stepped out of the synagogue that day and began to spread the good news all over the country. They had witnessed Jesus' first recorded healing. They'd never seen anything like it!





After the synagogue service in Capernaum, Jesus was invited to dinner at the home of Simon Peter, one of the new disciples. Peter lived in Capernaum with his family. Jesus and the other disciples all looked forward to whatever meal this former fisherman and his family would be serving. (Matt 8:14-15; Mark 1:29-31; Luke 4:38-39)





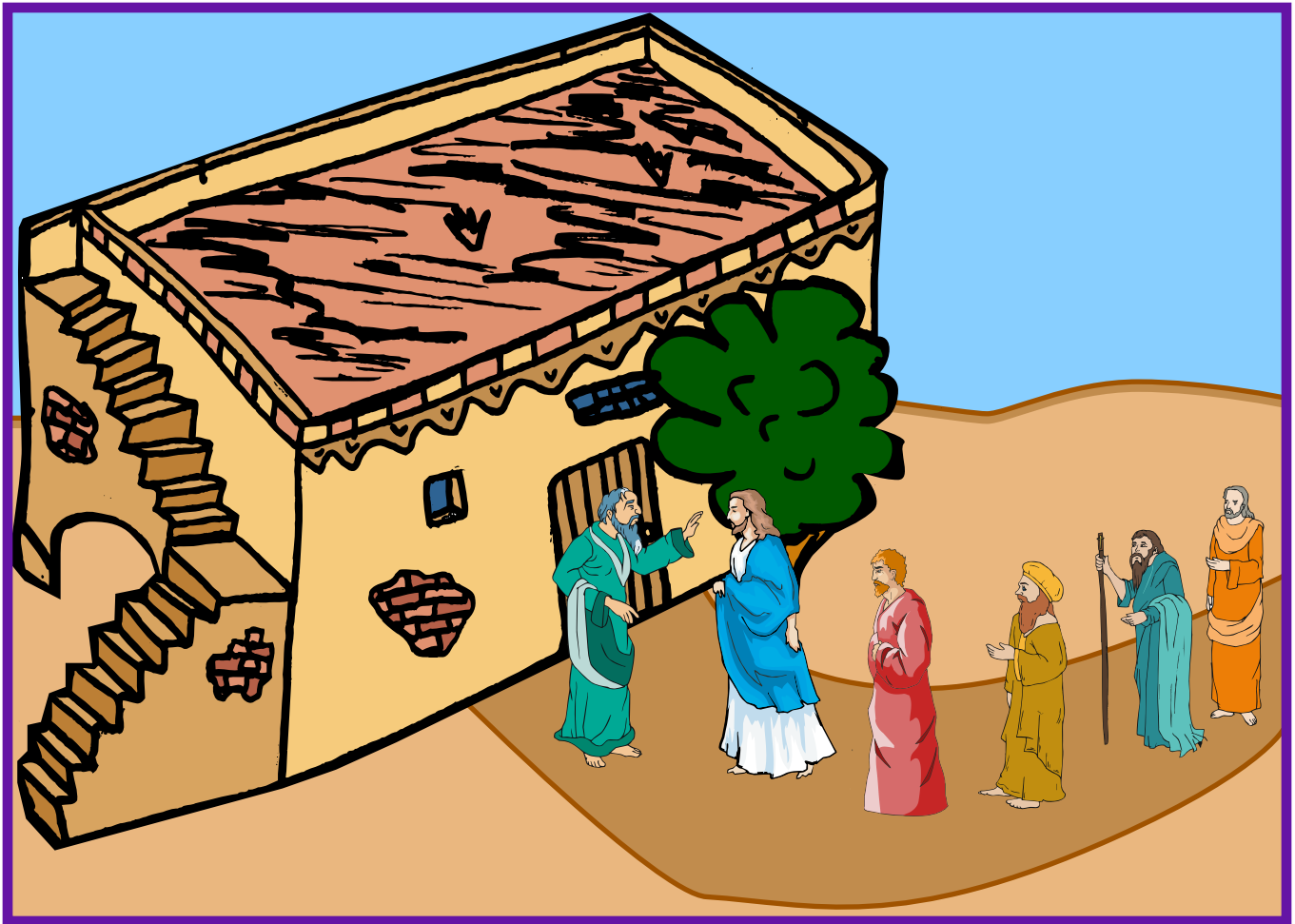


Jesus went straight to Peter's house, but when we left the synagogue, we didn't know which way to turn. We looked at the houses in Capernaum and they all looked alike. We were in the middle of an archaeological dig. The walls of the houses were made of rocks and they were only two feet high. We had to use our imagination to figure out which rooms were living rooms and which rooms were bedrooms. And, of course, there was no furniture, and no windows or house numbers.





We finally found Peter's house nestled under the protection of a modern building.

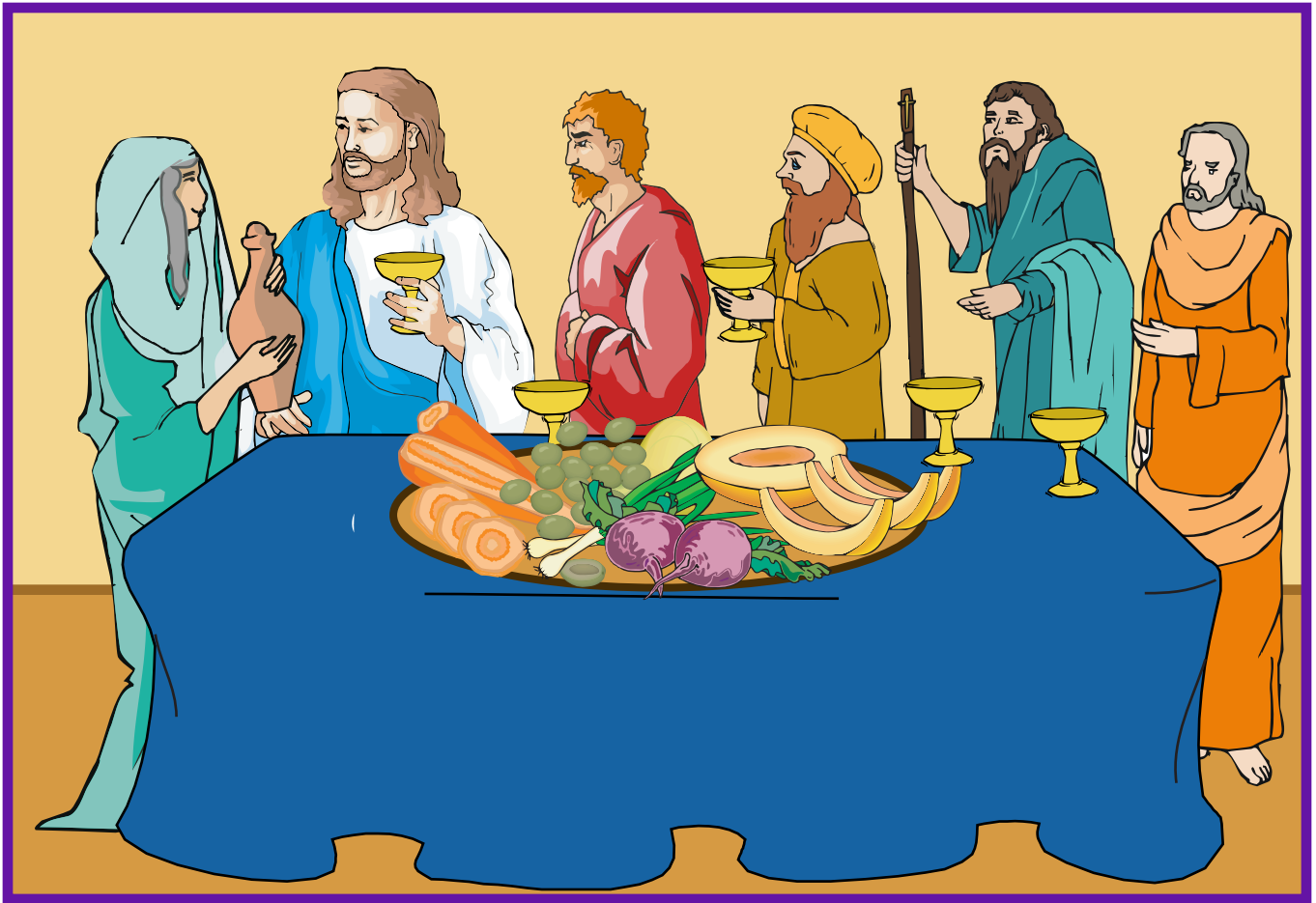


When Peter and the disciples arrived with their guest, they found that Peter's mother-in-law had been put to bed with a high fever. How stressful! What would they do with company coming for dinner? Normally they would have cancelled. But this was a special guest, who had just performed a most remarkable healing in front of the citizens of the town. So Peter, who often spoke without thinking, told Jesus about the predicament. Peter figured that if Jesus could heal in the synagogue, he could heal in this little house. If he could cast out a devil, he could cure a fever. If he could heal a man, he could heal a woman.



Jesus was willing to help. They led him into her room. There was no shouting this time. He bent over quietly and took her by the hand and helped her up. Peter's mother-in-law was perfectly well in an instant.





To prove how well she felt and how grateful she was, she began to fix dinner for everyone. Hooray!



Later, we had a taste of what she may have fixed for dinner that day. We went to a restaurant where we had "St Peter's Fish" found only in the Sea of Galilee. We'd never had a whole fish before. It was good, except for the way it kept staring at us as we ate!