

Introduction to Bible Geography

Description and Review Questions

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Introduction to Bible Geography is a fully-illustrated introduction to Bible geography, geared for beginning Bible students and older ones.

It covers Israel's divinely-ordained location, an overview of the larger region as far west as the Strait of Gibraltar, the Fertile Crescent, Mesopotamia (Shinar), Egypt and the Nile, Israel's mountains and rivers, the Negev, the Sea of Galilee and major sites pertaining to Jesus' ministry, the Jordan River, the Dead Sea, Jericho, Dan, Beersheba, Bethel, the Philistine cities, Carmel, Sharon, Bashan, Gilead, Shiloh, Samaria, Ebal and Gerizim, Elah Valley (where David killed Goliath), Jerusalem, ancient highways, the division of the tribes, Sodom and Gomorrah, and the Jezreel Valley (plain of Megiddo), its history and future.

The course consists of a PowerPoint presentation and a PDF. The PowerPoint covers the same material as the PDF, but it includes videos and photos that aren't in the PDF and is intended especially for classroom use, though it can be used with profit by individual students. The abbreviated PDF edition is for students to use in classrooms and for private study and easy reference. As the teacher goes through the PowerPoints, the students can have all of the major parts of the study before them in the PDF (using a smartphone or tablet, etc.) or in a printout of the PDF. The downloads of both files are provided as part of the package.

The study of geography is essential to a proper understanding of the Bible, because it is an historical book that describes events in the land of Israel and surrounding territory.

The more the student knows about the geography pertaining to a Bible passage, the better he can understand the scene and the teaching.

The student has to ask questions such as where is the author? Where are the recipients? If the passage describes an event, where does it take place? "What was the terrain like? What topographic features made this region unique? What was the weather like? How far was this place from other places mentioned in this passage? What were the travel routes? What size was this town or city? What was the layout? What was the location known for?" (William Hendrick).

This requires a good knowledge of Bible geography and constant reference to maps. This information can be found in good commentaries, surveys, Bible encyclopedias, and Bible atlases.

We cannot say enough about the importance of studying Bible geography and paying close attention to geography in the biblical text. If you don't, you overlook a great amount of information.

For example, in Galatians 1:15-21, Paul describes the places where he lived and visited after his conversion (from Damascus to Arabia, back to Damascus, to Jerusalem, to “the regions of Syria and Cilicia”). At the very least, the Bible student should trace these on a map, and a more serious study will involve getting information about each place.

Consider Luke 5:4, “launch out into the deep.” The deepest part of the Sea of Galilee is toward the east side out from Kursi. The lake is about 200 feet deep at that part.

Consider Genesis 15:2 (“this Eliezer of Damascus”) and Genesis 16:1 (“an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar”). Abraham’s governor, Eliezer, was of Damascus. It is easy to skip over the word “Damascus.” I skipped over it for decades. Then one day I stopped and thought about it, and realized that Abraham probably found this faithful man on the way down to Canaan from Haran. And Hagar being an Egyptian leads the perceptive student’s mind directly to the land of Egypt and tells him a great deal about her. She was probably obtained when Abraham and Sarah were backsliding in Egypt (Ge. 12:10-20), and she was an Egyptian in character. She went right back to Egypt when she left Abraham and Sarah (Ge. 21:21). Contrast Ruth, who left her Moabite people to associate with the people of God.

Consider the Mount of Transfiguration (Mt. 17:1-8). We are told that it was a “high mountain” (Mt. 17:1). This means that the mountain was not Mt. Tabor, the traditional Mount of Transfiguration, which is a mere hill, but that it was probably Mt. Hermon, Israel’s highest mountain (2,800 meters or 9,100 feet). This is further confirmed by the fact that just before this event, Jesus was in Caesarea Philippi which is at the base of Mt. Hermon (Mt. 16:13).

The study of Bible geography should be a lifelong process. We cannot emphasize too strongly the importance of a personal visit to the Bible lands, especially Israel itself, but also Turkey, Greece, and Egypt. Every preacher, especially, should make this a priority, and he should prepare well for any trip he makes to that part of the world.

We recommend the following Bible atlases. Ideally, the Bible student should obtain all three.

NEW MOODY ATLAS OF THE BIBLE, edited by Barry Beitzel. This atlas has a lot of excellent features. On the negative side, the atlas gives credence to evolutionary long ages of the earth, has Israel crossing a small lake instead of the Red Sea, and grossly misplaces Ur of the Chaldees. Overall, though, we consider it the best Bible atlas. The double-page map of Solomon’s international trading networks is excellent.

ROSE THEN AND NOW BIBLE MAP ATLAS. (This is not to be confused with the much smaller *Deluxe Then and Now Bible Maps*.) This should be obtained as a reference, but it also should be read and studied as a course. It has more than 120 color topographical maps and a wealth of color photos and charts. It has unique clear plastic overlays that allow the student to see where ancient countries and cities are located in a modern setting. Excellent maps showing the exploits of Elijah and Elisha. Good studies of the Assyrian era and maps of the campaigns of Assyrian kings in northern Israel and Judah; the book of Esther and its historical background; and the Herods and

the Roman era in Israel. See also *Holman Bible Atlas*, *Moody Atlas of the Bible*, and *Satellite Bible Atlas*.

SATELLITE BIBLE ATLAS. This atlas is unique and irreplaceable. It should be carried on any tour of Israel. (As practically all modern Bible atlases, this one has Israel crossing a the Bitter Lakes instead of the Red Sea.) See also *Rose Then and Now Bible Map Atlas*, *Holman Bible Atlas*, and *Moody Atlas of the Bible*.

BIBLEATLAS.ORG. This online atlas is easy to use and has many excellent features.

BIBLEMAPPER.COM. This is a program available for Windows that allows the student to create personalized maps. It comes with 37 pre-made maps. They are excellent maps except for the Exodus from Egypt which has Israel crossing the Bitter Lakes.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

PART I

1. What is the name of the part of the world in which Israel is located today?
2. Israel is at the crossroads of what three continents?
3. The descendants of Japheth settled in what direction from Israel?
4. The descendants of Ham settled in what direction from Israel?
5. What prophet stated that God put Jerusalem in the midst of the nations? (book and chapter)
6. To the north of Israel are what two large inland seas?
7. What was the ancient name of the peninsula bordered on the north by the Black Sea and the south by the Mediterranean?
9. What country is directly to the southwest of Israel?
10. What sea lies to the south of Israel?
11. What large peninsula is south and east of Israel?
12. What is the modern geographical name of the large strip of land that runs to the north and west of the Arabian Desert and that encompasses Israel and Egypt?
13. What two great rivers water this land in the north?
14. The region of these rivers is called what in the Bible?
15. What is another name for this region?
16. Name the two most famous cities that were built here after the flood.
17. On the way from Ur to the Promised Land, what city did Abraham stop in?
18. What is a biblical name for the Mediterranean Sea?
19. The western entrance to the Mediterranean is called what?
20. What ancient empire surrounded the Mediterranean Sea?
21. What were the three ancient nations to the east of Israel (name them from south to north)?
22. Moses viewed the Promised Land from what mountain?
23. What three Philistine cities were located along the Mediterranean coast of Israel?
24. What river runs through Egypt?
25. This river flows in what direction and empties into what sea?
26. Lower Egypt was in what part of Egypt (north or south)?
27. What ancient empire was to the north of Israel along the Mediterranean coast?

28. What were the two major cities of this empire near Israel?
29. What were the two major international highways that ran through or near Israel?
30. What two cities were used to name the southern and northern extent of Israel?
31. In what city did Abraham build his first altar after settled in the Promised Land?
32. The land God promised to Abraham extends north to what river?
33. What two tribes of Israel were farthest north (west of the Jordan)?
34. What three tribes were on the east side of the Jordan?
35. What two tribes were farthest south?
36. What two tribes bordered Judah to the north?
37. The Sea of Galilee was bordered on the west by what tribe and on the east by what tribe?
38. The Dead Sea was bordered by what tribe on the west and what tribe on the east?
39. What four tribes bordered the Mediterranean?
40. What tribe bordered Benjamin on the north?
41. The Jordan River is about how many miles long?
42. The headwaters of the Jordan are at the foot of what mountain?

PART II

1. What is a biblical name for the Dead Sea?
2. The Dead Sea is about how many miles long and wide?
3. It is about how many feet below sea level?
4. It is what about what percentage saline?
5. Sodom and Gomorrah were located in what plain?
6. What direction is this from the Dead Sea?
7. What is the name of the large desert area in the south of Israel?
8. What does that name mean?
9. What two biblical wilderness areas are in that territory?
10. What was the name of Jerusalem when David captured it?
11. Abraham was instructed to sacrifice Isaac on what mountain?
12. This mountain is located in what direction from the City of David?
13. What valley divides the Mount of Olives from Jerusalem?
14. This valley runs from Jerusalem in what direction to what sea?
15. What are two names for the valley that lies to the south of the City of David?
16. Bethlehem is what direction from Jerusalem?
17. The Sea of Chinnereth is located in what direction from Nazareth?
18. The Sea of Galilee is about how many miles long and wide?
19. What river flows into the Sea of Galilee in the north and flows out in the south?
20. In what town did Jesus live during His ministry in the region of the Sea of Galilee?
21. On what shore of the Sea of Galilee is this town located?
22. The feeding of the 5,000 occurred near what city?
23. This was on what shore of the Sea of Galilee?
24. The feeding of the 4,000 occurred on what shore of the Sea of Galilee?
25. What Roman city was located on the west shore of the Sea of Galilee?
26. Who built this city?

PART III

1. What are two names for the city where Mary Magdalene was from?
2. This city was located on what shore of the Sea of Galilee?
3. This city is at the foot of what mountain?
4. The pigs ran into the water and drowned on what shore of the Sea of Galilee?
5. What three cities did Jesus curse by name because they did not believe in Him as Messiah in spite of His great miracles?
6. These cities were located on what side of the Sea of Galilee?
7. What is the Greek name of Jezreel?
8. What are the names of the adjoining valleys to the east and to the west?
9. What are three battles that took place here in Bible times?
10. On what mountain was King Saul killed?
11. What great battle will occur here in the future?
12. The Plain of Sharon is located in what direction from Mt. Carmel?
13. Mt. Carmel lies in what direction from the Sea of Galilee?
14. What is the most famous Bible event that occurred on Carmel?
15. Samaria was located between what two major regions of Israel?
16. Was Samaria a city or a territory?
17. On what two mountains did Israel proclaim the blessings and curses of the law?
18. What city is at the foot of these mountains on the east side?
19. Where was the tabernacle set up during the days of Joshua?
20. In what valley did David kill Goliath?
21. This valley is what direction from Bethlehem?
22. Gilead was located on what side of the Jordan?
23. What mountains are west of the Dead Sea?
24. What mountains are south of the Jezreel Valley?