

# Jesus in the Synagogues and Temple

From the time Jesus was a little boy until his final week Jesus regularly went to the synagogue and visited the temple in Jerusalem. In Jesus' day there was a simple synagogue in most every town and even some of the villages in Galilee. For the Jewish people one's presence in the local synagogue and observance of the festivals in Jerusalem was an important part of their culture. It's almost certain that Jesus would have observed all the Biblical Holy Days as a young man and most likely throughout his life as evidenced by his presence in Jerusalem at the time of the feasts and Passover.

As the 2nd Temple in Jerusalem stood until 70AD - it remained the Holy place for festivals, communal worship, prayer, and the high court. The local synagogues<sup>1</sup> in Jesus' day functioned as a community center, school, lower court, and place of study during the week - not for prayer or worship. On the Sabbath families would gather for a meal at twilight then the following morning they would proceed to the local synagogue for a time of learning, reading the Scriptures and engaging in discourse. As many as seven different people were appointed by the hazzan of the synagogue to read certain passages from what we would call the Old Testament.

Of the 10 Gospel passages that speak of Jesus activities in the Synagogues and the Jerusalem Temple, there are 4 specific occasions which Jesus visited the synagogues in Capernaum and Nazareth; more 4 times we see that he went to the Temple in Jerusalem to observe the Passover; plus 2 distinct accounts, differentiated by more than 6 months, that the Gospels mention that Jesus also "went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues".

To date archaeologists have unearthed only 8 synagogues<sup>2</sup> in Israel predating the destruction of the second temple. Archaeologists are uncertain that each of these existed in Jesus' day still the continue their search for more sites and artifacts to help us understand the times and traditions of the early Church. One thing is for certain - all 8 of these sites share a common architecture which includes benches on the inside perimeter of the main hall and no Torah Ark<sup>3</sup> which . This further supports the fact that these served more didactic purposes and that community synagogues helped educate the Jewish people, and provide for the community to gather and care for one another.

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<sup>1</sup> [Ancient Synagogues in Israel and the Diaspora](#), [Synagogue in the 1st Century](#). [Reading the Scriptures](#).

<sup>2</sup> Capernaum, Nazareth, [The Gamla Synagogue](#), [Tel Reches in Galilee](#), Masada, Magdala, Jericho, and Herodium, [Unearthing the world of Jesus](#),

<sup>3</sup> [Torah Ark](#)

Chronologically, these accounts are as follows in the *Harmony of the Gospels*:

<b>Passage</b>	<b>Section - Phase</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Location</b>
Jn 2:13-25	<a href="#">Section 31</a> , 32 Phase 2	27 AD / Nisan 14	1st Passover	Jerusalem
Lk 4:16-31a	<a href="#">Section 39</a> Phase 2		Reading Isa 61 Rejection	Nazareth
Mark 1:21; Lk 4:31b	<a href="#">Section 42</a> Phase 3		Teaching and Healing a Demoniac	Capernaum
Mt 4:23; Mk 1:39	<a href="#">Section 44</a> Phase 3		Preaching and casting out demons	Throughout Galilee
Jn 5:1	<a href="#">Section 49a</a> Phase 4	28 AD / Nisan 14	Feast of Tabernacles (unmentioned 2nd Passover)	Jerusalem
Matt.13:54; Mk 6:2	<a href="#">Section 69</a> Phase 5a		Teaching Final visit to Nazareth	Nazareth
Mt 9:35; Mk 6:6	<a href="#">Section 70a</a> Phase 5a		Teaching, Preaching, Healing	Throughout Galilee
Jn 6:4	<a href="#">Section 72c</a> Phase 5b	29 AD / Nisan 14	3rd Passover	Jerusalem
Jn 6:22-71	<a href="#">Section 76a.b</a> Phase 5b		Teaching	Capernaum
Jn 11:55; and Mt 26:17-20; Mk 14:12-17; Lk 22:7-16	<a href="#">Section 128a</a> Phase 5d; and <a href="#">Section 143-144</a> Phase 5d	30 AD / Nisan 14	Last Supper 4th Passover	Jerusalem