



(*ioudaioi*)” and the region of “Judea (*ioudaia*)” was very similar. It could be that a Gentile audience would think of Palestine as “*the region of the Jews*” and be less concerned with the territorial differences between Samaria, Galilee and the specific southern region that natives identified more narrowly as “Judea.” If this was the case, and “Judea” was the originally reading, it would not constitute a contradiction or a mistake but once again, a different way of describing the same place. Whatever the case, there is no doubt that Jesus also taught in the synagogues of Judea (see John 18:20). Either way, this is not a contradiction or mistake. Mostly likely Luke’s use of a broader term allowed for a textual variant to develop quite innocently.



alternated between the terms “Galilee” or “Judea” with no intention to alter or contradict but as two ways to refer to the same territory.

One final possibility comes from some issues of spelling. The Greek spelling of the words for “Jews

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BULLETIN OF
THE OLSEN
PARK CHURCH
OF CHRIST

Faithful Sayings

November 30,
2014



Services

Sunday: 9:30 AM
10:20 AM
6:00 PM

Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:

Pat Ledbetter
Jeff Nunn
Kyle Pope

Deacons:

Steve Dixon
Jack Langley
Neil Ledbetter
Brady McAlister
Walker McAnear
Lance Purcell
Rusty Scott

Evangelists:

Kyle Pope
Andrew Dow

“Galilee” or “Judea”—Was Luke Mistaken?

By Kyle Pope

In Luke’s account of Jesus’ life and work, near the beginning of his gospel he records an incident in which Jesus “**went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and was teaching them on the Sabbaths**” (Luke 4:31, NKJV). While there the evangelist tells us about Jesus casting out a demon from a man in the synagogue (Luke 4:32-36), healing Peter’s mother (Luke 4:38-39), leading other sick and demon-possessed people to come to Peter’s house to be healed (Luke 4:40-42). At the conclusion of this account he records “**And He was preaching in the synagogues of Galilee**” (Luke 4:44). These closing words are simple enough, but they have served as a source of controversy and accusation among those who would seek to discredit the Bible and challenge its reliability.

The controversy rests in a textual variant that is present in some manuscripts. While the majority of extant

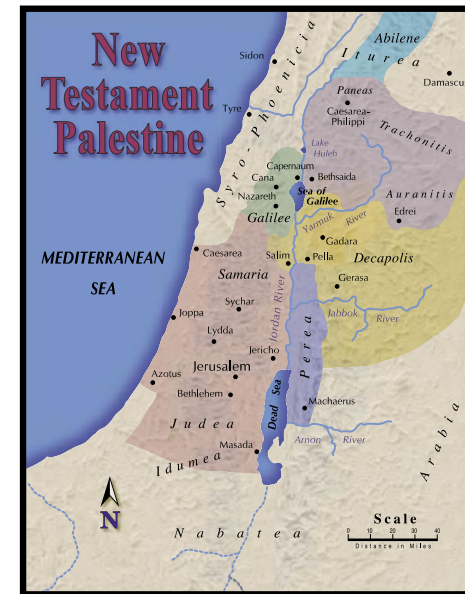
manuscripts and a few English translations (such as the KJV, ASV, NKJV, and HCSB) read as above, instead of “Galilee” some read “Judea.” This reading has been adopted by many modern English translations (such as RSV, NASB, NIV, ESV, and NLT). Is this a contradiction? Is Luke mistaken? Critics of faith say “yes,” but what is the answer, and what is the evidence regarding this?

The earliest extant manuscript of this text is a papyrus housed in Geneva, Switzerland among the Bodmer collection of papyri classified as P⁷⁵. This manuscript is believed to date to around A.D. 175 and reads “Judea.” Manuscripts produced after P⁷⁵ are somewhat evenly divided. The fourth century Vatican manuscript and some ancient Syriac and Coptic translations also read “Judea,” but the fifth century Alexandrian manuscript and other Latin, Syriac, Coptic, and Gothic translations read “Galilee.” What could explain such a difference?

The fact that there is a textual variant here may not be as sinister as some would contend. Philip Comfort in his *New Testament Text and Translation Commentary* (Carol Stream, Illinois: Tyndale House, 2008) suggests that the answer may reflect Luke’s occasional usage of the term “Judea” to include Palestine as a whole. Comfort cites the following examples in Luke where he appears to do this (Luke 1:5; 6:17; 7:17; 23:5 and Acts 10:37). Let’s note the last two of these examples. The first is a charge made by the Jews regarding Jesus at his trial before Pilate. They declare “**He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee to this place**” (Luke 23:5). The second, much like it, comes in Peter’s teach-

ing to Cornelius. After declaring that God preached “**peace through Jesus Christ**” whom he declares to be “**Lord of all**” (Acts 10:36), he tells him, “**that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached**” (Acts 10:37). In these examples Luke may include Galilee within what he calls “Judea.” If Luke wrote to Gentiles, as most scholars believe, it would make sense to occasionally use the more broad definition, and other times to speak of it in its more narrow sense of the southern territory.

It is clear that ancient writers used the term “Judea” in both ways. Thayer tells us the word meant, “1) in a narrower sense, to the southern portion of Palestine lying on this side of the Jordan and the Dead Sea, to distinguish it from Samaria, Galilee, Peraea, and Idumaea. 2) in a broader sense, referring to all Palestine” (*Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*). Ancient Gentile writers reflect this same broad application of the word. The Greek geographer Strabo (ca. 64 B.C-24 A.D), for example, described “Judea” as spanning from Gaza to the



Anti-Lebanon mountain range on the east side of the Jordan (*Geography* 16.2.21). The Alexandrian geographer Claudius Ptolemy (ca. A.D. 90-168) used the terms “Judea” and “Palestine” synonymously (*Geography* 5.16.1). If this tendency was widespread, scribes copying Luke’s text might easily have

