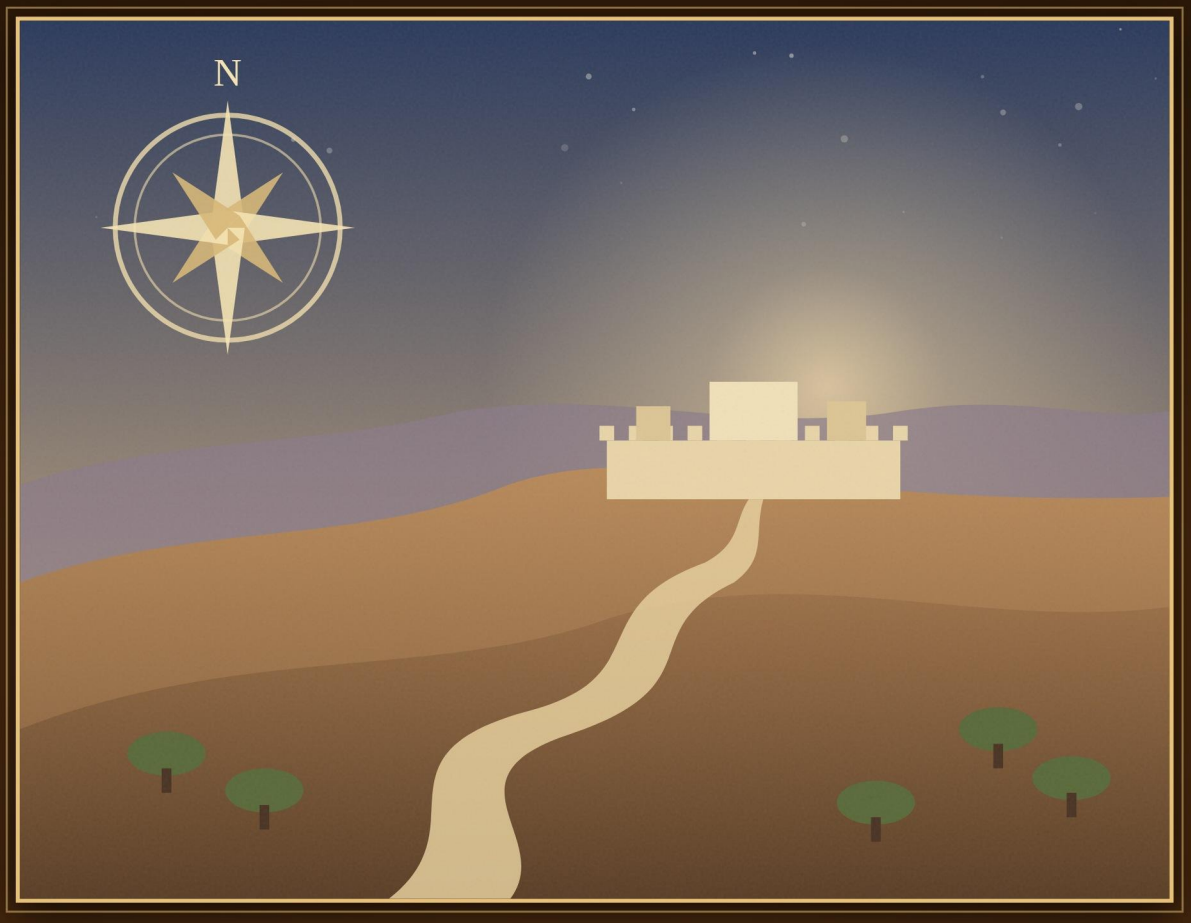
A BIBLE GEOGRAPHY GUIDE

The Land of the Bible

With 16 Original Maps



Places, Maps and Distances

Andrew Dominguez

Trinfinity
Enterprises

The Land of the Bible

Places, Maps and Distances

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The Land of the Bible: Places, Maps and Distances

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A note before you begin. This book is written to teach the Bible and encourage faith. It shares my understanding of Scripture and is offered for study and spiritual growth. It is not counseling, medical, legal, or financial advice. If you are facing a crisis, a health problem, or a legal or money problem, please reach out to a qualified professional as well as your pastor and church family. To the fullest extent the law allows, Andrew Dominguez, Trinfinity Enterprises, and Andrew Dominguez's heirs, estate, successors, and assigns accept no liability for how this material is used.

A Note on the Bible Translation Used in This Book

My preferred Bible for personal study, teaching, and research is the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB). I chose it because it is a word-for-word translation in today's language, built on the ancient Scripture sources: the Hebrew and Aramaic of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New Testament. I prepared the SLB myself, and the Scripture in this book is taken from it.

Where a literal phrase would mislead an English reader, the SLB gives the writer's meaning in plain words. Words added for sense are set in bold italics so you can see what is in the original and what is not.

The complete Steadfast Literal Bible is free to read, search, download, and print at trinfinityenterprises.com/slb. If you want to check a verse in its full setting or read the translation's preface and principles, that is the place to go.

Above all, my desire is not to promote one translation over another, but to faithfully teach the Word of God, encourage careful examination of the Scriptures, and help readers grow in their knowledge, understanding, and relationship with the Lord.

May every page of this book direct attention not to the translation itself, but to the truth of God's Word and the One whom it reveals.

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Before You Begin

> *Arise, walk about in the land, through its length and through its breadth, for to you I will give it.*
>
> Genesis 13:17 (SLB)

The Bible happened in real places. Abraham walked real roads. David hid in real caves near En Gedi. Jesus grew up in a small hill town in Galilee, taught in boats on a real lake, and walked the steep road from Jericho up to Jerusalem. Paul crossed real seas and was shipwrecked on a real island.

When you know where these places are, how far apart they sit and what the ground between them looks like, the Bible stops feeling like a collection of stories set nowhere in particular. You start to see why the Philistines kept fighting over the low hills, why Jesus had to pass through Samaria, why Paul's trip to Rome took months, and why a letter to Laodicea talks about lukewarm water.

What This Book Covers

This book walks through the lands of the Bible in the order the story unfolds. It starts with the shape of the land itself, then follows the patriarchs, the exodus, the tribes, the kings, the exile, the life of Jesus, the early church, Paul's journeys and the seven churches of Revelation. Each chapter has an original map, key Bible passages printed in full, plain teaching and a few questions to think about. The back of the book has a table of distances between key places and a list of every place on the maps.

How the Maps Were Made

Every map in this book was drawn for this book. The coastlines, lakes and rivers come from Natural Earth, a free map data set that its makers have placed in the public domain. The place markers use the standard modern identifications of each ancient site, the locations most Bible atlases and archaeologists agree on.

Please keep a few things in mind as you use them.

- **A question mark means the location is debated.** Some sites, such as Mount Sinai, Kadesh Barnea, Cana, Bethsaida and Emmaus, have more than one proposed location. The map shows one common choice and marks it with a question mark.
- **Routes are approximate.** The Bible usually names the places people went, not the exact roads they took. The lines on the maps connect the named places along likely paths.
- **The land has changed.** The map data shows today's coastlines, lakes and rivers. The Dead Sea in particular is much smaller than it was in Bible times, and its southern end is now

mostly shallow evaporation ponds. Some coastlines and river courses have also shifted over the centuries.

- **Borders are approximate.** Tribal areas, kingdom borders and Roman provinces changed over time. Region names are placed in their general area, not drawn as exact boundaries.
- **Distances are straight-line.** The distances in this book are measured in a straight line between the map coordinates, rounded to the nearest mile. Walking distances along real roads are longer, often by a quarter or more in the hill country.

About the Scripture

The Scripture in this book comes from the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB), a word-for-word translation in today's language. Words added in English to make the sense clear are printed in bold italics.

Chapter 1: The Land at a Glance

> *For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of wadis of water, of springs and deeps going out in the valley and in the hill country, a land of wheat and barley and vine and fig tree and pomegranate, a land of olive trees of oil and honey, a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, you will not lack anything in it, a land whose stones **are** iron, and from whose hills you will dig copper.*
>
> Deuteronomy 8:7-9 (SLB)

The land God promised to Abraham is small. From Dan in the north to Beersheba in the south, the phrase the Bible uses for the whole country, is about 146 miles in a straight line. From the Mediterranean coast to the Jordan River is roughly 30 to 55 miles, depending on where you measure. You could drive the length of it in an afternoon. Yet more happened in that small strip of land than in any other place on earth.



Map 1. The land of the Bible at a glance

Five Strips Running North and South

The easiest way to picture the land is as a set of strips running north to south, side by side, from the sea to the desert.

1. **The Coastal Plain.** A flat, sandy strip along the Mediterranean. It had good farmland and the main international road, but few natural harbors. For much of the Old Testament this was Philistine country in the south.
2. **The Shephelah.** The word means lowlands. These are low, rolling hills between the coast and the mountains. They were the buffer zone between Israel and the Philistines, and many battles were fought here, including David and Goliath in the Valley of Elah.

3. **The Hill Country.** The rocky backbone of the land, running from Galilee down through Samaria and Judea to Hebron. Most of Israel's people lived here. Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Hebron, Bethel and Shechem all sit on or near this ridge.
4. **The Jordan Valley.** A deep crack in the earth running from north of the Sea of Galilee down past the Dead Sea. It is part of a long rift that continues south into Africa. The Jordan River winds through it.
5. **The Transjordan.** The high plateau east of the Jordan. In the Old Testament it held Gilead, Ammon, Moab and Edom. Reuben, Gad and half of Manasseh settled here.

From High to Low

The land rises and falls sharply. Jerusalem sits on the ridge at about 2,500 feet above sea level. Jericho, only 14 miles away in a straight line, sits about 850 feet below sea level. That is a drop of more than 3,000 feet. That is why the Bible always speaks of going up to Jerusalem and going down to Jericho.

The Sea of Galilee lies about 700 feet below sea level. The surface of the Dead Sea is the lowest place on land anywhere on earth, more than 1,400 feet below sea level, and it keeps dropping as the water is drawn off. In the far north, Mount Hermon rises over 9,000 feet and holds snow for much of the year. Its melting snow feeds the springs at Dan and Caesarea Philippi, which become the Jordan.

> **Why It Matters** When the Bible says people went up or went down, it is usually describing the ground, not the compass. A trip from Jericho to Jerusalem is uphill nearly the whole way, and pilgrims sang the Psalms of Ascents, Psalms 120 to 134, as they climbed.

The Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea

The Jordan connects two very different bodies of water. The Sea of Galilee is fresh water, full of fish, about 13 miles long and 8 miles wide. Fishing towns like Capernaum and Bethsaida lined its shore. The Dead Sea has no outlet. Water flows in and only leaves by evaporating, so the minerals stay behind, making it far saltier than the ocean. Nothing grows in it, which gave it its name.

A Land Between

Look at a map of the whole region and you will see that this small land sits on the only good land bridge between Africa and Asia. To the west is the sea. To the east is desert. Every army and trader moving between Egypt and Mesopotamia had to pass through it. That made the land valuable and dangerous. It also made Israel a witness to the nations, a people placed where the whole world passed by.

Questions to Think About

1. Which of the five strips of land surprised you most?

_____

_____

_____

2. Why do you think God placed His people on a land bridge between great empires?

_____

_____

_____

3. How does knowing the drop from Jerusalem to Jericho change how you read Luke 10:30?

_____

_____

_____

Chapter 2: Seasons, Rain and Roads

> *And the land to which you are passing over to take possession of it **is** a land of mountains and valleys; by the rain of the heavens it drinks water*
>
> Deuteronomy 11:11 (SLB)

Egypt had the Nile. Mesopotamia had the Tigris and Euphrates. Israel had no great river to water its fields. It depended on rain, and rain depended on God. Moses told the people before they entered that this land would teach them to look up.

Two Seasons

The land has two main seasons. The rainy season runs roughly from October to April. The dry season runs from May to September, when it may not rain at all. The Bible speaks of the early rain, which softens the ground for plowing and planting in the fall, and the late rain in spring, which fills out the grain before harvest.

> *then I will give the rain of your land in its season, early rain and late rain, and you shall gather your grain and your new wine and your fresh oil.* (Deuteronomy 11:14)

Rain falls most heavily in the north and on the western slopes of the hills, where clouds from the Mediterranean first meet high ground. It thins out quickly to the south and east. Galilee is green. The Judean wilderness, just a few miles east of Jerusalem, is bare rock and dust. The Negev, around Beersheba, is dry country where only the hardy could farm.

This is why drought in the Bible is so serious. When Elijah prayed and it did not rain for three and a half years, the whole economy collapsed. And this is why God tied the rain to Israel's faithfulness in passages like Deuteronomy 11 and 28.

The Seven Foods of the Land

Deuteronomy 8:8 lists the main crops: wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives and honey, which may mean date honey as well as bee honey. Barley ripens first, around Passover. Wheat follows near Pentecost. Grapes, figs and pomegranates come in late summer, and olives in the fall. Israel's feasts are tied to these harvests, so the calendar of worship was also the calendar of the farm.

The Great Roads

Three main roads ran through the land, and they explain a great deal of Bible history.

- **The Way of the Sea.** The main international road ran from Egypt up the coastal plain, cut inland through the pass at Megiddo into the Jezreel Valley, and went on past the Sea of Galilee toward Damascus. Isaiah mentions it, and Matthew quotes Isaiah about Jesus'

ministry in Galilee. Megiddo guarded this road, which is why so many battles were fought there.

- **The King's Highway.** This road ran north and south along the Transjordan plateau, east of the Dead Sea, from the Gulf of Aqaba to Damascus. Moses asked the king of Edom for permission to use it, and was refused.
- **The Ridge Route.** A local road ran along the top of the hill country, linking Beersheba, Hebron, Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Bethel and Shechem. Abraham, Jacob, Samuel and many others traveled it.

> *Please let us pass through your land. We will not pass through field and vineyard, and we will not drink water of a well; we will go **by** the way of the king; we will not turn aside **to the** right and **to the** left until we have passed through your territory.'* (Numbers 20:17)

How Fast People Traveled

On foot, travelers usually covered about 15 to 20 miles a day, less in the hills or with children and animals. A trip from Nazareth to Jerusalem, about 64 miles in a straight line but longer by road, took several days. That is why Mary and Joseph traveled with a group of relatives and friends, and why they went a full day before noticing that the boy Jesus was missing in Luke 2.

Questions to Think About

1. How would depending on rain instead of a river change the way you pray?

_____

_____

_____

2. Why do you think so many battles happened near the great roads?

_____

_____

_____

3. Read Luke 2:41-46. How does knowing the travel times help you understand the story?

_____

_____

_____

Chapter 3: The World of the Patriarchs

> *By faith Abraham, being called, obeyed to go out into the place which he was going to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going.*
>
> Hebrews 11:8 (SLB)

The story of Israel begins far from Israel. Abraham grew up in Ur of the Chaldeans, a great city near the mouth of the Euphrates River in what is now southern Iraq. From there his family traveled north and west along the rivers to Haran, in what is now southern Turkey. Only after his father died did Abraham set out for Canaan.



Map 2. The journeys of Abraham

And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran, his son's son, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, the wife of Abram his son; and they went out with them from Ur of the

Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan; and they came as far as Haran, and they dwelt there. (Genesis 11:31)

Why the Long Way Around?

Look at the map and you will see that Ur and Canaan are separated by the Arabian Desert. No family with flocks could cross it. Instead, travelers followed the rivers and the farmland in a great arc, often called the Fertile Crescent. From Ur to Haran is about 575 miles in a straight line, and from Haran to Shechem is about 386 more. Following the rivers and roads, the whole trip was well over a thousand miles.

And the LORD said to Abram, "Go for yourself from your land and from your kindred and from the house of your father, to the land which I will show you." (Genesis 12:1)

Abraham in the Land

Abraham's first stop in Canaan was Shechem, in the middle of the hill country, where God appeared to him and promised the land to his descendants. He built altars at Shechem and near Bethel. When famine came he went down to Egypt, then returned to the hill country. He spent much of his life near Hebron and in the Negev around Beersheba, and he bought the cave of Machpelah at Hebron as a burial place for Sarah. It was the only piece of the promised land he ever owned.

Isaac, Jacob and Joseph

Isaac lived mostly in the south, around Beersheba and Gerar. When it came time for him to marry, Abraham sent his servant back to the family in the region of Haran to find Rebekah. Jacob later fled to the same region to escape Esau, worked twenty years for Laban, and came back with a large family. On the way out he dreamed of a ladder at Bethel. On the way back he wrestled with God at the Jabbok River, east of the Jordan.

Jacob's son Joseph was sold by his brothers near Dothan, north of Shechem, to traders on their way to Egypt. Years later, during a great famine, the whole family went down to Egypt and settled in the land of Goshen, in the eastern Nile Delta.

Place	What happened there
Ur	Abraham's family home (Genesis 11:28-31)
Haran	Abraham's father died; Jacob worked for Laban (Genesis 11:32; 29-31)
Shechem	God's first promise to Abraham in the land (Genesis 12:6-7)
Bethel	Abraham's altar; Jacob's dream (Genesis 12:8; 28:10-22)
Hebron	Abraham's home; the family tomb (Genesis 13:18; 23)
Beersheba	Wells and covenants; Isaac's home (Genesis 21; 26)
Egypt	Abraham in the famine; Joseph and the family (Genesis 12:10; 37-50)

Questions to Think About

1. Abraham left a great city for a tent in a land he did not own. What does that tell you about his faith?

_____

_____

_____

2. Why do you think owning only a burial cave mattered so much to Abraham?

_____

_____

_____

3. Where has God called you to go not knowing where you were going?

_____

_____

_____

Chapter 4: Out of Egypt

> *And it came about, when Pharaoh let the people go, that God did not lead them **by** the way of the land of the Philistines, for it **was** near; for God said, "Lest the people regret when they see war, and they return to Egypt." And God led the people around **by** the way of the wilderness **to** the Red Sea; and the sons of Israel went up armed from the land of Egypt.*
>
> Exodus 13:17-18 (SLB)

The shortest road from Egypt to Canaan ran up the coast, through Philistine country. A traveler could walk it in about two weeks. God did not lead Israel that way. He led them south into the Sinai wilderness, where He gave them His law, taught them to trust Him for food and water, and formed a nation.



Map 3. The exodus and the wilderness journey, one traditional route

From Goshen to the Sea

Israel lived in the land of Goshen, in the eastern Nile Delta, and built the store cities of Pithom and Rameses. Rameses is usually identified with a site near the modern village of Qantir. From there the people set out for Succoth, then turned back and camped by the sea, where God parted the waters and brought them through on dry ground.

Bible scholars do not agree on exactly where the crossing took place. Some point to the lakes and marshes along the line of today's Suez Canal. Others place it at the Gulf of Suez, and some place it at the Gulf of Aqaba. The Bible's own geography in Exodus 13 and 14 is clear that it was a real body of water deep enough to drown Pharaoh's army.

Where Is Mount Sinai?

The traditional site is Jebel Musa, in the granite mountains of the southern Sinai Peninsula. Christians have honored it as Mount Sinai since at least the fourth century AD. Other sites have been proposed in the northern Sinai and in northwest Arabia, partly because Paul says in Galatians 4:25 that Mount Sinai is in Arabia. The map shows the traditional site with a question mark. Wherever it stands, what matters is what happened there: God came down in fire, spoke the Ten Commandments, and made His covenant with Israel.

Forty Years

From Sinai, Israel traveled north to Kadesh Barnea, an oasis on the southern edge of Canaan. From there Moses sent twelve spies into the land. Ten brought back a bad report, the people refused to go in, and God sentenced that generation to wander for forty years until they died in the wilderness. Kadesh Barnea is usually identified with springs at Ein el-Qudeirat in the northeast Sinai, though that too is debated.

At the end of the forty years, Edom refused to let Israel pass along the King's Highway. Israel went around Edom and came up the east side of the Dead Sea to the plains of Moab. Moses climbed Mount Nebo, looked across the Jordan at the land he would not enter, and died there.

> **A Distance to Remember** In a straight line, the traditional Mount Sinai and Kadesh Barnea are about 147 miles apart. Deuteronomy 1:2 says the trip took eleven days. The people covered it in days, then spent decades wandering because they would not trust God.

Questions to Think About

1. Why do you think God led Israel the long way instead of the short way?

_____

_____

_____

2. What did the wilderness teach Israel that the short road never could?

_____

_____

_____

3. Is there a long way God is leading you right now? What might He be teaching you?

_____

_____

_____

Chapter 5: Conquest and the Twelve Tribes

> *Every place on which the sole of your foot will tread, to you I have given it, just as I spoke to Moses.*
>
> Joshua 1:3 (SLB)

Israel crossed the Jordan near Jericho, at flood season, on dry ground. Their first camp in the land was at Gilgal, near Jericho. From there Joshua led them up into the hill country.

Divide and Conquer

The order of Joshua's campaigns makes sense on the map. Jericho guarded the way up from the Jordan Valley. After Jericho and Ai, Israel controlled the center of the hill country, cutting the land in two. Joshua then turned south to defeat a coalition of kings around Jerusalem and the Shephelah, and later marched north to defeat the kings of Galilee at the waters of Merom. The conquest broke the power of the Canaanite kings, but much of the land still had to be possessed tribe by tribe.

The Tribal Areas

The land was divided among the tribes by lot, as recorded in Joshua 13 to 19. Levi received no tribal area. Instead its families received cities spread through all the tribes, so that the priests and teachers of the law lived among the whole nation. Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, each received a share, which keeps the count at twelve.



Map 4. The approximate areas of the twelve tribes

The map shows the general area of each tribe. The exact borders in Joshua are detailed, but many of the boundary towns cannot be located today, and the borders shifted over time. Notice that the tribe of Dan appears twice. Dan was first given land near the coast, west of Benjamin, but could not drive out the people there. Most of the tribe moved north and took the city of Laish, which they renamed Dan (Judges 18).

> *And all the congregation of the sons of Israel assembled* ***at*** *Shiloh, and they caused the tent of meeting to dwell there; and the land was subdued before them.* (Joshua 18:1)

Shiloh and the Tabernacle

Once the land was subdued, the tabernacle was set up at Shiloh in the hill country of Ephraim. It stayed there through the time of the judges. Shiloh is where Hannah prayed for a son and where young Samuel served. It is about 19 miles north of Jerusalem in a straight line.

The Judges

The book of Judges is set all over the land. Deborah and Barak fought at Mount Tabor and in the Jezreel Valley. Gideon defeated the Midianites in the same valley. Samson lived on the border between Dan and the Philistines in the Shephelah. When you read Judges with a map, you can see how each tribe was pressed by a different enemy on its own border.

Questions to Think About

1. Why do you think God scattered the Levites among all the tribes?

   _____

   _____

   _____

2. Dan did not take the land it was given and moved elsewhere. What does that teach about obedience?

   _____

   _____

   _____

3. Where in your life has God given you ground you have not yet taken?

   _____

   _____

   _____

Chapter 6: Saul, David and Solomon

> *And David captured the stronghold of Zion; it* ***is*** *the city of David.*
>
> 2 Samuel 5:7 (SLB)

Israel's first king, Saul, came from the small tribe of Benjamin and ruled from his hometown of Gibeah, just north of Jerusalem. His reign was spent fighting the Philistines, whose five cities lay on the coastal plain to the west: Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Gath and Ekron.



Map 5. The kingdom under Saul, David and Solomon

Battles in the Borderlands

Look at the map and you will see why the Philistines and Israel fought so often in the Shephelah. The Philistines wanted to push up the valleys into the hill country. Israel wanted to keep them on the plain. David met Goliath in the Valley of Elah, one of those valleys, between Gath and Bethlehem. Saul's last battle was far to the north, on Mount Gilboa, where the Philistines had pushed through the Jezreel Valley. They hung his body on the wall of Beth Shean.

David's Wilderness Years

While Saul hunted him, David hid in the Judean wilderness, a dry, rocky region east of Bethlehem and Hebron that drops steeply to the Dead Sea. The spring at En Gedi on the Dead Sea shore, where David spared Saul's life in a cave, is still flowing today. Many of David's psalms were written out of those years.

A Capital in the Middle

After Saul died, David ruled from Hebron for seven and a half years. Then he captured Jerusalem from the Jebusites and made it his capital. It was a wise choice. Jerusalem sat on the border between Judah in the south and the northern tribes, and it belonged to neither. It was easy to defend, with deep valleys on three sides, and it had a reliable spring, the Gihon. David brought the ark there, and Solomon later built the temple on the hill just north of the city of David.

> *And Judah and Israel dwelt in security, each man under his vine and under his fig tree, from Dan and to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon.* (1 Kings 4:25)

Solomon's Kingdom

Under Solomon, Israel reached its greatest size and wealth. He fortified cities that guarded the main roads, including Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer (1 Kings 9:15). He built a fleet at Ezion-geber on the Gulf of Aqaba to trade by sea. The phrase from Dan to Beersheba describes the land of Israel itself, but Solomon's influence reached well beyond it, from the Euphrates to the border of Egypt (1 Kings 4:21).

Questions to Think About

1. Why was Jerusalem a good choice for a capital?

   _____

   _____

   _____

2. Read Psalm 57 or Psalm 63, both linked to David's time in the wilderness. How does knowing the setting change how you read them?

_____

_____

_____

3. Solomon had everything and still drifted from God. What warning does that give us?

_____

_____

_____

Chapter 7: The Kingdom Divided

> *And the king took counsel and made two calves of gold, and he said to them, "**It is too** much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Look, your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt!" And he set the one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan.*
>
> 1 Kings 12:28-29 (SLB)

When Solomon died, his son Rehoboam answered the northern tribes harshly, and ten of them broke away under Jeroboam. From then on there were two kingdoms. Israel, the northern kingdom, was larger and richer. Judah, the southern kingdom, kept Jerusalem, the temple and the line of David.



Map 6. Israel and Judah, the divided kingdom

Two Capitals and Two Calves

Jeroboam was afraid that if his people kept going to Jerusalem to worship, they would turn back to the house of David. So he set up golden calves at the two ends of his kingdom: Dan in the far north, and Bethel on the southern border, only about 10 miles north of Jerusalem. Bethel had been a holy place since Jacob's dream, which made the false worship there even more tempting.

Israel's capital moved several times. It was at Shechem, then at Tirzah, and finally at Samaria, a hill city built by King Omri. Samaria remained the capital until the kingdom fell. The name later came to mean the whole central hill country.

Elijah and the Northern Kings

Most of the stories of Elijah and Elisha happen in the northern kingdom. King Ahab had a palace at Jezreel, overlooking the Jezreel Valley. Elijah faced the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, about 16 miles west of Jezreel, and then ran ahead of Ahab's chariot all the way back to Jezreel in the rain (1 Kings 18:46). When Jezebel threatened him, he fled south through Judah to Beersheba and on into the wilderness.

Judah Alone

Judah lasted about 136 years longer than Israel. Its kings were a mix of good and bad. Hezekiah trusted God when the Assyrian army surrounded Jerusalem, and God delivered the city. Lachish, Judah's second city in the Shephelah, was not spared. The Assyrian king Sennacherib besieged and captured it, and he later had the siege carved on the walls of his palace in Nineveh. Those carvings can be seen today in the British Museum.

Kingdom	Capital	Places of worship	Fell to
Israel (north)	Shechem, Tirzah, then Samaria	Golden calves at Dan and Bethel	Assyria, 722 BC
Judah (south)	Jerusalem	The temple in Jerusalem	Babylon, 586 BC

Questions to Think About

1. Why was it so easy for Israel to accept worship at Bethel and Dan instead of Jerusalem?

   _____

   _____

   _____

2. What convenient substitutes for real worship are we tempted by today?

_____

_____

_____

3. How does seeing the distance from Carmel to Jezreel help you picture 1 Kings 18?

_____

_____

_____

Chapter 8: Empires and Exile

> *In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria captured Samaria and carried Israel into exile to Assyria, and he made them dwell in Halah and on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and* ***in*** *the cities of Media.*
>
> 2 Kings 17:6 (SLB)

For most of the Old Testament, the great powers lay outside the land: Egypt to the southwest, and Assyria, Babylon and Persia to the northeast. Small kingdoms like Israel and Judah were caught between them. In the end, both were carried away.



Map 7. The great empires and the roads to exile

Assyria and the Fall of Samaria

Assyria's heartland lay along the upper Tigris River, with its capitals at Assur and later Nineveh, across the river from modern Mosul in Iraq. In 722 BC the Assyrians captured Samaria after a three-year siege and deported much of Israel's population far to the northeast. They brought in people from other lands to settle the area, and their mixed descendants became the Samaritans

of Jesus' day. Jonah had been sent to preach to Nineveh decades earlier. Nahum later announced its fall, which came in 612 BC.

Babylon and the Fall of Jerusalem

Babylon, on the Euphrates south of modern Baghdad, rose to power after Assyria. Nebuchadnezzar took captives from Jerusalem in 605 BC, including the young Daniel. He took more in 597 BC, including Ezekiel and King Jehoiachin. In 586 BC his army destroyed Jerusalem and the temple and carried most of the rest of the people away.

> *And the rest of the people who remained in the city, and the deserters who had deserted to the king of Babylon, and the rest of the multitude, Nebuzaradan the chief of the bodyguards carried into exile.* (2 Kings 25:11)

Notice the route on the map. Babylon lies about 540 miles east of Jerusalem in a straight line, but no army marched straight across the desert. The road to exile ran north through Damascus and Riblah, where Nebuchadnezzar had his headquarters, then east and south along the Euphrates. The trip covered roughly 800 to 900 miles and took about four months, as Ezra's later return trip did (Ezra 7:9).

Persia and the Return

In 539 BC, Cyrus of Persia captured Babylon. The next year he decreed that the Jews could return home and rebuild the temple, just as Isaiah had foretold by name.

> *Who **is** among you of all His people? May his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which **is** in Judah, and let him build the house of the LORD, the God of Israel; He **is** the God who **is** in Jerusalem.* (Ezra 1:3)

The book of Esther is set at Susa, one of the Persian royal cities, in what is now southwest Iran. Nehemiah served as cupbearer to the Persian king at Susa before he went back to rebuild Jerusalem's walls. Daniel also mentions Susa in his vision in Daniel 8.

Questions to Think About

1. The exile was not an accident of history. Read 2 Kings 17:7-8. Why did God allow it?

   _____

   _____

   _____

2. What does the return under Cyrus show about God's faithfulness to His promises?

_____

_____

_____

3. Daniel, Esther and Nehemiah served God far from home. What can we learn from them?

_____

_____

_____

Chapter 9: Jerusalem, the City of the Great King

> *Jerusalem: mountains **are** around it, and the LORD **is** around His people, from now and until forever.*
>
> Psalm 125:2 (SLB)

No city appears more often in the Bible than Jerusalem. It is mentioned hundreds of times, from Genesis 14, where Melchizedek is king of Salem, to the new Jerusalem in Revelation 21. Knowing its basic shape makes much of the Bible clearer.

Hills and Valleys

Jerusalem sits on a group of hills along the ridge of the hill country, at about 2,500 feet. Deep valleys surround the old city on three sides. The Kidron Valley runs along the east side, between the city and the Mount of Olives. The Hinnom Valley curves around the west and south sides. A smaller central valley once ran through the middle of the city.

The oldest part of Jerusalem, the city of David, is a narrow ridge running south from the temple mount, above the Gihon Spring in the Kidron Valley. The temple stood on the higher hill to the north, Mount Moriah, where 2 Chronicles 3:1 says Solomon built it. Over the centuries the city spread west and north onto the larger hills.

Places in Jerusalem

Place	What it is	Key references
City of David	The original hill David captured from the Jebusites	2 Samuel 5:6-9
Temple Mount	Mount Moriah, where Solomon's and later Herod's temple stood	2 Chronicles 3:1; John 2:13-22
Gihon Spring	Jerusalem's main water source, in the Kidron Valley	1 Kings 1:33-39; 2 Chronicles 32:30
Hezekiah's Tunnel	A tunnel cut through rock to bring Gihon water inside the walls	2 Kings 20:20
Pool of Siloam	Where the tunnel's water came out; Jesus healed a blind man here	John 9:7
Pool of Bethesda	A pool with five porches north of the temple	John 5:2-9
Kidron Valley	Between the city and the Mount of Olives	2 Samuel 15:23; John 18:1
Mount of Olives	The ridge east of the city, about 2,700 feet high	Luke 19:37; Acts 1:12; Zechariah 14:4
Gethsemane	An olive garden at the foot of the Mount of Olives	Matthew 26:36
Golgotha	The place of the crucifixion, outside the city wall	John 19:17-20; Hebrews 13:12
Hinnom Valley	South and west of the city; a place of idol worship and later of burning refuse	Jeremiah 7:31

Where Was Golgotha? John 19:20 says the place was near the city, and Hebrews 13:12 says Jesus suffered outside the gate. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre, inside today's walls, stands on the traditional site, which was outside the wall in Jesus' day. Another site, the Garden Tomb north of the Damascus Gate, was proposed in the 1800s. Most archaeologists favor the traditional site, but many visitors find the Garden Tomb helpful for picturing the scene.

Up to Jerusalem

Because of its height, every road to Jerusalem climbs. The Bible always speaks of going up to Jerusalem, even when coming from the north. The pilgrim psalms celebrate arriving at last.

> *I rejoiced in those who said to me, "Let us go* ***to*** *the house of the LORD." Our feet were standing in your gates, Jerusalem* (Psalm 122:1-2)

The City That Will Be

Jerusalem was destroyed by Babylon in 586 BC and by Rome in AD 70. But the prophets look ahead to a day when Jesus will return to the Mount of Olives, reign from Jerusalem, and the nations will come to learn His ways (Isaiah 2:2-4; Zechariah 14:4, 9). And Revelation ends with the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God.

Questions to Think About

1. Why do you think God chose a city in the hills, surrounded by valleys, as the place for His temple?

   _____

   _____

   _____

2. Which place in the table means the most to you, and why?

   _____

   _____

   _____

3. Read Psalm 48. What does it say about the city and about God?

Chapter 10: The Land in Jesus' Day

> *And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of **the** city of Nazareth, to Judea, to **the** city of David which is called Bethlehem, because of his being of **the** house and family of David*
>
> Luke 2:4 (SLB)

By the time Jesus was born, the land was part of the Roman Empire. Herod the Great ruled it as a king under Rome. When he died, his kingdom was divided among his sons, and later much of it came under Roman governors like Pontius Pilate. The map of the Gospels uses the names of regions from this time.



Map 8. The land in the time of Jesus

The Regions of the Gospels

- **Galilee.** The northern region, green and well populated, with many villages and the fishing towns on the lake. Jesus grew up in Nazareth and did most of His ministry here. Herod Antipas ruled it.
- **Samaria.** The central hill country, home of the Samaritans, who worshiped at Mount Gerizim and were bitterly divided from the Jews.
- **Judea.** The southern region around Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Jericho. It was ruled by Roman governors from about AD 6.
- **Perea.** The land east of the Jordan, opposite Judea and Samaria. Herod Antipas ruled it with Galilee. Jesus taught there in Matthew 19:1 and John 10:40.
- **The Decapolis.** A group of about ten Greek-style cities, mostly east of the Jordan and the Sea of Galilee. Jesus healed the demon-possessed man in this region, and the man went through the Decapolis telling what Jesus had done (Mark 5:20).
- **Idumea.** The land south of Judea, the old territory of Edom's descendants. Herod's family came from here.
- **Phoenicia.** The coast north of Galilee, with the cities of Tyre and Sidon. Jesus visited this region in Mark 7:24-31.

Why Jesus Had to Go Through Samaria

Most Jews traveling between Galilee and Judea avoided Samaria. They crossed to the east side of the Jordan, walked south through Perea, and crossed back near Jericho. The direct route through Samaria was shorter by a day or more, but it meant passing through the land of a people they despised.

> *Now it was necessary for Him to pass through Samaria.* (John 4:4)

John says it was necessary for Jesus to pass through Samaria. Geography did not force Him. The Father had a meeting arranged at Jacob's well near Sychar, below Mount Gerizim, with a Samaritan woman and her whole town.

Distances in the Gospels

Trip	Straight-line distance	Where in the Bible
Nazareth to Bethlehem	About 69 miles	Luke 2:4
Nazareth to Jerusalem	About 64 miles	Luke 2:41-45
Nazareth to Capernaum	About 20 miles	Matthew 4:13
Capernaum to Caesarea Philippi	About 26 miles	Matthew 16:13
Jerusalem to Jericho	About 14 miles	Luke 10:30; 19:1-28
Jerusalem to Bethany	About 2 miles	John 11:18
Jerusalem to Bethlehem	About 5 miles	Matthew 2:1-8

Questions to Think About

1. Why do you think Jesus spent most of His ministry in Galilee instead of Jerusalem?

_____

_____

_____

2. What does Jesus' choice to go through Samaria say about the people He came for?

_____

_____

_____

3. Who are the Samaritans in your world, the people others avoid?

_____

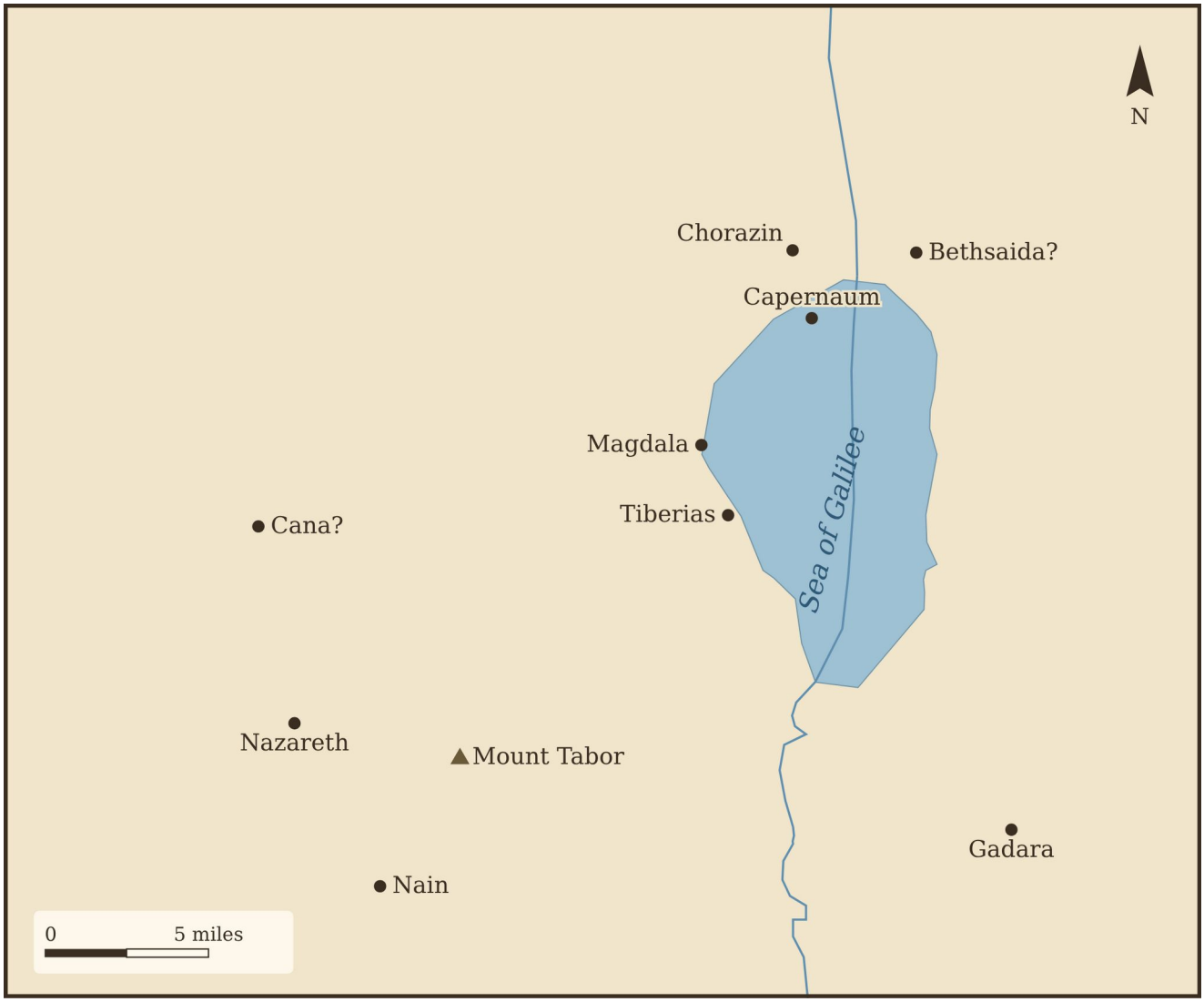
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Chapter 11: Around the Sea of Galilee

> *And having left Nazareth, having come, He dwelt in Capernaum, which **is** by the sea, in **the** territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, so that what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, "Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, **the** way of **the** sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles: the people sitting in darkness saw a great light, and to those sitting in **the** region and shadow of death, light has dawned on them."*
>
> Matthew 4:13-16 (SLB)

When Jesus began His ministry, He left Nazareth, a small village in the hills, and moved to Capernaum, a fishing town on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee. Most of the miracles and teaching in the first three Gospels happened within a few miles of that shore.



Map 9. Jesus' ministry around the Sea of Galilee

A Small Circle

Look at the scale on the map. Capernaum, Chorazin and Bethsaida, the three towns Jesus rebuked for not repenting in Matthew 11:20-24, sit within about 4 miles of each other. Magdala, the hometown of Mary Magdalene, is a few miles down the west shore. Tiberias, the new capital Herod Antipas built, is just south of that. The Gospels never say Jesus entered Tiberias.

Nazareth is about 20 miles from Capernaum in a straight line, up in the hills. Cana, where Jesus turned water into wine, is a few miles north of Nazareth. Its exact location is debated, and the map shows the most likely site, Khirbet Qana. Nain, where Jesus raised a widow's son, is south of Mount Tabor.

Place	What happened there	Key references
Nazareth	Jesus' hometown; rejected in the synagogue	Luke 1:26; 4:16-30
Cana	Water into wine; healing of an official's son	John 2:1-11; 4:46-54
Capernaum	Jesus' home base; many healings; Peter's house	Matthew 4:13; Mark 1:21-34; 2:1-12
Bethsaida	Home of Peter, Andrew and Philip; a blind man healed	John 1:44; Mark 8:22-26
Chorazin	Rebuked for unbelief	Matthew 11:21
Magdala	Probably the home of Mary Magdalene	Luke 8:2
Nain	A widow's son raised	Luke 7:11-17
The lake	Calling of fishermen; storm calmed; walking on water	Mark 1:16-20; 4:35-41; 6:45-52
East shore	Demon-possessed man healed; 4,000 fed	Mark 5:1-20; 8:1-10

Storms on the Lake

The Sea of Galilee lies in a deep basin, about 700 feet below sea level, with hills rising steeply around it. Cool air from the hills can rush down the slopes and stir up sudden, violent storms on the warm water. Experienced fishermen like Peter and Andrew knew how dangerous those storms were, which is why they were terrified in Mark 4 and why they were amazed when Jesus spoke and the wind stopped.

Caesarea Philippi

About 26 miles north of Capernaum, at the foot of Mount Hermon, stood Caesarea Philippi, a city known for a cave and shrine to the Greek god Pan. It was there, surrounded by pagan worship, that Jesus asked His disciples who they said He was, and Peter answered that He was the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matthew 16:13-16).

Questions to Think About

1. Jesus did most of His miracles in a small area, yet many there did not believe. What does that tell you about the human heart?

_____

_____

_____

2. Why might Jesus have asked His question at Caesarea Philippi of all places?

_____

_____

_____

3. Who do you say that Jesus is?

_____

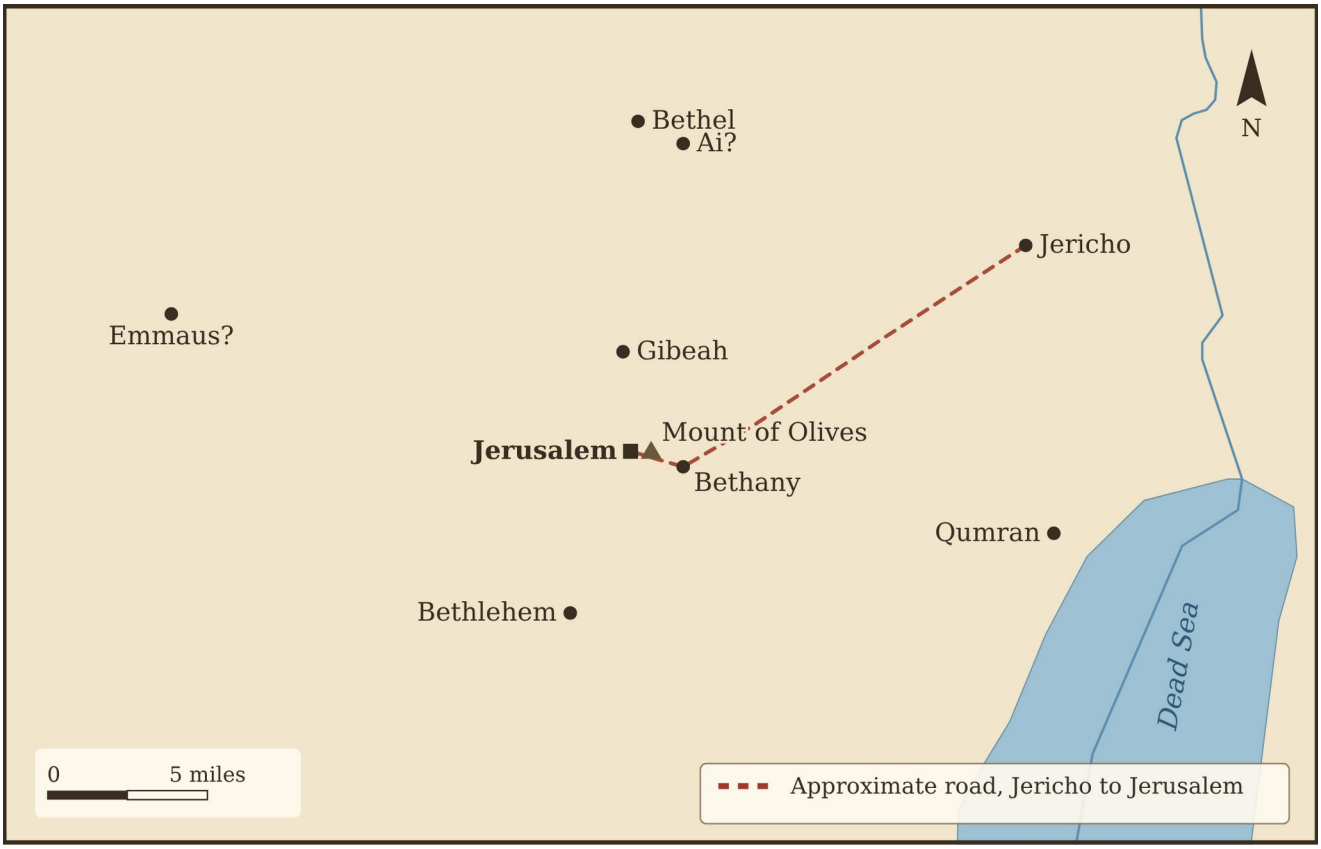
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Chapter 12: Jericho, Bethany and Jerusalem

> *And it came to pass, when the days of His being taken up were being fulfilled, that He Himself set His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem.*
>
> Luke 9:51 (SLB)

The last part of each Gospel moves toward Jerusalem. Jesus came up from the Jordan Valley through Jericho, stayed with friends in Bethany, and entered the city for the last week of His earthly life.



Map 10. Jericho, Bethany and Jerusalem

The Jericho Road

The road from Jericho to Jerusalem climbs more than 3,000 feet in about 14 miles in a straight line, through the bare hills of the Judean wilderness. It was lonely and dangerous, a good place for robbers to hide. That is the setting of Jesus' parable of the good Samaritan.

> *And having taken **it** up, Jesus said, "A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who, having both stripped him and inflicted wounds, went away, having left **him** half dead as he was."* (Luke 10:30)

In Jericho, on His last trip up this road, Jesus healed blind Bartimaeus and called Zacchaeus down from a sycamore tree (Mark 10:46-52; Luke 19:1-10).

Bethany

Bethany was a village on the east slope of the Mount of Olives, the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus. Jesus stayed there during His last week and walked into the city each day.

> *Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, approximately 1.7 miles (fifteen stadia) away.* (John 11:18)

The Last Week

1. Jesus rode a donkey from the Mount of Olives down across the Kidron Valley into the city (Luke 19:28-40).
2. He taught daily in the temple courts (Luke 19:47).
3. He ate the Passover with His disciples in an upper room in the city (Luke 22:7-20).
4. He crossed the Kidron Valley to Gethsemane to pray, and was arrested there (John 18:1-12).
5. He was tried before the high priest, Pilate and Herod, and crucified at Golgotha outside the city wall (John 19:16-20).
6. He rose from the dead and appeared to His followers in Jerusalem, on the road to Emmaus and in Galilee.
7. Forty days later He ascended from the Mount of Olives, near Bethany (Luke 24:50-51; Acts 1:9-12).

Where Was Emmaus?

> *And look, two of them were going on that same day to a village distant approximately 7 miles (sixty stadia) from Jerusalem, whose name **is** Emmaus.* (Luke 24:13)

No one knows for certain where Emmaus was. Several sites have been proposed. The map shows Emmaus Nicopolis, an old candidate, with a question mark. It is about 15 miles from Jerusalem, which is farther than the distance Luke gives, though some old manuscripts of Luke give a larger number. Other proposed sites, such as el-Qubeibeh and Motza, are closer to Jerusalem. What matters most is what happened on that road: the risen Lord opened the Scriptures to two disciples and made their hearts burn.

Questions to Think About

1. How does the steep, lonely Jericho road add to the parable of the good Samaritan?

_____

_____

_____

2. Bethany was a place of friendship and rest for Jesus. Who has been a Bethany for you?

_____

_____

_____

3. Read Luke 24:13-35. What did Jesus use to open the disciples' eyes?

_____

_____

_____

Chapter 13: The Church Spreads

> *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be witnesses to Me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to* ***the*** *uttermost part of the earth.*
>
> Acts 1:8 (SLB)

Acts 1:8 is a map of the whole book of Acts. The gospel starts in Jerusalem, spreads through Judea and Samaria, and then moves out toward the ends of the earth. Acts 1 to 7 takes place in Jerusalem. Acts 8 to 12 carries the gospel through Judea and Samaria and up the coast to Antioch. Acts 13 to 28 follows Paul across the Roman world to Rome.



Map 11. The church spreads from Jerusalem (Acts 1-12)

Scattered by Persecution

After Stephen was killed, persecution scattered the believers out of Jerusalem, and they preached wherever they went. Philip went north to the city of Samaria, where many believed. An angel then sent him south to the desert road from Jerusalem to Gaza to meet an Ethiopian official. Afterward Philip preached in the towns along the coast from Azotus to Caesarea, where he settled (Acts 8:40; 21:8).

> *And an angel of **the** Lord spoke to Philip, saying, "Rise up and go toward **the** south, on the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." This is desert.* (Acts 8:26)

Saul on the Damascus Road

Saul of Tarsus set out from Jerusalem for Damascus, about 135 miles to the north, with letters to arrest believers. Near the city, the risen Jesus met him in a blinding light. After his conversion Saul preached in Damascus, spent time in Arabia, returned to Jerusalem, and was sent home to Tarsus in Cilicia for safety (Acts 9:30; Galatians 1:17-21).

Peter on the Coast

Peter traveled to Lydda and Joppa on the coastal plain, healing Aeneas and raising Tabitha. At Joppa, on a rooftop, God gave him the vision of the sheet full of animals. Then messengers arrived from Caesarea, the Roman capital of Judea, about 32 miles up the coast. Peter went with them and preached to the Roman centurion Cornelius and his household, and the Holy Spirit fell on Gentiles for the first time (Acts 10).

Antioch

Believers scattered by the persecution also went north to Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch in Syria, about 310 miles north of Jerusalem in a straight line. Antioch was the third largest city in the Roman Empire. There, for the first time, believers preached to Greeks in large numbers. Barnabas came from Jerusalem, fetched Saul from Tarsus, and the two taught there for a year.

> *and having found him, he brought him to Antioch. And it came about **that** for a whole year they were gathered together in the church and taught a large crowd; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.* (Acts 11:26)

Antioch became the home base for the mission to the Gentiles. From here Paul set out on each of his journeys.

Questions to Think About

1. God used persecution to spread the gospel. How has God used hard times in your life for good?

_____

_____

_____

2. What barriers did the gospel cross between Acts 8 and Acts 11?

_____

_____

_____

3. Where is your Jerusalem, your Judea and Samaria, and your ends of the earth?

_____

_____

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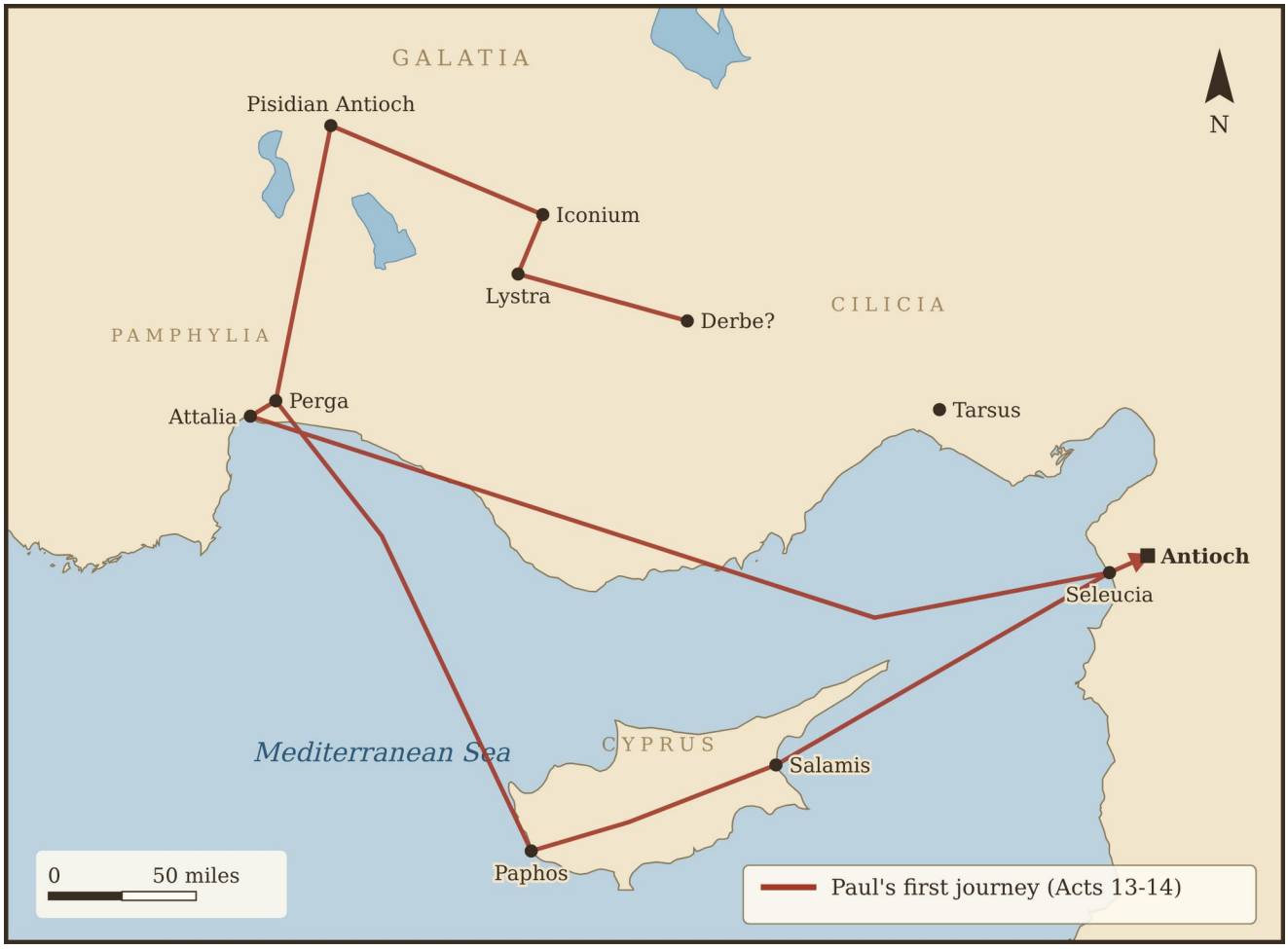
Chapter 14: Paul's Journeys

> *And as they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart now for Me both Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then, having fasted and having prayed and having laid their hands on them, they sent* ***them*** *away. So these, having been sent out by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus.*
>
> Acts 13:2-4 (SLB)

Paul's three missionary journeys took him across what is now southern Turkey, Greece and the Aegean islands. He traveled thousands of miles, mostly on foot, along Roman roads and by ship. His letters were written to churches along these routes.

The First Journey (Acts 13-14)

Paul and Barnabas, with John Mark, sailed from Seleucia, the port of Antioch, to Cyprus, Barnabas's home island. They crossed the island from Salamis to Paphos, where the Roman proconsul believed. Then they sailed to Perga on the south coast of Asia Minor, where Mark left them, and climbed into the highlands of southern Galatia. They planted churches in Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe, then retraced their steps to strengthen the new believers, and sailed home from Attalia.



Map 12. Paul's first journey

Paul's letter to the Galatians was most likely written to these churches, though some scholars place its readers farther north.

The Second Journey (Acts 15:36-18:22)

After the council in Jerusalem, Paul took Silas and went overland through Cilicia to Derbe and Lystra, where Timothy joined them. The Holy Spirit kept them from preaching in the province of Asia and in Bithynia, and they came down to Troas on the coast.

> *And a vision appeared to Paul during the night: a certain Macedonian man was standing, pleading with him and saying, "Having crossed over into Macedonia, help us!"* (Acts 16:9)

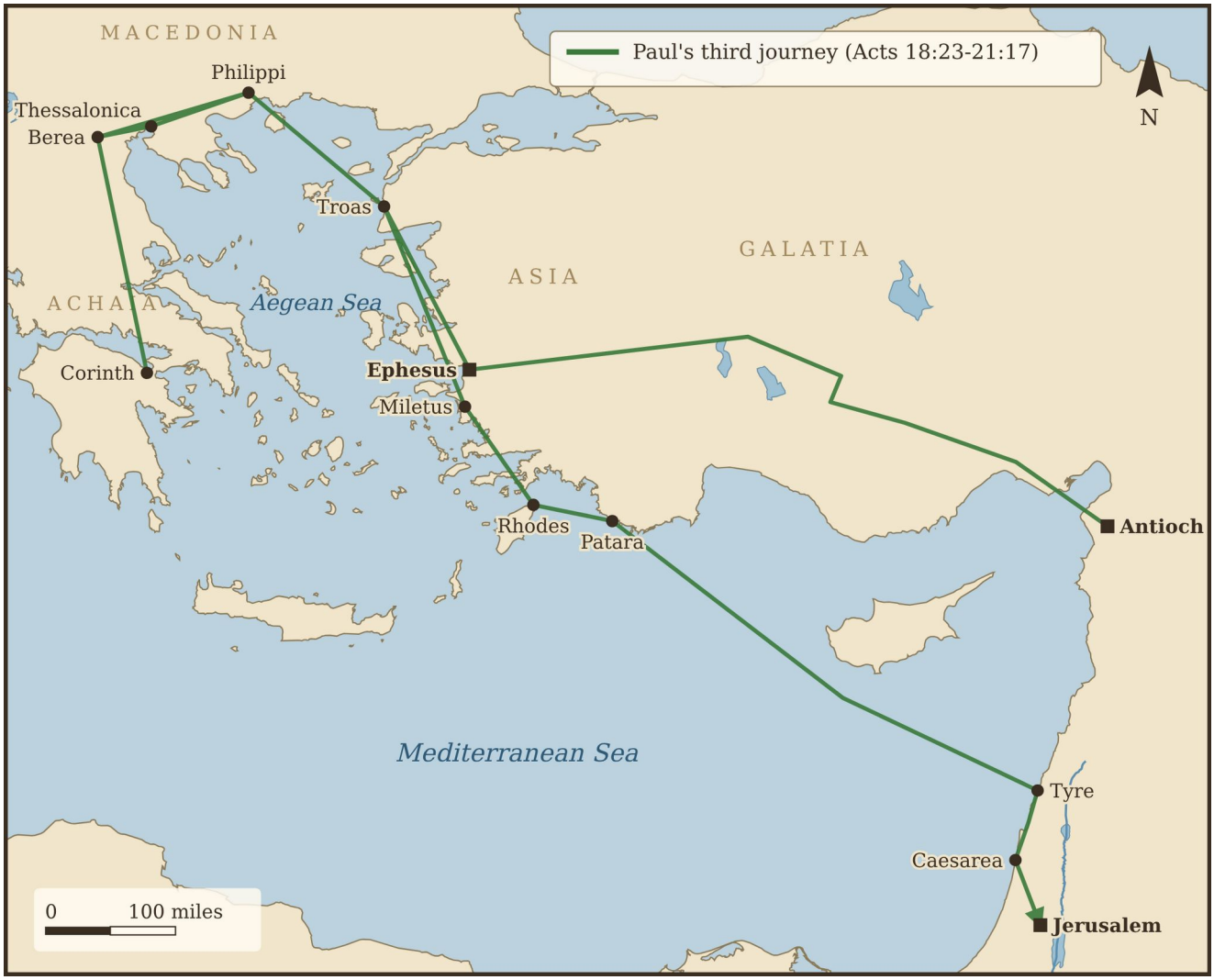
So the gospel crossed into Europe. Paul planted churches in Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea, preached in Athens, and spent eighteen months in Corinth. On the way home he stopped briefly at Ephesus, then sailed to Caesarea, went up to greet the church in Jerusalem, and returned to Antioch.



Map 13. Paul's second journey

The Third Journey (Acts 18:23-21:17)

Paul went back through Galatia and settled in Ephesus for over two years. The word of the Lord spread through the whole province of Asia from there (Acts 19:10). This is likely when churches were planted in Colossae, Laodicea and other cities of the region. After a riot in Ephesus, Paul went through Macedonia and Greece again, then turned back toward Jerusalem with an offering for the poor believers there. At Miletus he said goodbye to the Ephesian elders in one of the most moving speeches in Acts 20. He sailed past Rhodes and Patara, landed at Tyre, and went on by way of Ptolemais and Caesarea to Jerusalem.



Map 14. Paul's third journey

Letter	Written to churches founded on	Where Paul likely wrote it
Galatians	First journey	Antioch or Ephesus (debated)
1 and 2 Thessalonians	Second journey	Corinth
1 Corinthians	Second journey	Ephesus
2 Corinthians	Second journey	Macedonia
Romans	Not founded by Paul	Corinth
Philippians	Second journey	Prison, probably in Rome
Ephesians and Colossians	Third journey period	Prison, probably in Rome

Questions to Think About

1. Twice the Holy Spirit closed a door before Paul reached Troas. How has God redirected you?

_____

_____

_____

2. Paul went back to strengthen the churches he had planted. Why does follow-up matter?

_____

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_____

3. Read Acts 20:17-38. What did Paul care about most?

_____

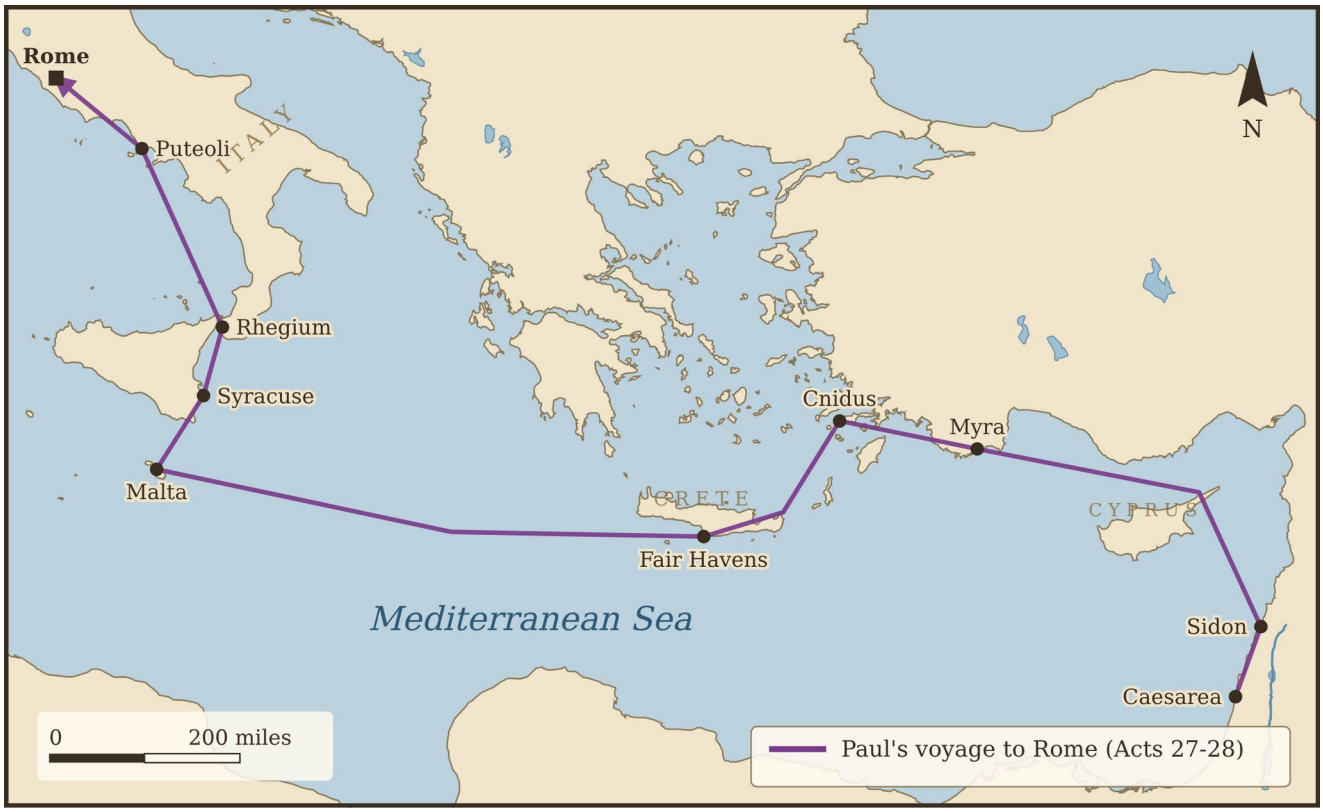
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Chapter 15: The Voyage to Rome

> *And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the camp commander; but Paul was permitted to stay by himself with the soldier who was guarding him.*
>
> Acts 28:16 (SLB)

Paul was arrested in Jerusalem and held for two years in Caesarea. When he appealed to Caesar, he was sent to Rome under guard. Luke traveled with him, and his account in Acts 27 is one of the most detailed descriptions of a sea voyage to survive from the ancient world.



Map 15. Paul's voyage to Rome

Sailing Late in the Year

Sailing on the Mediterranean was dangerous from about mid-September and largely stopped from November to March because of winter storms. Paul's ship left late. Luke notes that the Fast, the Day of Atonement in the fall, had already passed (Acts 27:9).

1. From Caesarea they sailed north to Sidon, then around the east and north of Cyprus to Myra on the south coast of Asia Minor (Acts 27:1-5).
2. At Myra they boarded an Alexandrian grain ship bound for Italy and crawled west against the wind to Cnidus, then south to the lee of Crete, putting in at Fair Havens (27:6-8).

3. Against Paul's warning, they tried to reach a better winter harbor farther along Crete. A violent northeast wind caught them and drove them out to sea (27:9-20).
4. After fourteen days adrift, the ship ran aground and broke apart on the island of Malta. All 276 people on board reached land safely (27:27-44).
5. Three months later they sailed on another Alexandrian ship to Syracuse in Sicily, Rhegium at the toe of Italy, and Puteoli on the Bay of Naples. From there they walked to Rome on the Appian Way (28:11-15).

In Rome

Jerusalem to Rome is about 1,430 miles in a straight line, much farther by the route Paul's ships took. In Rome, Paul lived under guard in his own rented house for two years, welcoming all who came to him and preaching the kingdom of God with all boldness (Acts 28:30-31). The book ends there, with the gospel at the heart of the empire, just as Jesus said in Acts 1:8.

Questions to Think About

1. Paul gave wise counsel even as a prisoner. How did God use him on the ship?

_____

_____

_____

2. Read Acts 27:21-26. Where did Paul's courage come from?

_____

_____

_____

3. Acts ends with the gospel unhindered in Rome. Why do you think Luke ended it there?

_____

_____

_____

Chapter 16: The Seven Churches of Revelation

> *saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last"; and, "What you see, write in a book and send* ***it*** *to the seven churches that* ***are*** *in Asia: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."*
>
> Revelation 1:11 (SLB)

John received the Revelation on the island of Patmos, about 61 miles southwest of Ephesus, where he had been exiled for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. The risen Christ told him to write to seven churches in the Roman province of Asia, in what is now western Turkey.



Map 16. The seven churches of Revelation 2-3

A Mail Route

Look at the order of the letters on the map. Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea. They form a rough loop, the order a messenger would follow if he landed at Ephesus and carried the letter from city to city along the Roman roads. Each church would hear all seven letters.

Church	Where it is today	What Christ said
Ephesus	Near Selcuk	Hard-working and sound, but had left its first love
Smyrna	Izmir	Poor yet rich; faithful under persecution
Pergamum	Bergama	Living where Satan's throne is; tolerating false teaching
Thyatira	Akhisar	Growing in love and service; tolerating Jezebel
Sardis	Near Salihli	A reputation for being alive, but dead
Philadelphia	Alasehir	Little strength, but kept His word; an open door
Laodicea	Near Denizli	Lukewarm, rich and blind

Lukewarm Water

The letter to Laodicea makes more sense with a map. Six miles north stood Hierapolis, famous for its hot springs. About 9 miles east was Colossae, which had cold, fresh water. Laodicea itself got its water through an aqueduct, and the remains show heavy mineral deposits. One common explanation is that by the time the water reached the city it was lukewarm and unpleasant to drink.

> *I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were cold or hot. So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to vomit you out of My mouth.* (Revelation 3:15-16)

If that background is right, the point is not that cold is bad and hot is good, but that both hot water and cold water are useful, and lukewarm water is not. Christ wanted His church to be useful to Him. Laodicea, rich and satisfied, had become useless and did not know it.

Listening to All Seven

Each letter ends the same way: He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. Not to one church, but to all of them. These letters were written to real churches in real cities, and they speak to every church today. Some of us need the warning to Ephesus. Some of us need the comfort given to Smyrna and Philadelphia.

Questions to Think About

1. Which of the seven churches is most like your church? Most like you?

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2. How does knowing the water supply of Laodicea help you understand Revelation 3:15-16?

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3. Two churches, Smyrna and Philadelphia, received no rebuke. What did they have in common?

_____

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_____

Distance Table

These distances are measured in a straight line between the map coordinates and rounded to the nearest mile. Distances by road were longer.

From	To	Miles
Dan	Beersheba	146
Jerusalem	Bethlehem	5
Jerusalem	Bethany	2
Jerusalem	Hebron	19
Jerusalem	Jericho	14
Jerusalem	Shiloh	19
Jerusalem	Bethel	10
Jerusalem	Shechem	30
Jerusalem	Samaria	34
Jerusalem	Joppa	34
Jerusalem	Gaza	49
Jerusalem	Caesarea	54
Jerusalem	Masada	33
Jerusalem	Nazareth	64
Jerusalem	Capernaum	79
Jerusalem	Tyre	103
Jerusalem	Damascus	135
Jerusalem	Antioch	310
Jerusalem	Babylon	540
Jerusalem	Nineveh	552
Jerusalem	Susa	763
Jerusalem	Rome	1432
Nazareth	Bethlehem	69
Nazareth	Capernaum	20
Nazareth	Cana	6
Capernaum	Bethsaida	4
Capernaum	Caesarea Philippi	26
Mount Carmel	Jezreel	16
Ur	Haran	575
Haran	Shechem	386
Rameses	Jerusalem	212
Mount Sinai	Kadesh Barnea	147
Antioch	Tarsus	86

From	To	Miles
Troas	Philippi	132
Philippi	Thessalonica	75
Athens	Corinth	46
Ephesus	Patmos	61
Laodicea	Hierapolis	6
Laodicea	Colossae	9

Places on the Maps

Coordinates are approximate, in degrees north and east, and point to the standard modern identification of each site. Debated identifications are marked.

Place	Where it is today	Coordinates	Key reference
Ai	et-Tell, West Bank (debated)	31.92 N, 35.26 E	Joshua 7-8
Antioch	Antakya, Turkey	36.20 N, 36.16 E	Acts 11:19-26
Ashdod	Tel Ashdod, Israel	31.75 N, 34.66 E	1 Samuel 5
Ashkelon	Ashkelon, Israel	31.66 N, 34.55 E	Judges 14:19
Assur	Qalat Sherqat, Iraq	35.46 N, 43.26 E	(Assyrian capital)
Athens	Athens, Greece	37.97 N, 23.73 E	Acts 17:15-34
Attalia	Antalya, Turkey	36.88 N, 30.70 E	Acts 14:25
Azotus	Ashdod, Israel	31.75 N, 34.66 E	Acts 8:40
Babylon	Near Hillah, Iraq	32.54 N, 44.42 E	2 Kings 25; Daniel 1
Beersheba	Tel Beer Sheva, Israel	31.25 N, 34.84 E	Genesis 21:31
Berea	Veria, Greece	40.52 N, 22.20 E	Acts 17:10-14
Beth Shean	Beit Shean, Israel	32.50 N, 35.50 E	1 Samuel 31:10
Bethany	al-Eizariya, West Bank	31.77 N, 35.26 E	John 11
Bethel	Beitin, West Bank	31.93 N, 35.24 E	Genesis 28:19
Bethlehem	Bethlehem, West Bank	31.70 N, 35.20 E	Micah 5:2; Luke 2
Bethsaida	et-Tell, Israel (debated)	32.91 N, 35.63 E	John 1:44
Caesarea	Caesarea, Israel	32.50 N, 34.89 E	Acts 10; 23:23-33
Caesarea Philippi	Banias, Golan Heights	33.25 N, 35.69 E	Matthew 16:13
Cana	Khirbet Qana, Israel (debated)	32.79 N, 35.28 E	John 2:1-11
Capernaum	Kfar Nahum, Israel	32.88 N, 35.58 E	Matthew 4:13
Carchemish	Turkey-Syria border on the Euphrates	36.83 N, 38.01 E	Jeremiah 46:2
Chorazin	Korazim, Israel	32.91 N, 35.56 E	Matthew 11:21
Cnidus	Near Datca, Turkey	36.69 N, 27.37 E	Acts 27:7
Colossae	Near Honaz, Turkey	37.78 N, 29.26 E	Colossians 1:2
Corinth	Ancient Corinth, Greece	37.91 N, 22.88 E	Acts 18
Damascus	Damascus, Syria	33.51 N, 36.29 E	Acts 9
Dan	Tel Dan, Israel	33.25 N, 35.65 E	Judges 18:29; 1 Kings 12:29
Derbe	Near Karaman, Turkey (debated)	37.35 N, 33.36 E	Acts 14:20
Ekron	Tel Miqne, Israel	31.78 N, 34.85 E	1 Samuel 5:10
Emmaus	Several proposed sites	31.84 N, 34.99 E	Luke 24:13
En Gedi	Ein Gedi, Israel	31.46 N, 35.39 E	1 Samuel 24
Ephesus	Near Selcuk, Turkey	37.94 N, 27.34 E	Acts 19

Place	Where it is today	Coordinates	Key reference
Ezion-geber	Near Aqaba and Eilat (debated)	29.54 N, 35.00 E	1 Kings 9:26
Fair Havens	Kali Limenes, Crete	34.93 N, 24.79 E	Acts 27:8
Gadara	Umm Qais, Jordan	32.66 N, 35.68 E	Matthew 8:28
Gath	Tell es-Safi, Israel	31.70 N, 34.85 E	1 Samuel 17:4
Gaza	Gaza	31.51 N, 34.46 E	Acts 8:26
Gerasa	Jerash, Jordan	32.28 N, 35.89 E	(Decapolis city)
Gibeah	Tell el-Ful, Jerusalem	31.82 N, 35.23 E	1 Samuel 10:26
Haran	Harran, Turkey	36.87 N, 39.03 E	Genesis 11:31
Hebron	Hebron, West Bank	31.53 N, 35.09 E	Genesis 23
Hierapolis	Pamukkale, Turkey	37.92 N, 29.12 E	Colossians 4:13
Iconium	Konya, Turkey	37.87 N, 32.48 E	Acts 14:1-6
Jericho	Tell es-Sultan, West Bank	31.87 N, 35.44 E	Joshua 6; Luke 19
Jerusalem	Jerusalem	31.78 N, 35.23 E	2 Samuel 5; Luke 19-24
Jezreel	Tel Jezreel, Israel	32.56 N, 35.33 E	1 Kings 21
Joppa	Jaffa, Tel Aviv, Israel	32.05 N, 34.75 E	Jonah 1:3; Acts 9:36-10:23
Kadesh Barnea	Ein el-Qudeirat, Egypt (debated)	30.63 N, 34.42 E	Numbers 13:26
Lachish	Tel Lachish, Israel	31.57 N, 34.85 E	2 Kings 18:14
Laodicea	Near Denizli, Turkey	37.84 N, 29.11 E	Revelation 3:14
Lydda	Lod, Israel	31.95 N, 34.90 E	Acts 9:32
Lystra	Near Hatunsaray, Turkey	37.58 N, 32.33 E	Acts 14:6-20
Magdala	Migdal, Israel	32.83 N, 35.52 E	Luke 8:2
Malta	Malta	35.95 N, 14.40 E	Acts 28:1
Mari	Tell Hariri, Syria	34.55 N, 40.95 E	(ancient city on the Euphrates)
Masada	Masada, Israel	31.32 N, 35.35 E	(Herod's fortress)
Megiddo	Tel Megiddo, Israel	32.59 N, 35.18 E	2 Kings 23:29
Memphis	Mit Rahina, Egypt	29.84 N, 31.25 E	Jeremiah 46:14
Miletus	Near Balat, Turkey	37.53 N, 27.28 E	Acts 20:15-38
Mount Carmel	Carmel ridge, Israel	32.67 N, 35.09 E	1 Kings 18
Mount Gilboa	Gilboa ridge, Israel	32.47 N, 35.42 E	1 Samuel 31
Mount Hermon	Israel, Lebanon and Syria	33.42 N, 35.86 E	Psalm 133:3
Mount Nebo	Jordan	31.77 N, 35.73 E	Deuteronomy 34
Mount Sinai	Jebel Musa, Egypt (traditional)	28.54 N, 33.98 E	Exodus 19-20
Mount Tabor	Har Tavor, Israel	32.69 N, 35.39 E	Judges 4:6
Mount of Olives	East of Jerusalem's Old City	31.78 N, 35.24 E	Acts 1:12
Myra	Demre, Turkey	36.26 N, 29.98 E	Acts 27:5
Nain	Nein, Israel	32.63 N, 35.35 E	Luke 7:11
Nazareth	Nazareth, Israel	32.70 N, 35.30 E	Luke 1:26; 4:16

Place	Where it is today	Coordinates	Key reference
Nineveh	Mosul, Iraq	36.36 N, 43.15 E	Jonah 3
Paphos	Paphos, Cyprus	34.76 N, 32.41 E	Acts 13:6
Patara	Near Gelemis, Turkey	36.26 N, 29.32 E	Acts 21:1
Patmos	Patmos, Greece	37.31 N, 26.55 E	Revelation 1:9
Perga	Near Aksu, Turkey	36.96 N, 30.86 E	Acts 13:13
Pergamum	Bergama, Turkey	39.13 N, 27.18 E	Revelation 2:12
Persepolis	Near Shiraz, Iran	29.93 N, 52.89 E	(Persian royal city)
Philadelphia	Alasehir, Turkey	38.35 N, 28.52 E	Revelation 3:7
Philippi	Near Krinides, Greece	41.01 N, 24.29 E	Acts 16
Pisidian Antioch	Near Yalvac, Turkey	38.30 N, 31.19 E	Acts 13:14
Ptolemais	Akko, Israel	32.92 N, 35.07 E	Acts 21:7
Puteoli	Pozzuoli, Italy	40.82 N, 14.12 E	Acts 28:13
Qumran	Qumran, West Bank	31.74 N, 35.46 E	(Dead Sea Scrolls)
Rabbah	Amman, Jordan	31.95 N, 35.93 E	2 Samuel 12:26
Rameses	Near Qantir, Egypt (debated)	30.80 N, 31.83 E	Exodus 1:11; 12:37
Rhegium	Reggio Calabria, Italy	38.11 N, 15.65 E	Acts 28:13
Rhodes	Rhodes, Greece	36.44 N, 28.23 E	Acts 21:1
Riblah	Near Homs, Syria	34.45 N, 36.55 E	2 Kings 25:6
Rome	Rome, Italy	41.89 N, 12.49 E	Acts 28; Romans 1:7
Salamis	Near Famagusta, Cyprus	35.18 N, 33.90 E	Acts 13:5
Samaria	Sebastia, West Bank	32.28 N, 35.20 E	1 Kings 16:24
Sardis	Near Salihli, Turkey	38.49 N, 28.04 E	Revelation 3:1
Seleucia	Near Samandag, Turkey	36.12 N, 35.93 E	Acts 13:4
Shechem	Tell Balata, Nablus, West Bank	32.21 N, 35.28 E	Genesis 12:6
Shiloh	Khirbet Seilun, West Bank	32.06 N, 35.29 E	Joshua 18:1
Sidon	Saida, Lebanon	33.56 N, 35.37 E	Mark 7:24-31
Smyrna	Izmir, Turkey	38.42 N, 27.14 E	Revelation 2:8
Succoth	Tell el-Maskhuta, Egypt (debated)	30.55 N, 32.10 E	Exodus 12:37
Susa	Shush, Iran	32.19 N, 48.26 E	Nehemiah 1:1; Esther 1:2
Sychar	Near Nablus, West Bank (debated)	32.21 N, 35.28 E	John 4:5
Syracuse	Syracuse, Sicily	37.07 N, 15.29 E	Acts 28:12
Tarsus	Tarsus, Turkey	36.92 N, 34.90 E	Acts 21:39
Thessalonica	Thessaloniki, Greece	40.64 N, 22.94 E	Acts 17:1-9
Thyatira	Akhisar, Turkey	38.92 N, 27.84 E	Revelation 2:18
Tiberias	Tiberias, Israel	32.79 N, 35.53 E	John 6:23
Troas	Near Dalyan, Turkey	39.75 N, 26.16 E	Acts 16:8-11; 20:6-12

Place	Where it is today	Coordinates	Key reference
Tyre	Tyre, Lebanon	33.27 N, 35.20 E	Ezekiel 26; Acts 21:3
Ur	Tell el-Muqayyar, Iraq	30.96 N, 46.10 E	Genesis 11:28-31

About the Maps

The maps in this book are original drawings made for this book. Coastlines, lakes and rivers come from Natural Earth (naturalearthdata.com), a free data set placed in the public domain by its makers. Place locations follow the standard modern identifications used in Bible atlases and archaeological reports. Routes, borders and region names are approximate, and debated sites are marked with a question mark. The map data shows modern coastlines and lakes, which differ in places from Bible times, especially the Dead Sea.

About This Book

The Land of the Bible is one of a set of free Christian books from Trinfinity Enterprises. All Scripture quotations come from the Steadfast Literal Bible. Questions or corrections are welcome at andrew@trinfinityenterprises.com.