

Bible Geography

Overview and Discussion of Scale

The following video is recommended for a look at the scale of the Bible lands compared with North America, specifically the 48 contiguous states of the USA.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=azmz71bYZCs

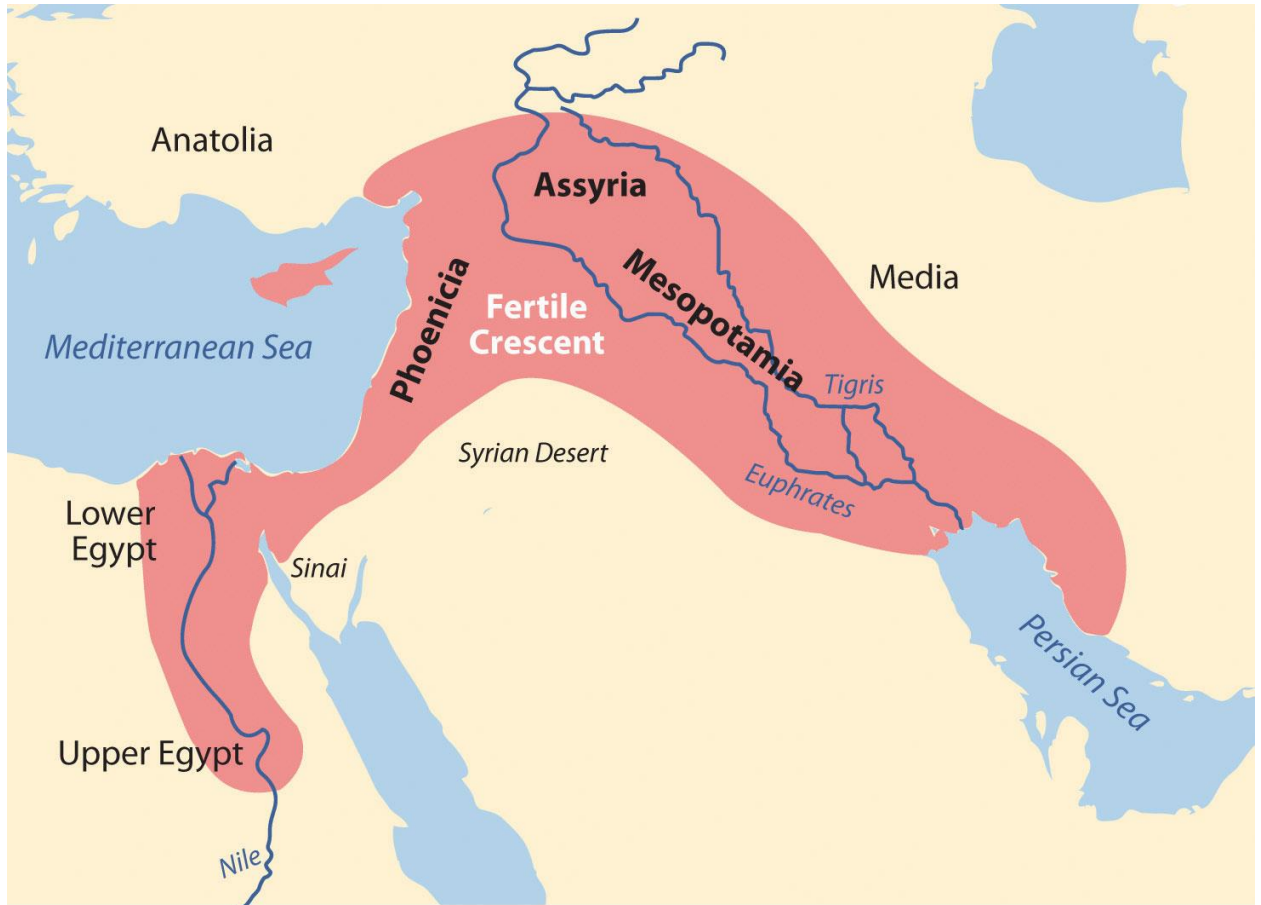
Introduction:

1. Bible geography is not a common subject for study in a class by itself.
 - a. Details may be mentioned in other lessons or studies.
 - b. But it is not often considered as its own study.
2. Yet, “man is a creature of space as well as time, so that geography must be added to history if we are to gain an adequate concept of his various activities” (Charles F. Pfeiffer; *Baker’s Bible Atlas*, p. 13).
3. The patriarchs, the nation of Israel, and the early church did not exist in isolation.
4. They had contact with other lands and their inhabitants – Chaldea, Canaan, Egypt, Moab, Philistia, Assyria, Babylon, and many others.
5. A knowledge of history and geography are key to grasping a deeper understanding of the Bible and the events recorded within its pages.
 - a. We are separated from these events by thousands of years; thus, it helps to know the history of those times.
 - b. We are also separated by thousands of miles from a land that most of us will never visit; thus, it helps to know the geography of that region.

I. An Overview of the Geography of the Bible Lands

- A. The events of history recorded in the Old Testament took place in a territory of some 1.11 million square miles (excluding seas).
- B. This land is bordered by five great bodies of water:
 1. The Mediterranean Sea (to the east)
 2. The Black Sea (to the north)
 3. The Caspian Sea (to the northeast)
 4. The Persian Gulf (to the southeast)
 5. The Red Sea (to the south)
- C. To the south, this land extended to the nation of Egypt; to the east, it reached Persia (Iran); to the north, Asia Minor (Turkey); and to the west, the great region of Rome.
- D. Much of the southern part of this region is desert – the Sahara, parted by the Nile River creating the fertile Nile Valley.
- E. The “Fertile Crescent” extended from the Persian Gulf northwest along the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers to the area near Carchemish, then following the Jordan River into Syria and Palestine (Canaan).
 1. The name Mesopotamia means, “between rivers,” and refers to the land between the Euphrates and Tigris.
 2. Ur of the Chaldees was located at the southeastern end of the Fertile Crescent near the Persian Gulf (cf. Gen. 11:28, 31; 15:7).
 3. Nineveh was located on the Tigris River (called the Hiddekel in the Bible [Dan. 10:4]) while Babylon was on the Euphrates.

Lesson 01



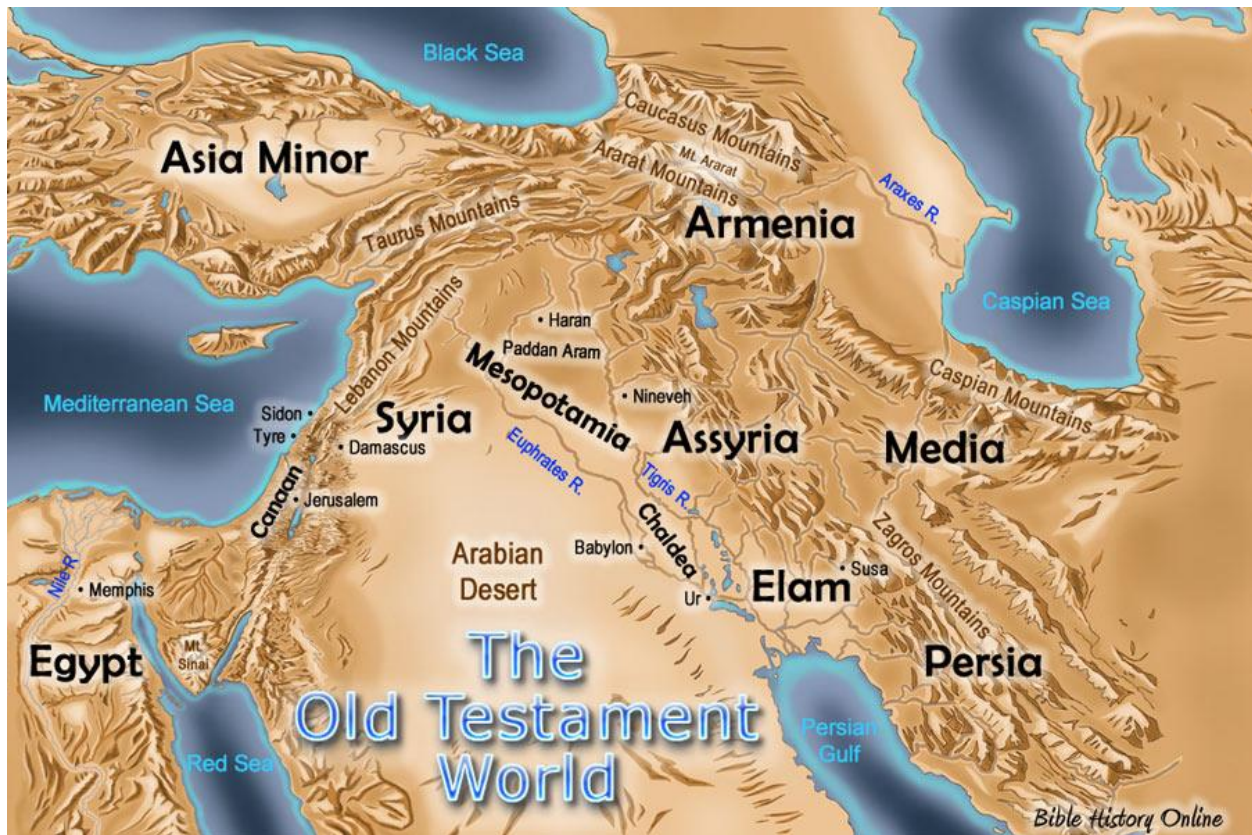
The Fertile Crescent

- F. The Nile River is formed by the convergence of the White Nile and the Blue Nile about 1,625 miles north of Lake Victoria.
1. The White Nile flows from Lake Victoria, located in modern Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.
 2. The Blue Nile flows from Lake Tana located in the mountains of Ethiopia.
 3. They come together at the city of Khartoum.
 4. From its most distant headwaters, the Nile flows northward for almost 4,000 miles - making it the longest river system in the world.
- G. Egypt is often referred to as “the gift of the Nile” for, without this river, life would not be possible in this region.



Lesson 01

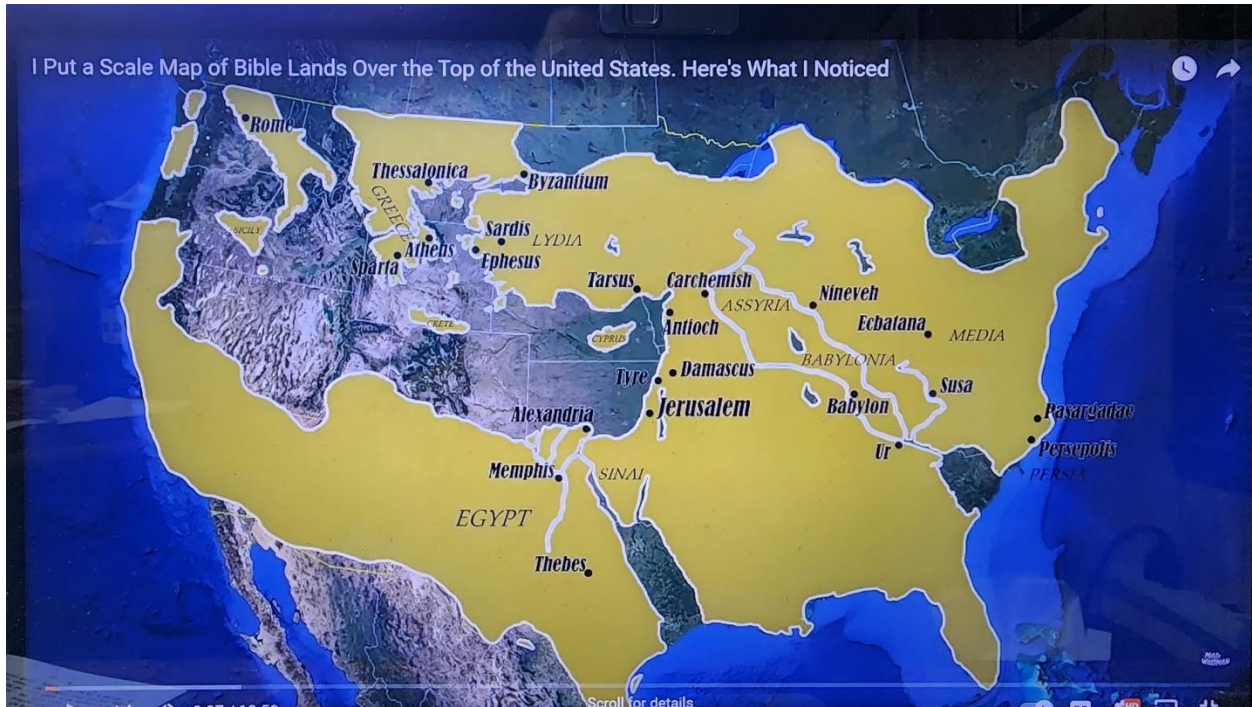
- H. There were several lands (tribes or nations) that affected the events of Bible history in the Old Testament.
1. Armenia – between the Black Sea and Assyria; where the ark landed
 2. Media – between the Caspian Sea and Babylon; home of the Medes
 3. Persia – southeast of Media, modern-day Iran
 4. Sumer – at the head of the Persian Gulf
 5. Babylonia
 6. Assyria – north of Babylon
 7. Elam – east of Babylon, capitol was Susa (Shushan [Neh., Esther])
 8. Mesopotamia
 9. Land of the Hittites – from Carchemish to Asia Minor
 10. Syria – called Aram (cf. Num. 23:7), south of Hittite land
 11. Phoenicia – between Mediterranean Sea and Lebanon Mts. (Tyre)
 12. Canaan – Palestine west of the Jordan River
 13. Philistia – Crete and southeastern coast of the Mediterranean
 14. Egypt



Lesson 01

II. A Discussion of Scale

- A. It is often difficult to understand distances travelled in Bible events because of one's unfamiliarity with the geography and topography of the Bible lands.
- B. By comparing to familiar distances, understanding can be enlightened.



C. Consider these journeys...

1. From Bethlehem to Jerusalem was about 6 miles (Luke 2:21-22) [from Whitehouse to New Hope MBC]
2. From Bethlehem to Egypt was from 40 – 200 miles (Matt. 2:13-15) [from Whitehouse to Jasper or to Memphis, TN]
3. The wise men travelled from 400 – 700 miles (Matt. 2:1-12) [from Whitehouse to Dallas, TX or Chicago, IL]
4. Paul's missionary journeys covered about the same territory as the Lewis and Clark expedition; but he did it at least 3 times!
5. The journey of the people of Judah from Jerusalem into captivity in Babylon is nearly equivalent to the distance covered on the Trail of Tears.
6. Nehemiah's journey from Persia to Jerusalem was about 1,600 miles [from Whitehouse to Yellowstone National Park].

D. Yet, it is also worth noting that the area of Palestine is small in comparison with the United States.

E. The US is about 448 times larger than the modern nation of Israel!

Conclusion:

1. This study will carry us through events at various locations in the Bible lands.
2. It will help us to see the impact that geography had on these events.
3. It will help us to better understand the Bible and its context.