

Tiberias

Tiberias was founded by Herod Antipas (Herod the Great's son) in 17 AD. South of Tiberias were hot springs used since the Iron Age (1200-586 BC). The new city of Herod Antipas was in Hellenistic style and replaced Sepphoris as the capital of west Galilee. It was built over an ancient burial grounds so it was considered unclean by the Jews. Herod Agrippa II



(Herod the Great's great-grandson) forced Jews to live there. Finally around 150 AD the city was purified and even the Jewish Sanhedrin and the Talmudic school left Sepphoris to settle in Tiberias. The Jerusalem Talmud was written here. (The Babylonian Talmud was written in Sepphoris). The city maintained peace with Rome during the Jewish wars. During the first century two synagogues were built near the coast of Galilee. In one synagogue there is a mosaic from 350 AD with three panels of mosaic figures: 1) the Ark with a menorah, shofar, etc.; 2) A zodiac circle with the pagan sun god Helios in his chariot encircled with the 12 signs of the Zodiac (similar to the one in Sepphoris made in 500-600 AD); 3) Greek inscriptions of the names of the founders of the synagogue.

Today Tiberias is a busy, modern city.

In the Bible: Herod Antipas named his city after Emperor Tiberias. Tiberias was the Caesar when Jesus began his ministry:

“In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar – when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod (Antipas) tetrarch of Galilee, his brother (Herod) Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene – during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the desert.” - Luke 3:1-2

At that time people began to refer to the Sea of Galilee as the Sea of Tiberias as in John 6:1 and 21:1. There is no record of Jesus visiting Tiberias, only a couple of mentions of him being on or beside the Sea of Tiberias (or, the Sea of Galilee).