

# GALILEE BOAT

The Galilee boat was discovered in 1986 along the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee, north of Magdala near Kibbutz Ginosar. Because of a long drought (1985-1986), the water level of the sea was low, and amateur archaeologists spotted the outline of a boat in the sand on the shore.

Much care was taken to excavate the boat from the beach without destroying the flimsy, water-logged wood. Numerous volunteers worked day and night because of the rain and the threat of the rising sea level. They also built a temporary dike to protect the boat. After it was reinforced in a polyurethane cocoon, the boat was floated on the sea (its last voyage!) to the nearby Yigal Allon Museum at Kibbutz Ginosar (only 1,600 feet away) for preservation.

The boat was preserved in a foam (polyethylene glycol) for several years in order to prevent the wood from decaying. Radio carbon dating, plus the pottery found near the boat, date it to the first century B.C. or A.D. Since this was the time of Christ, it is often referred to as the "Jesus Boat." Today, the boat is on display at the Yigal Allon Museum.



Yigal Allon Museum



Foam Display Illustrating the Boat's Preservation



The Galilee Boat



Wooden Model of the Galilee Boat

Originally, the boat was 26.5 feet long by 7.5 feet wide by 4.5 feet deep. It was made of cedar and oak, being constructed with mortise and tenon joints and wooden pegs. The boat had a crew and cargo capacity of one ton. It held five crew members plus a large catch of fish, or five crew members plus ten passengers (fifteen people). The five crew members included a helmsman and four rowers. Originally, the boat had a mast for sailing and two oars on each side (plus two “rudders” manned by the helmsman). The stern (rear) was rounded, and the bow (front) came to a point. There were decks in each end of the boat. In the story of calming the sea, Jesus probably slept under the deck of the stern of the boat, away from the elements. The helmsman would have been on top of the stern deck. The cushion Jesus slept on may have been a sailor’s pillow or perhaps a sandbag used as a ballast to stabilize the ship (Mk. 4:37-38).



Visible Wooden Pegs of the Galilee Boat



Mortise and Tenon Method Illustrated

This type of boat was typically used for fishing. Various kinds of nets were employed, including a circular net about twenty feet in diameter and a large dragnet hundreds of feet long. Fishing at night was common, and the best catches were made between Capernaum and Bethsaida (“house of fishing”). Such boats were also used for transportation. During the First Jewish Revolt (A.D. 67), they even served a military purpose. They were used in the Battle of Migdal, in which the Romans soundly defeated the Jews (Josephus *Wars* 3.10.1-10).



Re-enactment of a Fisherman Casting His Net