

Caesarea Philippi

Worship site for Pan, so called Panias before Herod Philip rebuilt it in 2 BC and renamed it Caesarea. It became known as Philip's Caesarea to distinguish it from his father's Caesarea on the sea. 25 miles north of the Seas of Galilee, and 50 miles SW of Damascus, it sits at the base of Mt. Hermon where it serves as one of five headwaters of the Jordan River producing 5,000 gal./sec in winter.



Antiochus III the Great defeated Egypt at Panias in 197 BC. The Syrians then took control of the area and Antiochus Epiphanes used it to move into control of Judea which resulted in the Maccabean Revolt.

Herod the Great had built a temple to Caesar near this spring in the Golan Heights and Philip his son made it the capital of his kingdom in 2 BC after his father died. Philip built a palace there that became a luxurious palace for Agrippa II. With the rise of Christianity in the Byzantine period pagan worship of Pan ended and the temples were abandoned, but the city continued to prosper and the royal palace became a public bath house.

In the Bible: **Matthew 16:13; Mark 8:27**, the furthest Jesus traveled north was here. Peter confessed Jesus was the Son of God. Transfiguration occurred up on Mount Hermon at this time.



In Jesus time a temple stood in front of this cave that served as the inner sanctuary. In the cave was a very deep pool believed to be the gates to Hades. Sacrifices were thrown into the waters. If the victims disappeared in the water this was a sign the god had accepted the offering, but if blood appeared in the nearby springs it had been rejected.



Five niches in the rock formation held images in front of a platform shrine.

One Greek inscription reads:
"For Pan and the nymphs, Victor son of Lysimachos with his children dedicated a likeness in stone of Hermes, child of Maia, son of Zeus, having vowed it, the year 150."