

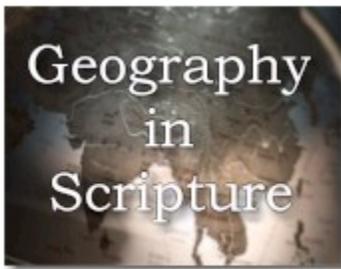
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Geography in Scripture

by Ernest L. Martin, Ph.D, 1995
 Edited by David Sielaff

Read the accompanying [Newsletter for February 2011](#)



There is something very special about biblical geography. Unlike the study of ordinary geographical matters that might be undertaken in our schools and universities, the geography of the Bible has a great deal of spiritual and symbolic teaching not normally understood by the general public. Even the average student of Scripture knows very little about this important aspect of biblical teaching.

In fact, the comprehension of geographical factors embedded within the teachings of the biblical revelation gives the observant student an abundance of “secret” information concerning doctrines, history, and prophecy. The reason I employ the word “secret” is simply because all aspects of Scripture have been provided by the Father to buttress the message of Christ Jesus, and that message is only for the ears of His elect.

“And the disciples came, and said unto him, ‘Why speak you unto them [the people] in parables?’ He answered and said unto them,

‘Because it is given unto you [the disciples] to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them [the people] it is not given. For whosoever has, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever has not, from him shall be taken away even that he has. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because

they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.

And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias [Isaiah], which says,

“By hearing you shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing you shall see, and shall not perceive: [Why?] For this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.” [quoting Isaiah 6:9–10]

But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you [you disciples], **That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which**

you see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which you hear, and have not heard them.”

• **Matthew 13:10–17**

Christ even used geographical factors to emphasize and to illustrate His divine message. Without an adequate knowledge of the geographical features associated with the teaching of His ministry, people can be left in the dark regarding the full meaning of His Gospel. However, it is now time to strip away the veil and covering that seem to be on the eyes of many people today — even those in seminaries and universities. It is not that I wish to censure anyone because all of us have had to grow in grace and knowledge on these matters, but it has to be admitted that the geographical aspects of doctrines and prophecies have often been completely avoided as a means of proper interpretation of the biblical revelation. This is because people have not really been aware of just how important geography is in determining just what the Gospel is all about.

I will try to restore some of the important teachings of biblical geography and to see how significant the understanding of geography in the study of the Bible can actually be. Only the tip of the iceberg can be given here, but the prime tools of interpretation will be presented so that the fundamentals of the matter can be recognized.

The First Factor

The first thing that must be realized in the study of biblical geography is that the one piece of real estate that is most important in all portions of the Bible is the Land of Canaan, called from Roman times onward, the Land of Palestine. This was the land that was promised to the father of the faithful, Abraham, and it figures in all matters of history, prophecy, and even doctrine.

It was called “The Promised Land” (Exodus 12:25; Numbers 14:40; Deuteronomy 6:3, 9:28, etc.¹) and it had from the very first a symbolic meaning attached to it. It represented no less than “the Kingdom of heaven” on earth in physical form. This is why it was known very early in history as “The Holy Land.” When Joshua and the Israelites first entered the Land of Canaan to conquer it from the Canaanites, he was told:

“And the captain of YHVH’s host said unto Joshua, ‘Loose your shoe from off your foot; for the place whereon you stand is holy.’ And Joshua did so.”

• **Joshua 5:15**

From that time, the Land of Canaan was known as “the Holy Land” to the Israelites.

This land was from the River Jordan to the Mediterranean Sea, from the Brook of Egypt (the eastern branch of the Nile) and the Gulf of Eloth [Eilat] in the south to Mount Hermon in the north. Even at the present time it is “holy” not only to Jews but to over a billion Christians and well over half a billion Muslims.

From a religious point of view, no area on earth is more important, and its capital since the time of King David, Jerusalem, is most significant of all. In the Middle Ages it was common to call Jerusalem and the Holy Land “the Navel of the Earth” which meant in practical terminology the center of the whole earth. It certainly has been throughout history, and it will figure most prominently in prophetic events which are destined to occur in the next few years ahead of us!

¹ The word “promise” does not precisely occur in Hebrew. The word translated “promise” in English is the very common Hebrew word *dabar* which simply means “word,” a spoken communication. It refers to the word spoken by God, which is assuredly equivalent to a promise. It is a spoken declaration by God that will happen, hence the translation as “promise.” Hence, Exodus 12:25 better reads:

“And it shall come to pass, when you be come to the land which YHWH will give you, according as he has spoken [“promised,” KJV], that you shall keep this service.”

The Uniqueness of the Land

The Israelites were ordained to settle the land and establish it as their home base, but they were also told to spread outward from there and to bless the whole world with the knowledge of God (Deuteronomy 26:18–19, 28:9–12; and Jeremiah 4:1–2).

In actual fact, the Land of Canaan, though only about 200 miles north to south and 50 miles east to west, is like a microcosm of the whole world. In the extreme north is Mount Hermon, almost 10,000 feet in elevation, which is like the Alpine areas of the earth. It is a ski area in the winter. The source of the Jordan River has waterfalls that make one think he could be in regions of the Rocky Mountains, or Switzerland.² The rich agricultural regions of the Huleh Valley (its name today, anciently called Merom) in the north and the “Sharon” Plains to the south of Mount Carmel remind a person of the fine areas of California.

The hill country of Samaria and Judaea are similar to most Mediterranean countries with an abundance of grapes, olives, figs, etc. Then there are the desert regions to the southeast of Jerusalem and to the south of Beersheba that are some of the wildest and most desolate on earth. Interestingly, within five miles of Jerusalem one enters the Wilderness of Judaea which has been described by world travelers as truly the most desolate region they have ever been in. This is where King David fled for refuge and where Christ spent His 40 days of trial with Satan the Devil (Matthew 4:1–11). But in the Jordan Valley near the Dead Sea is the oasis of Jericho where virtually every tropical plant in the world can grow. Truly, the Land of Canaan is like the whole world compressed into a tiny area.

The region is the land-bridge between the Eurasian and the African continents as well as being the strip of land that connects the seaways of the Atlantic/Mediterranean in the west with the Indian/Pacific Oceans in the east. So, not only religiously, but even geographically, it could be said that the Land of Canaan is really “the Navel of the World.” It is because of these unique geographical features that God placed Israel in this strategic region of the earth. They were positioned in the “center” of everything. Christ Jesus was also sent to this axial land and sea bridge of the world.³

The Land of Canaan and Doctrine

It is almost impossible to understand some of the major doctrines of Christ without knowledge of the geography of the Holy Land. As stated before, the land itself represented no less than the Kingdom of God on earth. The author of the Book of Hebrews based his teaching of salvation on the illustration of Joshua (the successor of Moses) leading the children of Israel into the Holy Land. Note what he said:

“Today if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. For if Jesus [Joshua] had given them rest, then he would not afterward have spoken of another day. There remains therefore a rest [Greek: keeping a millennial Sabbath of a thousand years] to the people of God ... Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.”

• *Hebrews 4:7–11*

² The article “Palestine” by C.R. Conder in *ISBE (The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, 1914, 1st unabridged edition. James Orr, General Editor)* notes that:

“Palestine West of the Jordan, between Dan and Beersheba, has an area of about 6,000 square miles, the length from Hermon southward being nearly 150 miles, and the width gradually increasing from 20 miles on the North to 60 miles on the South. ... East of the Jordan an area of about 4,000 square miles was included in the land of Israel. ... The land is divided by the deep chasm of the Jordan valley — an ancient geological fault continuing in the Dead Sea, where its depth (at the bottom of the lake) is 2,600 ft. below the Mediterranean.”

DWS

³ Regarding the worldwide geopolitical and strategic importance of the land of Israel in the past and today, see the excellent May 4, 2008 article by Dr. George Friedman “[The Geopolitics of Israel, Ancient and Modern](#)” reprinted from the geopolitical and strategy website www.stratfor.com. Dr. Friedman looks at the historical and political importance of Israel in the past and present, but his secular website does not address prophecy. DWS

In other words, the conquering of the Land of Canaan by Joshua and the Israelites was an example or a type of the “second Joshua” (Jesus Christ) leading the true people of God into the actual millennial kingdom which will exist once Christ returns to this earth. And what is amazing, once it is realized how important a geographical/prophetic understanding is to biblical comprehension, is the fact that Christ Jesus will follow just about the same geographical paths that Moses and Joshua traversed back at the Exodus period when He returns to earth. This is a part of the “circular interpretation” mentioned elsewhere. Things have a way of repeating themselves in prophetic teachings.⁴

The Importance of Geography in Prophetic Interpretation

It is not normally understood, but Christ will not come first to the Mount of Olives when He returns. He comes with His angels to an area southeast of Jerusalem. The Bible shows that Christ first comes to the Land of Edom to what is called the Valley of Jehoshaphat to wage a successful war against a multinational army. Read Joel 3:1–21. It is a very sobering passage that will take place in our future before Christ’s second coming.

This valley is where Jehoshaphat won the victory over the Moabites and Ammonites in the southwestern area of the Dead Sea (2 Chronicles 20:1–30). The region abuts to and finally became part of the Land of Edom. The prophet Isaiah spoke of this end-time war in Isaiah 63:1–6.⁵ It is described in greater detail in Isaiah chapter 34 where all the nations of the world will be brought to battle in the Land of Edom where the Valley of Jehoshaphat is found.

In the Book of Revelation it says that this valley will flow with blood up to the horses’ bridles⁶ (Revelation 14:14–20) — the feet of the Messiah will be stained with the blood of the heathen as He rides on His white horse conquering (Isaiah 63:3 and see especially Revelation 19:11–16 where the Isaiah passage is clearly referred to).

It is only after this major encounter with this multinational army in the Land of Edom in the Valley of Jehoshaphat does He start towards Jerusalem. But the Bible shows that Christ will not journey directly from Edom to Jerusalem. Isaiah shows that He goes first to Sela (the modern Petra, the ancient capital of Edom) and from thence He goes north into Moab and towards Ammon, the capital of the nation of Jordan today (Isaiah chapter 16).

In truth, the Messiah follows almost the same route into the Holy Land that Moses and Joshua took at the time of the Exodus. The early Jews actually thought of the Messiah as being like Moses and many people believed in the 1st century (correctly, as a matter of fact) that the Messiah would first appear in the desert regions south and east of Jerusalem. Then He will journey over the Jordan River, as did Joshua and the Israelites, to take over the Holy Land and Jerusalem from the east.

That is why Christ warned the apostles not to go into the desert when the Messiah appears imminent (Matthew 24:26)⁷ because the False Christ will try to mimic Moses and gather false disciples in the desert south and east of Jerusalem. That the true Christ would indeed approach the area of Jerusalem from the east was a well-known belief:

⁴ Dr. Martin’s final article before his death in January 2002 “[The ‘Great Generation’ and Modern Prophecy](#)” goes into great detail regarding the cyclical theme of biblical prophecy and its interpretation. As Dr. Martin shows, prophecy is not only dual but often has a three-fold interpretation, understanding, and fulfillment. It is up to us to use wisdom to discern the interpretation according to all the biblical passages that relate to the original prophecy. DWS

⁵ See Dr. Martin’s detailed account of the geography associated with the path of the antichrist and his armies, which is presented in his article “[New Prophetic Discoveries Concerning the End Time.](#)” The details of these Bible prophecies are quite remarkable and compelling. DWS

⁶ What is meant by “**unto the horses’ bridles**” is that the blood would splash up to the bridles of the horses, not that the horses were swimming in blood neck deep, or that the riders’ feet were constantly in blood. DWS

⁷ Matthew 24:26: “**Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not.**” DWS

“He brought me [Ezekiel] to the gate [of the Temple], even the gate that looks toward the east: and, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east: and his voice was like the noise of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory.”

• **Ezekiel 43:1–2**

Even Christ himself taught that His second advent to this earth would be from the east. He would come from the east to the Mount of Olives and Jerusalem.

“For as the lightning [the sun] comes out of the east, and shines even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For wheresoever the carcass [the dead body] is, there will the eagles be gathered together.”

• **Matthew 24:27–28**

We are told that eagles (figuratively) carried the Israelites under Moses out of Egypt at the time of the Exodus (Exodus 19:4) and the Exodus ended with Moses dying just east of the Jordan River and being buried in an unknown sepulcher (Deuteronomy 34:5–6).⁸ The burial place of Moses was east of Jericho and some 30 miles east from Jerusalem, but the eagles will gather at the place of the dead body (the body of Moses) and the location of this dead body will be east of Jerusalem as Christ said in Matthew 24:27–28.⁹

Indeed, this “gathering” of Christ with His elect is more clearly shown by Luke:

“I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. And they [the apostles] answered and said unto him [Christ], Where Lord? [that is, where will they be taken?] **And he said unto them, ‘Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.’”**

• **Luke 17:34–37**

Christ will gather His saints over the place where Moses’ body was hidden. Moses will then be resurrected from the dead. The resurrection occurs and those living who are changed into spirit beings will assemble with Christ and then journey from the east to congregate over the Mount of Olives for the official descent of Christ to Jerusalem. This is when the concluding battle against the Antichrist and his armies will take place. This is described in detail in Isaiah 10:28–34, and continuing on through to Isaiah 12:6.

Armageddon?

Before this final destruction takes place, the Antichrist will have assembled his multinational force at Megiddo. In the New Testament it is called Armageddon, Revelation 16:16: **“And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.”** There is no battle of Armageddon as so many are erroneously teaching today.

Armageddon is where the aggregate armies of the Antichrist assemble for an attack on Jerusalem. It is not where the final conflict takes place. The Antichrist divides his army into three groups. One proceeds south from Armageddon down the coast of Israel and then turns eastward and bivouacs in the Valley of Jehoshaphat. Another division heads east from Armageddon and journeys south down the Jordan Valley to link up with the first division in the Valley of Jehoshaphat to provide a pincher position.

The main army of the Antichrist will proceed southward from Armageddon through the central highland route directly toward Jerusalem. Isaiah picks up the movement of this main contingent at a town called Aiath (the ancient Ai) located about 12 miles north of Jerusalem.

Consider and review this sequence of events:

⁸ See “Appendix: Geography, Moses, and the Ark of the Covenant” after this article. DWS

⁹ See Dr. Martin’s article “[The Place of Safety](#)” which points out the sequence of events for those believers in Israel and Palestine. DWS

1. Christ appears from heaven on a white horse with His angels and deals first with the portions of Antichrist's army located in the Valley of Jehoshaphat.
2. Christ then proceeds to Sela (Petra),
3. Christ then proceeds northward to where **"the body"** is located — this is at the sepulcher of Moses.
4. Next, the resurrection from the dead takes place. Moses is raised and all others who have died in Christ (including you and me). All believers who are alive and in Christ will be changed in the twinkling of an eye (1 Corinthians 15:52) and be brought immediately to the place of **"the body"** (**"where the eagles are gathered together"**) just to the east of the Jordan River some 10 miles from Jericho.
5. All will then return with Christ from the east and appear with Him over the Mount of Olives.
6. Only then will Christ place His feet triumphantly on earth.
7. In the meantime, the Antichrist and his main army will approach Jerusalem from the north as Isaiah prophesied — Isaiah 10:28–34.
8. The Antichrist will be defeated and the Millennium will arrive on earth.¹⁰

Geographical Matters to be Considered

I have written in detail about these matters in previous articles, but these end-time events must be considered with a specific understanding of geography. The prophecies throughout the Bible concerning the events associated with Christ's Second Advent cannot be understood apart from the comprehension of biblical geography.¹¹ That is why it is such an important subject for students of the Scripture to study and to learn. All of us would be completely in the dark about these significant events if we did not understand the important and meaningful geographical factors involved. Let us now look at some other geographical texts which show these prophetic events.

The Final March of Antichrist's Army

Most prophetic interpreters completely overlook the concluding battle that Christ has with the Antichrist. The main reason for this is because of their lack of interest in geographical matters that the prophet Isaiah thought very important. Isaiah must have thought them significant because he paid close attention to the towns, valleys, and hills that were located just north of Jerusalem. In the long prophecy about the career of Immanuel which embraces six whole chapters (from Isaiah chapter 7 to 12 inclusively), Isaiah gives the exact geographical locations of the military procedures of the Antichrist against the Messiah of Israel who is Immanuel Himself. His description starts in Isaiah 10:28 and it cannot make sense or be understood without geographical knowledge.

The first site that Isaiah recorded was Aiath (the ancient Ai which Joshua conquered) about 12 miles north and slightly east of Jerusalem. He then mentioned Migron and then Michmash (verse 28). This Michmash is easily identified because the tiny Arab village that now occupies the site has practically the same name today. It is just north of the ancient village of Geba which is on a hill and still goes by the name Jeba.

These two villages are separated by a deep canyon which Isaiah called **"the passage"** (verse 29). Isaiah then advances the march of the Antichrist whom he called **"the Assyrian"** from village to village towards

¹⁰ Again, see the detailed account with maps of the path of the antichrist and his armies as presented in Dr. Martin's article ["New Prophetic Discoveries Concerning the End Time."](#) DWS

¹¹ See Dr. Martin's articles: ["Prophetic Geography and the Time of the End"](#) and ["Gentile Nations and Israel."](#) DWS

Jerusalem. Most of these sites are identified. It is abundantly clear that the geography has not drastically changed even since the time of Isaiah over 2700 years ago.¹²

The Antichrist then comes to Nob, a priestly village located on the Mount of Olives which overlooks the city of Jerusalem. That spot is where **“the Assyrian,”** reckoned as a **“mighty cedar tree,”** shakes his fist at Jerusalem and its Messianic king. By this time Christ will have already entered Jerusalem from the east (verse 32). The Shoot out of Jesse destroys this **“mighty tree of Lebanon”** with his **“thickets”** (his army) with **“the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he** (Immanuel) **slay the wicked man”** (Isaiah 11:4).

This is the destruction of the **“wicked one”** that the apostle Paul referred to in 2 Thessalonians 2:8. Indeed, Paul actually quoted this very verse from Isaiah 11:4 to show the Antichrist’s destruction.

“And then shall that Wicked One be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit [breath] of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.”

• **2 Thessalonians 2:8**

It is only by pin-pointing the geographical features that the prophet Isaiah referred to in those six chapters and especially knowing the villages, hills, and canyons mentioned by the prophet from Isaiah 10:28 to 10:34, that the final career of the Antichrist whom Paul was talking about can be known. I would imagine that most of you students have never heard a preacher or lecturer mention anything about these significant details unless you have gone with me to Israel over the past years or read some of my prophetic writings over the years. The fact is, most people (even professionals in teaching the Bible) seldom relate these important truths or other geographical matters. They simply do not emphasize the importance of geography. No wonder that there are so many blinded from understanding the truths of the biblical revelation.¹³

Geography and New Testament Doctrines

We need to survey some of the teachings of Christ himself, and upon close examination we will discover that many have a geographical basis to them. It is particularly advantageous to visit the places where Christ gave His major teachings and to witness the geographical features when He presented them. On my tours to Israel we often go to some of the off-the-beaten-tracks away from the ordinary sites that most people like to see. We go to the exact spots where Christ made some of His important doctrinal discourses.

The geography of the areas helps to explain His messages in a profound way. For example, Christ was at Caesarea Philippi in the north of Israel at the base of Mount Hermon (where the Jordan River has one of its sources springing from beneath the mountain) when He asked who the people were saying He was (Matthew 16:13–20). Peter then began to name some of the earlier prophets of the Old Testament. Of course, He was not one of the previous prophets.

Then Christ inquired who Peter thought He was. Peter answered that He was the Messiah, the Son of the living God (Matthew 16:16). Christ then said to Peter that he was a **“petros”** (a little stone) but that **“upon**

¹² In other words the landscape mentioned has not changed substantially since the massive earthquake during the time of King Uzziah of Judah. This earthquake is referenced in Amos 1:1 where it is noted that God’s call of Amos the prophet was **“two years before the earthquake”** (Amos 1:1). This earthquake, we are told by Zechariah, was a shadow of a greater earthquake to come when Christ returns, when the greatest earthquake ever divides the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:4–5):

“And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.

And you shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, you shall flee, like as you fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and YHWH my God shall come, and all the saints with you.

In fact, we will be present with Him in our spiritual bodies watching the feet of Christ touch the Mount of Olives. DWS

¹³ As noted at the beginning of this article, they see and do not perceive just as Isaiah 6:9–10 quoted in Matthew 13:10–17. Where events take place is very significant in Scripture. DWS

this petra” (a large boulder) would Christ build His *ekklesia*. It was not upon Peter (the little pebble) that the community of Christians would be erected; it was on the Petra (the Boulder — the Rock of Israel — Christ Himself).

What has all this to do with the geography of Caesarea Philippi? Very much indeed. The former name of the city was *Panias* in Greek. It meant the place where all the gods of the heathen were worshipped. There are still to be seen niches carved into the large rock escarpment that overlooks the spring from whence the Jordan River emerges. These niches before the time of Christ contained statues of the various gods and goddesses of the heathen. So, this very spot is where Christ asked Peter who the people thought He was. It was at a place where men created gods galore.

Peter answered correctly. Christ then could look down into the spring of Jordan and see small pebbles (and they are still there in abundance) and refer the pebbles to Peter (a small natural stone, not like the carved images of the heathen), but Christ could point to the enormous rock escarpment (a part of Mount Herman) that was overlooking the spring and refer it to Himself. Christ was like that Rock — huge, massive, and majestic. In point of fact, the idol niches of the “dead gods of the heathen” were themselves carved out of that very Rock.

Christ was showing that not only the natural pebbles in the river bed of Jordan, but even the stone statuary that the people used to worship their gods also had their origin from the one Rock (that gigantic *petra*) — and that was the Rock that all people ought to worship, not material things like that natural petra at Caesarea Philippi. Of course, the natural rock and pebbles at the base of Mount Hermon were only illustrations of the spiritual teaching that Christ was giving to His apostles, but they gave a visible and impressive accent on what He was saying. This is why it is essential to take into account the geographical environments in which the various teachings of Christ were given. It helps to bring the messages alive in a way that makes them unforgettable.

A Challenge

Here is a little exercise for you to try, to give you an idea of the importance of geography so that you can be on the lookout for significant geographical clues in all areas of the Scripture which you study. Look at the blank map of Israel/Palestine on the next page:

Below is a list of 25 important geographic locations. With a pencil put as many of the prime geographical regions, mountains, rivers, valleys, and cities as you can on the map.

First, try to locate the following items without reference to your Bible.

Second, try to locate them with the help of your Bible.

Third, locate them with maps in a Bible in an atlas or on the internet.

1. Mt. Hermon
2. the course of the Jordan River
3. the Sea of Galilee
4. the Dead Sea
5. the city of Jerusalem
6. the Mount of Olives
7. the city of Jericho
8. Gehenna
9. the Valley of Jehoshaphat (use only the biblical text to find this valley) which is the Valley of Decision

10. the Land of Edom
11. the lands of Moab and Ammon
12. the city of Caesarea Philippi
13. the city of Aiath (Ai)
14. Mt. Nebo (use only the biblical clues to find it, not simply where the maps of today locate it — because they invariably put it in the wrong place)
15. Megiddo (Armageddon)
16. the Plains of Sharon
17. Mt. Carmel
18. Shiloh
19. Sodom & Gomorrah (use only the biblical clues to find it, not where modern maps place them)
20. Sela (Petra)
21. the Wilderness of Judaea
22. Michmash
23. Geba
24. the Land of the Philistines
25. **“the passage”** of Isaiah 10:29

The effect of this exercise will be to plant in your mind not only the general location of these places, but also to show you the relationship of one place to another.

Note how simple the general outline of the territory of Israel/Palestine is: the coastline of the Mediterranean Sea, a larger lake, a smaller lake, a river connecting the two, and in the south a small portion of what is called the Gulf of Aqaba today. You could draw such a simple map with a stick in the ground, which is probably what ancient people did. After all, there were travelers and merchants crossing this land bridge of the world constantly. They knew where they were, where they were going, how to get there, and what landmarks were before them.



Israel / Palestine

A Further Challenge

The 15 verses of the 5th chapter of Micah mentions many towns located about 30 or 40 miles southwest of Jerusalem. Make a list and identify where all of them were. Use alternate translations if necessary. It will be seen, if one pays close attention to the prophecy, that what was happening in those towns was the very reason Micah wrote his important prophecy. A portion of that prophecy refers to events to occur in the near future to us (Micah 5:1–15).

A Final Challenge

The apostle Paul wanted to preach in the province of Asia (find out where “Asia” was and its capital city) but was forbidden by God’s Spirit (Acts 16:6). Then he started toward Bithynia (find out where it was) but was again forbidden to go there. Where did the Spirit tell them to go and why? Then continue reading. Why is this geographical indication so important to the spread of Christ’s Gospel to the world? How does

this one factor affect all of us who live in the Western World today? This one event was one of the most significant in the dissemination of Christ's teachings. Why?

Ernest L. Martin, 1995
 Edited by David Sielaff, February 2011

Conclusion (by David Sielaff)

As we have seen, geography is vitally important for biblical study. All the topics covered in this article, including the challenges, involve information that you need to know about God's placement of events within a framework of geography. The geographical relationship of nations, waterways, strategic strongpoints and weak points, the location of cities, even where battles took place in the past (or will take place in the future) — all are best evaluated by a proper understanding of the geography of Scripture. God has divided nations and peoples around the globe for a purpose:

“And has made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation.”

• **Acts 17:26**

The location of the Temple within Jerusalem is very important to correctly understand events that take place as recorded in both Testaments, including prophecies yet to be fulfilled. The Tomb of David has a direct relationship to the Temple. King David's Tomb can only be found if the Temple location is correct.¹⁴

Jerusalem's placement within the Promised land is also precise and significant. Consider Dr. Martin's article "[The Tribe of Benjamin](#)" where he explained where and why the location of Jerusalem is within the area of Israelite tribal settlement since the time of David, King of Israel.

Jesus Himself was tried, judged, and sentenced by the Jewish Sanhedrin in the Temple. He was judged by Pilate in Fort Antonia just a few yards from the area of the Temple. He was crucified in view of and just east of the Temple on the Mount of Olives as passersby stoned Him as He hung on the *stauros* of crucifixion. Then His body was prepared and entombed nearby, still on the Mount of Olives. He was resurrected 3 days later and ascended from the Mount of Olives, again looking upon the Temple on earth across the Kidron Valley as He rose to God's Temple in heaven.

To be sure, we do not know when Christ will return, but we are definitely told the place to where He will return: **“... this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen him go into heaven”** (Acts 1:11).

“Behold, he comes with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.”

• **Revelation 1:7**

Even heaven itself has geographic aspects to it, as Dr. Martin noted in his article "[The Geography of Heaven](#)." Indeed, in the future eons we will visit and come to know well the city of New Jerusalem which will be the only piece of real estate that will transition from the old heaven to the new earth (Revelation 3:12, 21:1–3, 10–27), where it will remain as God's dwelling place for the remainder of the eons.

What comes after the eons? That we are not told ... yet. Perhaps we will actively participate in God's next great creation, as sons and daughters of God, partaking in that new creation, each of us personally and actively loved by God our Father. At that time we will look back and see how every event in time and every place where those events happened all contributed to the glory of God.

DWS

¹⁴ See my article "[The Location and Future Discovery of King David's Tomb](#)." Of course, God can cause an earthquake to reveal the location of David's Tomb at any time, but I believe He will allow the Tomb to be discovered. DWS

Appendix: Geography, Moses, and the Ark of the Covenant

by David Sielaff

Geography plays a crucial role in a connected group of references, some biblical and some not biblical or non-canonical. Look first at this passage in the last chapter of Deuteronomy:

“And Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto the mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that is over against Jericho. And YHWH showed him all the land of Gilead, unto Dan, And all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim, and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah, unto the utmost sea, And the south, and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, unto Zoar.

And YHWH said unto him, ‘This is the land which I swore unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto your seed: I have caused you to see it with your eyes, but you shall not go over thither.’ So Moses the servant of YHWH died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of YHWH. And he [YHWH] buried him [Moses] in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Bethpeor: but no man knows of his sepulcher unto this day.”

• *Deuteronomy 34:1–6*

“... unto this day” means the day when this passage was written, whether by Joshua or perhaps inserted later by the prophet Samuel. It is interesting that “no man knows” the location of Moses’ sepulcher, but it is likely that spirit beings know the location. After Moses’ death a conflict took place over his body.

“Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not [Michael dared not] bring against him a railing accusation [a judgment of evil], but said, ‘The Lord rebuke you.’”

• *Jude 1:9*

The biblical text does not say what happened to Moses’ body, except that it was buried in a place hidden from man. Whether Satan the devil knows the location or not cannot be known. According to the non-biblical and apocryphal Book of Second Maccabees the ark of the covenant, the tabernacle, and the altar of incense were hidden in a mountain by Jeremiah in a location apparently nearby where Moses viewed the land of Promise and near to where Moses died and was buried. According to 2 Maccabees:

“It is also found in the records, ... how that the prophet [Jeremiah], having given them the law, charged them not to forget the commandments of the Lord, ... It was also contained in the same writing, that the prophet, being warned of God, commanded the tabernacle and the ark to go with him, as he went forth into the mountain, where Moses climbed up, and saw the heritage of God [the Promised Land].

And when Jeremy came thither, he found a hollow cave, wherein he laid [1] the tabernacle, and [2] the ark, and [3] the altar of incense, and so stopped [sealed] the door. And some of those that followed him came to mark the way, but they could not find it. Which when Jeremy perceived, he blamed them, saying, ‘As for that place, it shall be unknown until the time that God gather his people again together, and receive them unto mercy.’”

• *2 Maccabees 2:1–2, 4–7*

We have no assurance that this so-called apocryphal “prophecy” will come true. It may occur that Satan will lead the antichrist or his minions to “find” the ark, the tabernacle, and the altar of incense, giving legitimacy to their deception that he is the true Christ.

After this discovery additional proof would be for fire to come down from heaven when a sacrifice is made near the ark. This is part of the prophecy of the second beast of Revelation:

“It exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence, and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound was healed.

[How does he make them worship the 1st beast?] **It works great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in the sight of men; and by the signs which it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast, it deceives those who dwell on earth, bidding them make an image for the beast which was wounded by the sword and yet lived; and it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast so that the image of the beast should even speak, and to cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain.**

• *Revelation 13:12–15, Revised Standard Version*

The fire coming “**down from heaven**” will not be from God. It will be from this second beast. It will be a counterfeit of God’s acceptance of the sacrifices of Abraham, Moses, and Solomon. The purpose of the fire will be — again — to give legitimacy to the first beast that he is the Christ, the Anointed, the Messiah of Israel. It will all be a lie.¹⁵ Read again Dr. Martin’s article “[Discovering the Mark of the Beast](#).”¹⁶

This fire from heaven will take place at a particular geographical location in the city of Jerusalem, wherever the next Temple will be built. The Temple will be the center of the world at that time.

Discovery of the ark of the covenant would mean nothing to God. So, we do not know if the ark will be found. There is, however, an interesting passage in a genuine biblical writing of Jeremiah:

“And it shall come to pass, when you be multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, says YHWH, they shall say no more, ‘The ark of the covenant of YHWH’: neither shall it come to mind: neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done any more.

At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of YHWH; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of YHWH, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart.

• *Jeremiah 3:16–17*

Indeed, the ark has been forgotten, except in the minds of some archaeological adventurers. They are free to search for it, of course, but they should consider that they are going against the warnings of the prophet Jeremiah, just as the people of Judah did in his day, warnings that he received from God. I wonder, if they reject Jeremiah’s admonitions, why do they accept the prophecies of 2 Maccabees as valid?

This biblical passage of Jeremiah 3:16–17 says that the subject of the ark of the covenant comes up “**in the land**” before the “**time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of YHWH,**” meaning before the Millennium begins with Christ’s returns. It certainly has not happened yet. The truth is, according to the biblical text in Jeremiah 3:16–17, the ark is not to be thought of as having any importance whatsoever. Why would God feel it necessary to prophesy and instruct people in Israel to reject the ark as having any kind of authority or authenticity unless the ark had been found for them to reject? That is a very interesting question. Dr. Martin believed (and so do I) that a future discovery of the ark may indeed occur. In fact, I think it is likely.

Is the ark something that believers should be seeking? No.

¹⁵ Continuing on with the next verses on 2 Maccabees, which specifically states that such fire from heaven will show God’s acceptance of the sacrifices and the legitimacy of the ark, the tabernacle, and the altar of incense. 2 Maccabees 2:8–13:

“Then shall the Lord show them these things, and the glory of the Lord [supposedly] shall appear, and the cloud also, as it was showed under Moses, and as when Solomon desired that the place might be honorably sanctified. It was also declared, that he being wise offered the sacrifice of dedication, and of the finishing of the temple. And as when Moses prayed unto the Lord, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the sacrifices: even so prayed Solomon also, and the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offerings.

And Moses said, ‘Because the sin offering was not to be eaten, it was consumed [by fire].’ So Solomon kept those eight days. The same things also were reported in the writings and commentaries of Neemias [Nehemiah].”

¹⁶ Even today many people (I know at least five people myself) who have an unfortunate fascination with the ark that tends, in my opinion, toward a form of idolatry. Imagine the impact such a discovery would have upon Jews around the world. DWS

Jeremiah said that Israelites were not to think about it: **“neither ... come to mind,”** or **“remember it.”** Israel was to avoid the subject, forget it, and not **“visit it.”** To do so will lead them to seek **“the imagination of their evil heart.”** This will occur **“at that time,”** just before Christ’s return to earth.

David Sielaff, February 2011