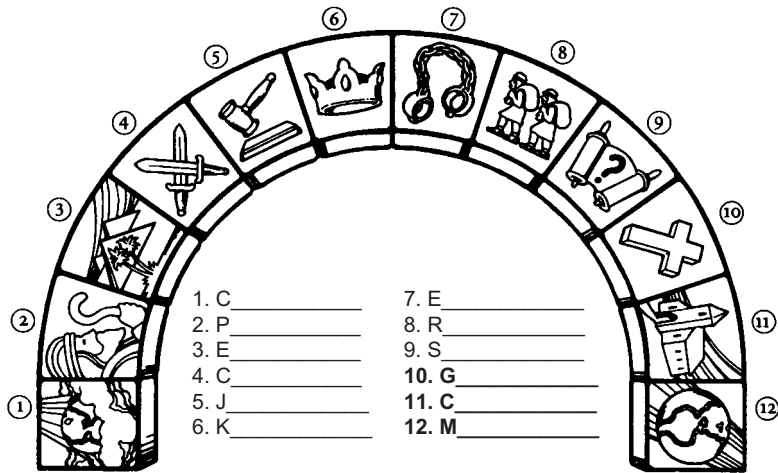


Test #7: ARC OF BIBLE HISTORY (Fill in the names of the eras).

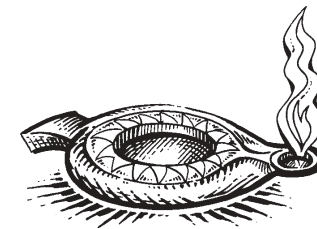


BASIC BIBLE STUDY

An Introductory Guide To Understanding The Scriptures

PART SIXTEEN

N.T. Geography & Structure



"Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet,
and a light unto my path"
PSALM 119:105

BBS#16 • Geography & Structure Of The N.T.

When in the Gospels you read of going from the cities of Jericho to Jerusalem to Cana, those are just words on a page with no meaning until you have overviewed the geography. You have no realization that someone has just walked 75 miles, as the crow flies, the distance from Londonderry to Belfast, or that it also included walking up 1300 feet in altitude and then down another 1000.

In fact, gaining perspective on the geography of the New Testament is in itself a fascinating study. The Holy Land was really quite small, (cf. the **Table of Distances** in modern Israel, p3. The distances are given in miles). **All Palestinian Old Testament history (and New Testament Gospel history) took place in a country smaller than Wales or the Scottish highlands.**

The Sea of Galilee is 7 miles by 14 miles, almost a mud puddle compared to the Great Lakes of the USA. The Dead Sea is 10 miles by 50 miles, smaller than some virtually nameless reservoirs in the The States. The "mighty" Jordan river is little more than a strong-running creek compared to the truly mighty rivers of the world like the Amazon or Mississippi. Perhaps because it is such a small country, everything is exaggerated.

Small though it is, Israel is a remarkably varied land. From low desert to high mountain - with lush valleys and rolling hills in between - the gamut is run in topography. Any body of water that you cannot swim across is a "sea," and every hill higher than your head is a "mountain."

A SENSE OF SCALE

In Scripture we read of "from Dan to Beersheba" as being the extremities of the land in historic Bible times. We think of it as a vast distance. It is less than a day's drive.

- It is just 75 miles from Jerusalem to Nazareth.
- Bethlehem is a scant 5 miles from Jerusalem.
- From Nazareth to Capernaum is barely 25 miles.

To be able to create mental pictures as you read the events in the New Testament is to help the narrative come alive. Therefore, as we begin looking at the New Testament, we begin with the geography.

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Test #5: THE MAIN LOCATIONS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

(From the options listed at right, write in the location to match the era and figure)

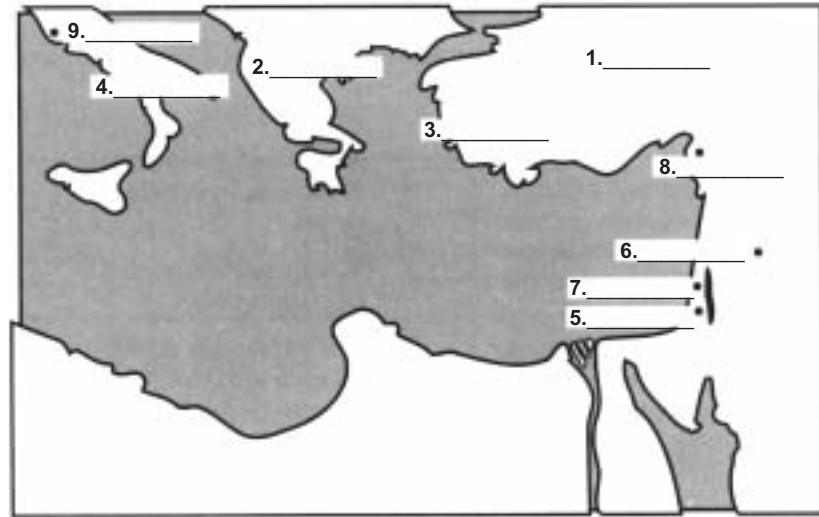
ERA:	FIGURE:	LOCATION:	OPTIONS:
Gospels	Jesus		Roman Empire
Church	Peter		Palestine
Missions	Paul		Jerusalem

Test #6: NEW TESTAMENT STORY-LINE CHART

(From memory, fill in the New Testament story-line chart).

ERA	FIGURE	LOCATION	STORYLINE SUMMARY
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Congratulations! You have just taken a massive stride towards mastering an overview of the New Testament. As the New Testament studies progress, we will become more specific, but this study maps out the essential/basic structure.



Test #3: MAIN ERAS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

(Write in the correct era on the proper line matching the description).

OPTIONS: ERA: DESCRIPTION:

- Missions The life of Jesus of Nazareth, as told in the Gospels
- Gospels The formation of the Christian Church
- Church The expansion of the Church into the Roman Empire through missions

Test #4: CENTRAL FIGURES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

(Fill in the blanks).

ERA: FIGURE: DESCRIPTION:

- Gospels Jesus The predicted _____
- Church Peter The _____ of the early Church
- Missions Paul The first Christian _____

	Beersheba	Caesarea	Capernaum	Damascus	Dan	Gaza	Haifa	Jerusalem	Megiddo	Tel Aviv
Beersheba	—	136	167	244	206	27	161	54	134	82
Caesarea	136	—	63	140	102	95	30	82	22	48
Capernaum	167	63	—	80	40	152	52	113	59	105
Damascus	244	140	80	—	63	229	123	190	136	182
Dan	206	102	40	63	—	191	86	152	98	144
Gaza	27	95	40	229	191	—	114	60	100	55
Haifa	161	30	52	123	86	114	—	101	20	67
Jerusalem	54	82	—	101	152	60	101	—	80	41
Megiddo	134	22	80	136	98	100	20	80	—	53
Tel Aviv	82	48	105	182	144	55	67	41	53	—



I. THE GEOGRAPHY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

[A] THE GEOGRAPHY OF THE GOSPELS

The difference between the geography of the Gospels and the geography of the Book of Acts is significant enough to warrant separate treatment.

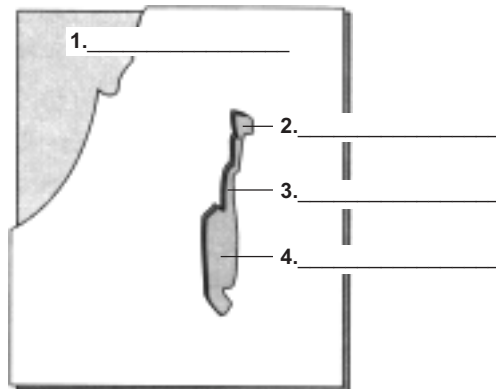
BODIES OF WATER

Once you have mastered the geography of the Old Testament, the geography of the New Testament is fairly simple. The bodies of water are among those of the Old Testament outlined in Basic Bible Study #2.

1. Mediterranean Sea
2. Sea of Galilee
3. Jordan River
4. Dead Sea

Bodies of Water in the Gospels

(Fill in the appropriate blanks on the following map. The names and numbers should match those on the preceding list).



TESTS

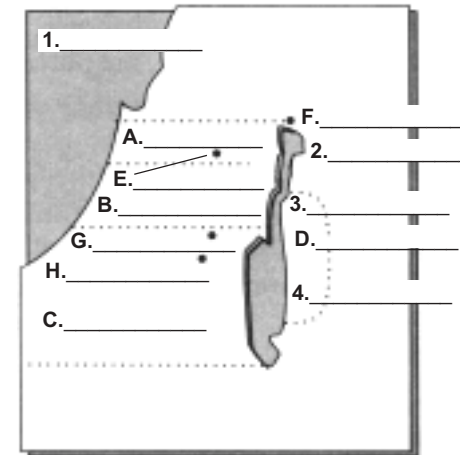
Test #1: THE GEOGRAPHY OF THE GOSPELS

(From the options listed, fill in the bodies of water, provinces, and cities on the map that follows).

Numbers = bodies of water Letters = cities and provinces

- Dead Sea
- Jordan River
- Mediterranean Sea
- Sea of Galilee

- Bethlehem
- Capernaum
- Galilee
- Jerusalem
- Judea
- Nazareth
- Perea
- Samaria



Test #2: THE GEOGRAPHY OF ACTS

(From the options listed, fill in the countries and cities on the following map).

Countries:

- Asia
- Galatia
- Greece
- Italy
- Rome

Cities:

- Antioch
- Caesarea
- Damascus
- Jerusalem

BBS#16 • Geography & Structure Of The N.T.

ERA:	FIGURE:	LOCATION:	DESCRIPTION:
G	J	Palestine	The general land area that was known as Canaan and Israel in the Old Testament is commonly known as Palestine in the New. It includes the Roman provinces of Galilee, Samaria, and Judea.
C	P	Jerusalem	The ancient city of Jerusalem has been in the same location throughout most of biblical history after the Kingdom Era. It is the city that gave birth to the early Church.
M	P	Roman Empire	As Paul spread the message of Christianity he took it to the heart of the Roman Empire. From Palestine, north into what is modern Turkey, and west through modern Greece, to Italy.

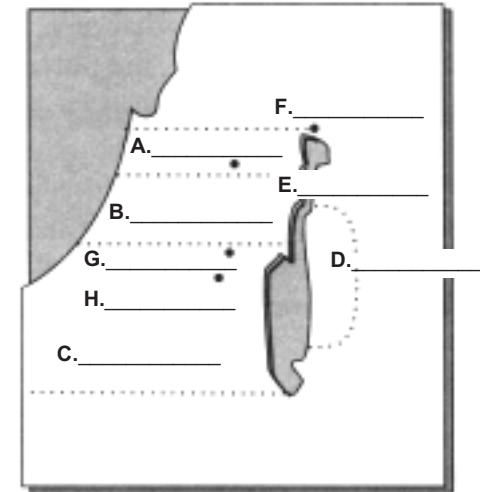
We are now able to add the main locations from the New Testament to our story-line chart:

ERA	FIGURE	LOCATION	STORYLINE SUMMARY
Gospels	Jesus	Palestine	_____
Church	Peter	Jerusalem	_____
Missions	Paul	Roman Empire	_____

BBS#16 • Geography & Structure Of The N.T.

PROVINCES AND CITIES

The primary geographical area in the Gospels is the same as that which was ruled by the nation of Israel in the Old Testament. However, the land, now known as Palestine, is ruled by Rome and has been divided into sections, or provinces. (As you read these descriptions, write the location on the map below by matching the letters).



A. The Province of Galilee

Located between the Mediterranean Sea and the sea that shares its name, Galilee, is the province Jesus considered His home province. Both Nazareth, His early home, and Capernaum, His later home, are in Galilee. Hence the phrase, "the Stranger of Galilee."

The Sea of Galilee itself is some 700 feet below sea level. The winding Jordan River snakes into it at one end and twists and turns out of it again at the other. It is heart-shaped, thirteen miles long and about seven miles across at its widest part. It is rimmed around with mountains whose heads stand in a temperate zone and whose feet are in the subtropics where bananas, palms, and bamboos can grow. Far to the north Mount Hermon raises its snow-capped peak.

In Jesus' day the hills around the lake were clothed with trees. Aqueducts provided irrigation. The western shore was a chain of populous villages and towns with green gardens, busy markets,

thriving wharfs, and humming light industries.

TIBERIAS

The chief town was Tiberias, a centre of Roman life which Jesus never visited (as far as we know). There Greeks and Romans rubbed shoulders with native Galileans. The splendid Herodian palace was there, with its Greek sculptures that offended the sensibilities of orthodox Jews. There, too, was an amphitheatre and theatres where one could watch performances of travelling entertainers or watch gladiators fight, as though it were Rome itself.

B. The Province of Samaria

Located between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River, Samaria is home to Samaritans. Part Jewish, part Gentile people, they live in constant animosity with the Jews.

Jesus showed His concern for them by travelling through their land and staying with them. After Jesus’s death and resurrection, Philip went to Samaria to preach the gospel: his work was followed up by Peter and John (**Luke 17:11, John 4:1-43, Acts 8:5-25**).

C. The Province of Judea

Located between the Mediterranean Sea and the Dead Sea, Judea is approximately the same area as the southern tribe of Judah in the Old Testament. Encompassing the city of Jerusalem, it is home to most of the Jews in the New Testament.

D. The Province of Perea

A long, narrow province on the east bank of the Jordan River, Jesus spent some concentrated time there with His disciples toward the end of His ministry.

E. The City of Nazareth

Located in Galilee just west of the Sea of Galilee, it is the town where Jesus spent His childhood, worked as a carpenter with Joseph, and grew into manhood.

- At the time of Jesus it appears that Nazareth had a bad reputation, for Nathanael (from the neighbouring village of Cana), exclaimed, “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” (**John 1:46**).
- Jesus Himself was not accepted here. It was in Nazareth that the first attempt was made on His life (**Luke 4:16-32; esp. 28&29**). After this, Jesus turned His back on Nazareth and went down to Capernaum.

ERA	FIGURE	LOCATION	STORYLINE SUMMARY
Gospels	_____	_____	_____
Church	_____	_____	_____
Missions	_____	_____	_____

[B] THE THREE CENTRAL FIGURES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

ERA:	FIGURE:	DESCRIPTION:
Gospels	Jesus	The predicted Messiah
Church	Peter	The leader of the early Church
Missions	Paul	The first Christian missionary

We are now able to **add the Central Figures** from the New Testament to our story-line chart which currently shows just the New Testament Eras.

ERA	FIGURE	LOCATION	STORYLINE SUMMARY
Gospels	Jesus	Palestine	_____
Church	Peter	Jerusalem	_____
Missions	Paul	Roman Empire	_____

[C] THE THREE MAIN LOCATIONS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Our final task is to identify the general or primary geographic **location** of the events of the three main eras of the New Testament. (Write in each main era and central historical figure as you read the description of the geographical location).

ERA	FIGURE	LOCATION	STORYLINE SUMMARY
_____	_____	_____	Adam is created by God, but he _____ and _____ God's original _____ for man.
_____	_____	_____	Abraham is _____ by God to _____ a people to _____ God to the world.
_____	_____	_____	Moses _____ the Hebrew people from _____ in Egypt and then gives them the _____ .
_____	_____	_____	Joshua leads the _____ of the _____ .
_____	_____	_____	Samuel and others were chosen as _____ to _____ the people for _____ rebellious years.
_____	_____	_____	David, the greatest king in the new _____ , is followed by a succession of mostly _____ kings, and God eventually _____ Israel for her sins, sending her into exile.
_____	_____	_____	Daniel gives _____ and encourages _____ among the _____ for the next seventy years.
_____	_____	_____	Ezra _____ the people back from _____ to rebuild _____ .
_____	_____	_____	Pharisees and others _____ the Israelites in _____ for the next _____ years.

Nazareth was a kind of great divide, not only between north and south, Judea and Galilee, but between the Old Testament and the New. Nazareth, geographically, is a frontier town, the bridge between two worlds. It was the place where the traveller said a final "farewell" to Judea and "hello" to Galilee when going north, and the opposite when going south. To the south was exclusive, aristocratic, formal Jerusalem. To the north was Galilee of the Gentiles, with Roman military roads from Syria and old trade routes from the distant east.

F. The City of Capernaum

Located on the very top of the Sea of Galilee, it is where Jesus called home during His ministry years. It was only 10 miles from Roman Tiberias with its baths and famous spa. Across the lake the wild Gergesene hills crowded down to the shore.

This was where Jesus lived, where Roman soldiers marched, where Greek merchants flourished, where Phoenicians spread their exotic wares from distant lands across the sea, where caravans halted from the east, where soldiers and camp followers rubbed shoulders with gladiators and entertainers, where Jew and Gentile met in uneasy contact. Jesus chose to live not in the theological centre of Jerusalem, not among the ascetic Essenes in the wilderness, not even in prim but dubious Nazareth, but in bustling Capernaum where people from many lands crossed and recrossed in their journeying.

For approximately 20 months, this city became the centre of Christ's activities (two-thirds of His ministry spent in Galilee; one-third in Jerusalem). Jesus:

- taught in the synagogue here (**Mark 1:21; Luke 4:31-33**).
- From this synagogue, (the base of which still remains - note the darker stones under the white ones), sounded out the words of our Saviour: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me ..." (**Luke 4:31-33**). This synagogue was built for the Jews by a Roman centurion; cf. **Luke 7:5**.
- delivered a man of an unclean spirit and healed Peter's mother-in-law (**Matthew 8:14-17; Mark 1:21-34; Luke 4:31-41**);
 - healed the centurion's servant ... that Roman centurion had built the synagogue for the Jews in Capernaum (**Matthew 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10**);
 - healed the man sick of the palsy (**Matthew 9:1-8; Mark 2:1-12; Luke 5:17-20**);
 - raised Jairus' daughter from the dead (**Matthew 9:18-26; Mark 5:22-43; Luke 8:41-56**);

- healed the woman who had an issue of blood (**Matthew 9:20-22; Mark 5:25-35; Luke 8:43-48**);
- healed two blind men (**Matthew 9:27-35**);
- healed the son of a nobleman (**John 4:46-54**);
- healed the man with the withered hand (**Matthew 12:10-14; Mark 3:1-6; Luke 6:6-11**);
- as well as healing great multitudes of sick folk (**Matthew 8:16&17; 9:36-38**).

Sad truth is, Capernaum did not show the gratitude they should have for the ministry of our Lord. He pronounced a curse on this city (**Matthew 11:23&24**). That prophecy of Jesus was fulfilled: the site of Capernaum was uncertain for a long time. Today, Capernaum is little more than a heap of rubble at the side of the lake.

G. The City of Jerusalem

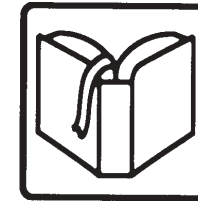
Located in Judea, just off the top of the Dead Sea, it is the home of the temple, the holy city, and the centre of activity for Jews.

From its barren hills, the prophets and apostles launched the eternal sounds of the Law and Gospel; "... For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem" (**Isaiah 2:3**).

However, Jerusalem - city of faith and peace - has also been a city of terror, war and bloodshed on a staggering scale. More wars have been fought around its gates than in any other city in the world. Jerusalem has been besieged more than 50 times, conquered 36 times and destroyed 10 times. To walk in and around Jerusalem is to walk over a sea of human blood.

HISTORICAL TIMELINE FOR JERUSALEM

- It is first mentioned in the Bible during the times of Abraham under the name of Salem (**Genesis 13:18**).
- David captured the city from the Jebusites, made it his capital, and brought the Ark of the Covenant into it.
- Solomon built the Temple here.
- Less than 400 years later, the Babylonians captured the city, destroyed the temple, and carried the Jews into captivity to Babylon.
- In 168 B.C. Antiochus Epiphanes flattened the walls which had been rebuilt under Nehemiah.
- It was not until 20 B.C., when Herod the Great was King of the Jews, that the walls and temple of Jerusalem were rebuilt.



II. THE STRUCTURE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Having mastered the geography of the New Testament, we are now ready to continue the story of the Bible with the three main eras that remain. You will recall that the 27 books of the New Testament can be divided into three different kinds of books:

- five Historical Books,
- thirteen Pauline Epistles, and
- nine General Epistles.

As we did with the Historical Books in the Old Testament, first we will overview the events of the Historical Books of the New Testament - the Gospels and the Acts. Then, in the next few studies, we will expand the story line.

[A] THE THREE MAIN ERAS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

1. Gospels

The life of Jesus of Nazareth as told in the Gospels.

2. Church

The formation of the Christian Church.

3. Missions

The expansion of the Church into the Roman empire through missions.

We are now able to add this new information to our storyline chart from the Old Testament.

6. The City of Damascus

Located in modern Damascus, in the modern country of Syria, it was Paul's destination when he was temporarily blinded by Jesus and converted to Christianity.

7. The City of Caesarea

Located on the Mediterranean coast just south of the Sea of Galilee, it was the site of Paul's trials.

Herod the Great rebuilt the town of Caesarea in 20 B.C., right on the shore of the Mediterranean, and gave it to Octavian. The most skilled architects and engineers of that age spent 12 years constructing what became one of the most beautiful and striking cities of Palestine. It became the seat of the Roman governors.

It was in Caesarea that:

- Pontius Pilate lived;
- Philip the evangelist preached (**Acts 8:40**);
- Peter preached to Cornelius (**Acts 21:8**);
- Paul spent two years in prison - and testified to the Risen Lord before Agrippa (**Acts 26**).

It was only in 1956 that the ruins of Caesarea were excavated from the sand dunes. Many indicators of the former glory of this site have been found, notably the amphitheatre - and the aqueduct which brought water into the city from the mountains 12 miles away. A stone inscribed with the name "Pontius Pilate" was also uncovered - direct archaeological evidence that supports the truth of the Gospels. Old city would have covered more than 200 acres.

8. The City of Antioch

On the Mediterranean coast north of Israel, near modern Turkey, it was the starting point for all three of Paul's missionary Journeys (The missionary journeys of Paul cannot be studied without some good Bible maps).

9. The City of Rome

Located in modern Rome, it was the city of Paul's imprisonment and death. Paul travelled during the reigns of Claudius (AD 41-54) and Nero (AD 54-68), the 'Caesar' to whom he appealed at his trial (**Acts 25:11**).

Herod's Jerusalem was the city that Jesus knew.

H. The Town of Bethlehem

The birthplace of Jesus, it is five miles southwest of Jerusalem on a hill about 2,600 feet above sea level. Bethlehem's history strikes roots deep into the past. It was mentioned in connection with:

- the death of Rachel (**Genesis 35:16-19**);
- Ruth the Moabite and Boaz (**Ruth 1:19-22**, etc);
- the family of David ... David was born here (**1 Samuel 16:1-4**);
- the birth of Jesus, (as a result of the Roman census) (**Luke 2:1-20 ... cf. Micah 5:2**).

Many of the incidents in the life of the Lord Jesus can be much better understood, given a knowledge of the geography of the Holy Land.

JOURNEYING FROM JERUSALEM TO JERICHO (Luke 10:30)

The Mount of Olives stands just 300 feet higher than Jerusalem and serves to screen the city from the wilderness that falls away to the Dead Sea.

MOUNT OF OLIVES

This Mount is associated with some of the key events in the life of our Lord.

It was to this mountain that:

- Jesus came for rest, meditation and prayer;

It was on this mountain that:

- He taught His disciples 'The Lord's Prayer';
- He foretold the destruction of Jerusalem;

It was from this mountain that:

- He ascended into heaven (**Luke 24:50&51 ... Acts 1:8-11**);
- and **the prophet Zechariah** tells us that when Messiah returns, His feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives - that Mount shall cleave in two - the dead shall be raised out of their graves - and our Lord shall rule over the nations!

Jerusalem itself stands 2,500 feet above sea level while the Dead Sea lies 1,290 feet below sea level. Thus, going down from Jerusalem to the Dead Sea, the traveller descends nearly 4,000 feet to a tropical climate. Snow can be lying on the streets of Jerusalem while twenty-five miles away at Jericho it can be hot. Jericho is not far from the Dead Sea. We can see the literal truth of the man in the Lord's story who "went down" from Jerusalem to Jericho. The Jordan Valley is part of a great rift system in the earth's crust and it remains hot all year around.

SEA OF GALILEE

The sea of Galilee, usually placid and still as a mirror, is subject to sudden, violent storms that churn the lake into massive waves quite able to swamp small boats on its surface. The reason can be found in the surrounding hills. Westerly winds come swooping over the highlands, come howling down to the lake through scores of gorges and valleys, and then emerge like so many furies on the low lying water. As a result the sea of Galilee can be calm one moment and raging the next.

OUR LORD'S NATURAL AMPLIFICATION SYSTEM

When the lake is calm it has another property, utilised by the Lord Jesus when addressing the great crowds that thronged its shores to hear Him speak. He would have the thousands of people sit on the slopes while He Himself either stood at the water's edge with His back to the lake, facing the crowds, or else sat near the shore in a boat. He would not need to raise His voice. He would speak in a conversational tone, and the lake behind Him, acting as a natural sounding board, picked up His voice, amplified it, and cast it up the slopes ahead.

John Phillips recalls: "I once addressed a group of men in this way, near Capernaum where the Lord did so much of His teaching. The men sat a fair way off where they could not normally have heard someone speaking in an ordinary talking voice. But they heard every word I said as I read to them, in a dinner-table tone of voice, the story of the sower who went forth to sow. The lake was the Lord's microphone and amplifier, designed by and for Him when He created the world."

There can be no doubt that knowledge of Bible geography lends colour and realism to our understanding of the Book.

[B] THE GEOGRAPHY OF ACTS

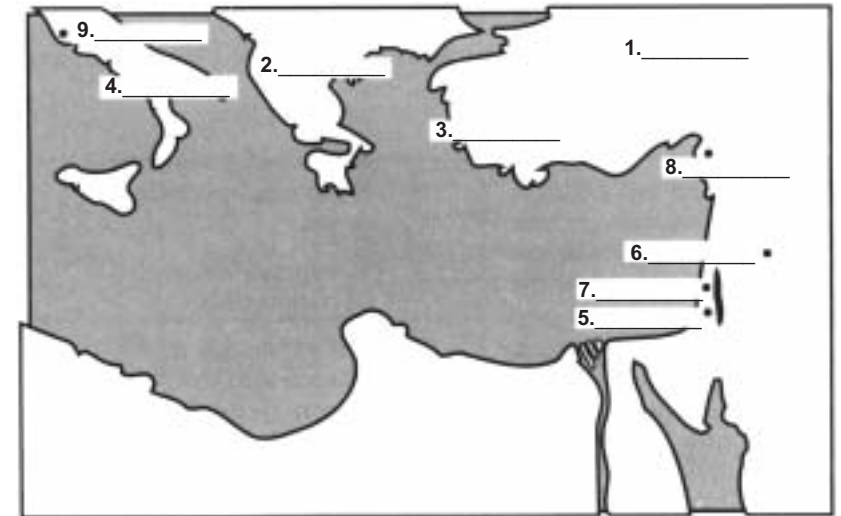
BODIES OF WATER

The bodies of water are the same as for the Gospels, only more of the Mediterranean is involved. Therefore, you already know them!

COUNTRIES AND CITIES

As we move out of the Gospels and into Acts, our geography expands from Palestine further into the Roman Empire. (As you read the

descriptions, write the location on the map below).



1. The Country of Galatia

Located in modern-day Turkey, it was the destination of the apostle Paul's first missionary journey to take the gospel message to Gentiles.

2. The Country of Greece

Located in modern Greece, it was the destination for Paul's second missionary journey.

3. The Country of Asia

Located on the western coast of modern Turkey, it was the destination of Paul's third missionary journey. When we read of "the seven churches of Asia," we do not think of a handful of churches in India, China, or Japan. Bible geography directs our attention to the Roman province of Asia Minor, a part of what we now know as Turkey.

4. The Country of Italy

Located in modern Italy, it was the country of Paul's imprisonment and death.

5. The City of Jerusalem

Located in modern Jerusalem it is the location of the beginning of the early Christian Church.