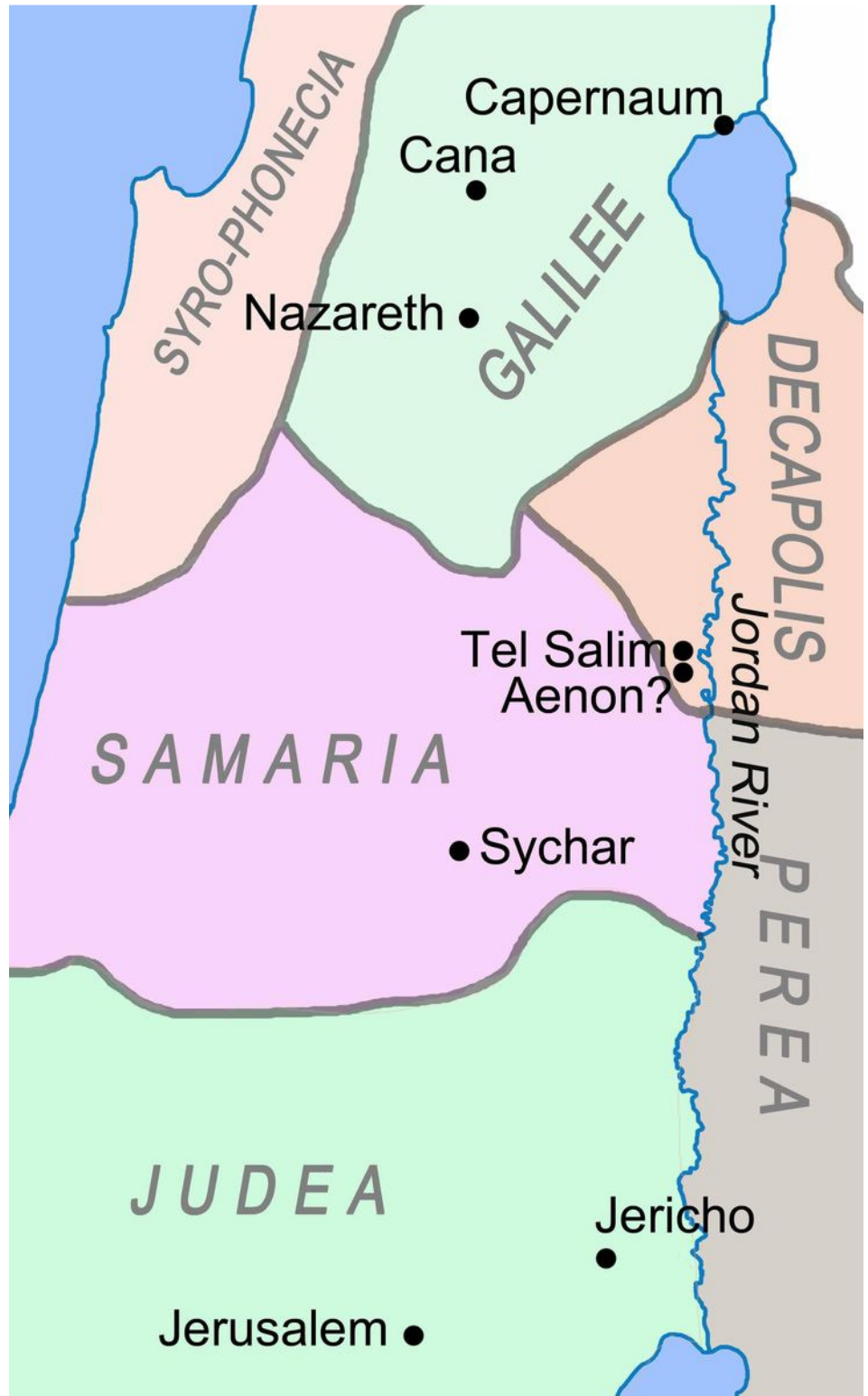


Jesus' Ministry: Geography of the Great Commission
Acts 1:6-8

Geography serves many purposes in God's word. Not only does it locate an event that provides a context to the biblical passage, but, with archaeology, it also serves to validate the historical accuracy of God's word. Often, there may be a significance to the geography especially when several locations are mentioned. Here is such an example.

Just prior to His Ascension to heaven, Jesus tells His disciples where to start their ministry. Observe carefully the locations mentioned by Jesus. Is there a significance to the order and sequence of their mention?

Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in **Jerusalem**, and in all **Judea** and **Samaria**, and **to the end of the earth.**" (Acts 1:6-8, NKJV)

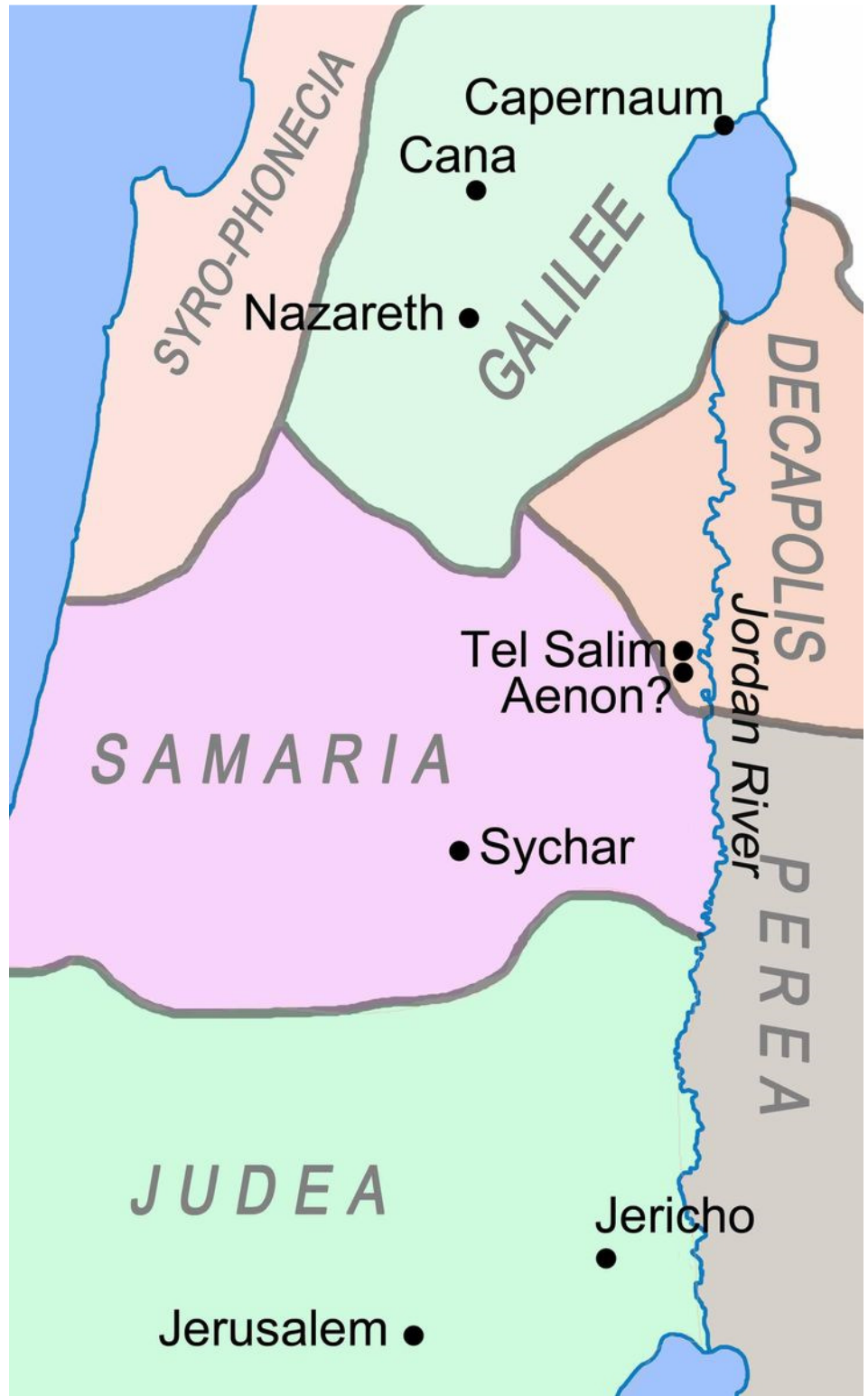


Jesus' Ministry: Geography of the Great Commission (Acts 1:6-8)
Teacher Notes

Geography serves many purposes in God's word. Not only does it locate an event that provides a context to the biblical passage, but, with archaeology, it also serves to validate the historical accuracy of God's word. Often, there may be a significance to the geography especially when several locations are mentioned. Here is such an example.

Just prior to His Ascension to heaven, Jesus tells His disciples where to start their ministry. Observe carefully the locations mentioned by Jesus. Is there a significance to the order and sequence of their mention? Hint: what type of people lived in these areas?

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Remind the student to carefully observe who the audience is and what their perspective may be.

Help the student recognize the historical context of the moment. Where are the disciples and how long ago was the crucifixion? Read the verses before and after Acts 1:6-8.

The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. (Acts 1:1-3, NKJV)

Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven." Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey. (Acts 1:9-12, NKJV)

The disciples are with Jesus 40 days after His crucifixion on Mount Olives in Jerusalem and just before He ascends to heaven (Acts 1:9).

Ask the student: what is the disciples' perspective of Jerusalem? What do you think is the significance of Jesus mentioning Jerusalem first?

Because Jerusalem is the center of Jewish worship and has the greatest density of Jews, it is not a friendly place for the disciples (John 20:19). However, the crucifixion took place publicly in Jerusalem as well as a good portion of the resurrection occurrences.

The priority of Jerusalem appears to indicate that evangelism begins where and when one is empowered with the Holy Spirit. In a sense, evangelism begins "at home" in one's immediate area.

Ask the student: what is the disciples' perspective of Judea? What do you think is the significance of Jesus mentioning Judea second?

Judea is the name of the region that encompasses the area given to the tribe of Judah and includes the cities Jerusalem and Bethlehem.

Jesus' mention of Judea indicates that evangelism from your home to the immediate area.

Ask the student: what is the disciples' perspective of Samaria?

Samaria was the ancient capitol of the Northern Kingdom Israel when the nation was divided. Under king Ahab, influenced by his wife Jezebel, Samaria became a center of idolatrous worship.

In 722 B.C., Assyria conquers the Northern Kingdom Israel and deports many Jews and imports Assyrian nationals to the land. The remaining Jews intermarry with the foreigners, and later, when deported Jews return to Samaria, they too bring their mixed race marriages and continue to intermarry.

In Jesus' day, the Jewish people of Galilee and Judea shunned the Samaritans, viewing them as a mixed race who practiced an impure and half-pagan heretical religion. Jews despised Samaritans and avoided them.

Ask the student: if you lived in the region of Galilee, how would you travel to Jerusalem?

Jews in Galilee would avoid Samaria by crossing the Jordan river and travel south through Decapolis and Perea before crossing the Jordan river again into Judea.

Jesus' mention of Samaria indicates that evangelism includes reaching out to despised areas and people.