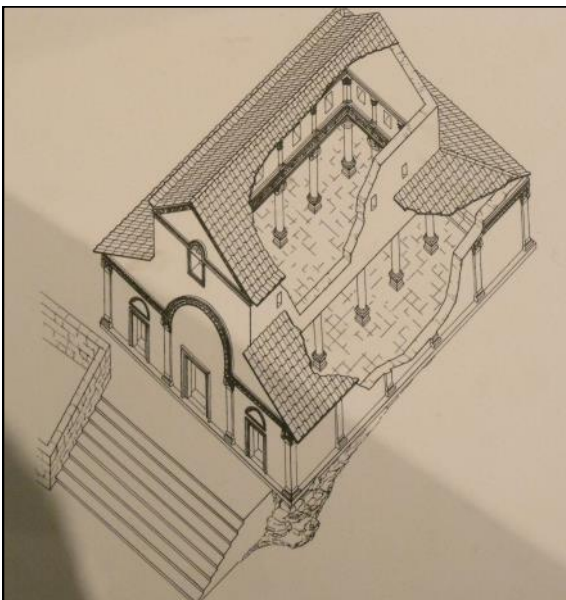


CHORAZIN

Chorazin was a town located about 2.5 miles north of Capernaum on a basalt plateau. Along with Capernaum and Bethsaida, Chorazin was specifically named by Jesus and condemned because of its failure to repent (Mt. 11:20-24; Lk. 10:13-16). These parallel accounts report the only story in the Bible that refers to Chorazin. Nevertheless, the passages make it clear that Jesus spent plenty of time there. Early in his ministry, Jesus had left his hometown of Nazareth and settled in Capernaum on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee. He ministered in Capernaum as well as in nearby Chorazin and Bethsaida. These unrepentant towns were severely condemned by Jesus since they were the places where “most of his miracles had been performed” (Mt. 11:20).

Archaeological excavations at Chorazin have produced a synagogue, which dates back to the late third or early fourth century A.D. Some of the remains from this structure have been taken to the Israel Museum in Jerusalem for display. One outstanding feature of the synagogue is the chief seat, also known as “Moses’ seat.” This chair was the most honored place in the synagogue, where a rabbi would sit while expounding the Law to the congregation. Other places where chairs of Moses have been discovered include the Greek island of Delos, Dura Europas in Syria, Hamath Tiberias in Galilee, and En Gedi in Judea. Jesus used this imagery when he instructed his disciples about hypocrisy: “The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach” (Mt. 23:2-3).



The Chorazin synagogue faced the south, toward Jerusalem. It was used from about the fourth to the sixth century A.D., although it was damaged by an earthquake during that period and had to be rebuilt. Like many other houses of prayer, it had benches along the walls to seat the congregation. The synagogue was ornately decorated with geometric and floral patterns, as well as animal and human figures. It was constructed from the local basalt stone, and measured 45 by 65 feet.







Moses' Seat (Israel Museum)

Aramaic Inscription:

- Line 1 Remembered for good be Judah ben Ishmael
- Line 2 who made this stoa [or platform]*
- Line 3 and its staircase. As his reward
- Line 4 may he have a share with the righteous.

*[*The stoa or platform most likely refers to the raised area with steps and columns where Moses' Seat rested, elevated above the congregation.]*



Ornate Column and Gable Which Surrounded a Niche for the Torah Ark Inside the Synagogue (Israel Museum)

Other items, including oil presses and a *miqweh*, have been discovered at Chorazin. However, at this date, the excavations at Chorazin have not produced evidence from the time of Jesus. Digging has only taken place in part of the city, so additional excavations could turn up evidence from the first century.



A *Miqweh* (Above) and Other Ruins (Below)

