



Bible Geography I

Physical Geography – Old Testament World

I. EXTENT OF THE OLD TESTAMENT WORLD

A. Position of Palestine

1. Center of the Old Testament World
2. Geographical center of the world (Deuteronomy 32:8)
3. Location of many trade routes
 - a. To Egypt
 - b. To Mesopotamia
 - c. To Asia Minor
4. Location of oft-disputed territory because it served as a buffer zone between rival nations (see Foreword and Chapter One of *Battles of the Bible* by Chaim Herzog and Mordechai Gichon)

B. Bounded by Five Great Bodies of Water

1. The Mediterranean Sea (Great Sea)
2. The Black Sea
3. The Caspian Sea
4. The Persian Gulf
5. The Red Sea

C. Practical Limits of Old Testament World

1. East – Persia
2. West – Egypt
3. North – Mountains of Ararat in Armenia
4. South – Mount Sinai in Arabia

D. The Desert

1. Occupies much of the Old Testament World
2. An extension of the Sahara Desert
3. Much of it in land now known as Saudi Arabia (Galatians 1:17; 4:25)

A. The Fertile Crescent

1. Crescent-shaped strip of land which has supported many civilizations
2. Includes:



- a. Tigris-Euphrates Valley (Mesopotamia)
- b. Assyria
- c. Syria
- d. Palestine
- e. Egypt

II. LARGE BODIES OF WATER

A. Mediterranean Sea

1. Separates Europe, North Africa and southwestern Asia
2. Linked to Atlantic Ocean by way of the Strait of Gibraltar (8 miles wide)
3. Connected with Black Sea through Sea of Marmara
4. 2,500 miles from east to west
5. Average depth: 4,900 feet
6. Maximum depth: 17,280 feet
7. Biblically called the “great sea” (Numbers 34:6-7; Joshua 1:4; **Ezekiel 47:1-12)
8. Main Palestine ports
 - a. Old Testament – Joppa, Tyre
 - b. New Testament – Caesarea
 - c. Modern – Haifa, Ashdod
 - i. Mt. Carmel is near modern day Haifa
 - a) This is Mt. Carmel that Elijah slew the false prophets (1 Kings 18:19-40)
 - b) The cloud like a man’s hand out of the sea (1 Kings 18:41-44)
 - ii. This same Mt. Carmel is where Elisha would also do his work
 - a) Elisha travels from Jericho to Bethel (2 Kings 2:19-23)
 - b) Elisha travels from Bethel to Mt. Carmel (2 Kings 2:24-25)
 - c) Elisha travels back to Samaria (2 Kings 2:25)

B. Persian Gulf

1. 615 miles long
2. Leads to Indian Ocean
3. Fed by Tigris and Euphrates rivers
4. Seldom over 300 feet deep
5. Bordered by Persia (Iran) on the east and Arabia on the west

C. Caspian Sea

1. World’s largest inland sea
2. A salt lake
3. 640 miles from north to south



4. East of the Black Sea

D. Red Sea

1. Divides Africa and Arabia (**Exodus 13:17-18; **1 Kings 9:26-28)
2. 1,400 miles long
3. Leads to Indian Ocean
4. Intense blue-green in color; sometimes turns to a reddish-brown color by algae

E. Black Sea

1. Divides Europe and Asia
2. Not mentioned in the Bible

III. IMPORTANT RIVERS

A. Tigris

1. About 1,200 miles long
2. Called the Hiddekel river in Genesis 2:14 and Daniel 10:4
3. Joins the Euphrates about 100 miles from the Persian Gulf
4. The three great Assyrian capitals – Ninevah, Calah and Ashur – were on its banks
5. Modern Baghdad is on its banks

B. Euphrates

1. About 1,700 miles in length
2. First Biblical mention (Genesis 2:14)
3. Babylon and Ur were on its banks
4. Biblical titles (**2 Kings 23:29-30 w/ 2 Chronicles 35:20-24)
 - a. “the river” (Exodus 23:31; Deuteronomy 11:24)
 - b. “the great river” (Genesis 15:18; Deuteronomy 1:7)

C. Orontes

1. About 250 miles long
2. Flows northward through Lebanon and then into the Mediterranean
3. Antioch (now Antakya) and Hamath (also Hamah) are cities built on its banks
4. It is not mentioned directly in scripture

D. Nile

1. Longest river in the world – over 4,000 miles long
2. Supported a population of 50 million in the mid 1960’s
3. Its two main sources meet at Khartoum
 - a. Blue Nile flows from the highlands of Ethiopia



- b. White Nile flows through lakes Victoria and Albert
4. One of the few great rivers which flows from **south** to **north**
5. Has large triangular-shaped delta (140 miles on each side); very fertile; has multiple streams (Exodus 2:1-5; **Isaiah 11:11-16)
6. Contains six cataracts, or waterfalls, which hinder navigation—the first being at Aswan and the sixth below Khartoum
7. The Nile's annual flooding, which is caused by heavy tropical rains from Ethiopia and the East African Basin, provides a fertile soil for agriculture in a river valley that runs from 3 to 10 miles wide.

IV. MOUNTAIN RANGES

A. Ararat

1. Landing place of Noah's ark (Genesis 8:4)
2. Midway between Black and Caspian Seas
3. Present-day boundaries of Armenia, Georgia, Turkey and Iran come together here

B. Zagros

1. Extends northwest-southeast east of the Tigris River
2. Formed traditional boundary between Assyria and Media
3. Has peaks above 12,000 feet

C. Taurus

1. Located along southern coast of Asia Minor
2. Mountain complex that lies in the southern part of modern day Turkey
3. Area of Paul's birth
4. Many peaks between 10,000 and 12,000 feet

D. Lebanons

1. Extends the length of Lebanon running parallel to the Mediterranean coast
2. Contains two parallel ranges
 - a. Lebanons – on the west
 - b. Anti-Lebanons – on the east
3. The two ranges form the valley of Lebanon (Joshua 11:17)
4. Mt. Hermon, which is over 9,000 feet high, is located in the southern end of the Anti-Lebanons (**2 Chronicles 2:11-16)
5. The valley is part of the Great Rift System which extends from Turkey to Mozambique
6. The two mountain ranges become the two ranges which are located on the east and west of the Jordan Valley



V. LANDS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

- A. Armenia – north of Assyria in the mountains of Ararat (**Isaiah 37:33-38)
- B. Media – between Caspian Sea and the Zagros Mountains (**Esther 1:1-3)
- C. Persia – south of Media and north and east of the Persian Gulf
- D. Sumer – in the area at and above where the Tigris and Euphrates come together (notice the location of Ur, a major Sumerian city and the hometown of Abraham – Genesis 11:31; 15:7)
- E. Babylon – north of Sumer on the lower Euphrates
- F. Assyria – south of Armenia in Upper Mesopotamia
- G. Elam – between Zagros Mountains and lower Tigris River (Jeremiah 49:34-39)
- H. Mesopotamia – the Tigris-Euphrates Valley
- I. Land of the Hittites – Asia Minor (Joshua 1:3-4; 1 Kings 10:29)
- J. Syria – northeast of Palestine (2 Samuel 8:1-14)
- K. Phoenicia – north of Palestine between Mediterranean Sea and Lebanon Mountains (Joel 3:4)
- L. Canaan – Palestine west of the Jordan (Genesis 11:31; Genesis 12:5; Genesis 37:1; Exodus 6:4; **Zephaniah 2:4-5)
- M. Philistia – coastal plain of Palestine between Joppa and Gaza (**Psalm 108:7-9)
- N. Egypt – land in Africa along the Nile (First reference – Genesis 12:10)

NOTE: These notes are some of the most important in the entire course. If you do not have these lands, bodies of water, rivers and mountain ranges clearly in your mind, the rest of the course will never come together for you. Please make sure you know this section well.