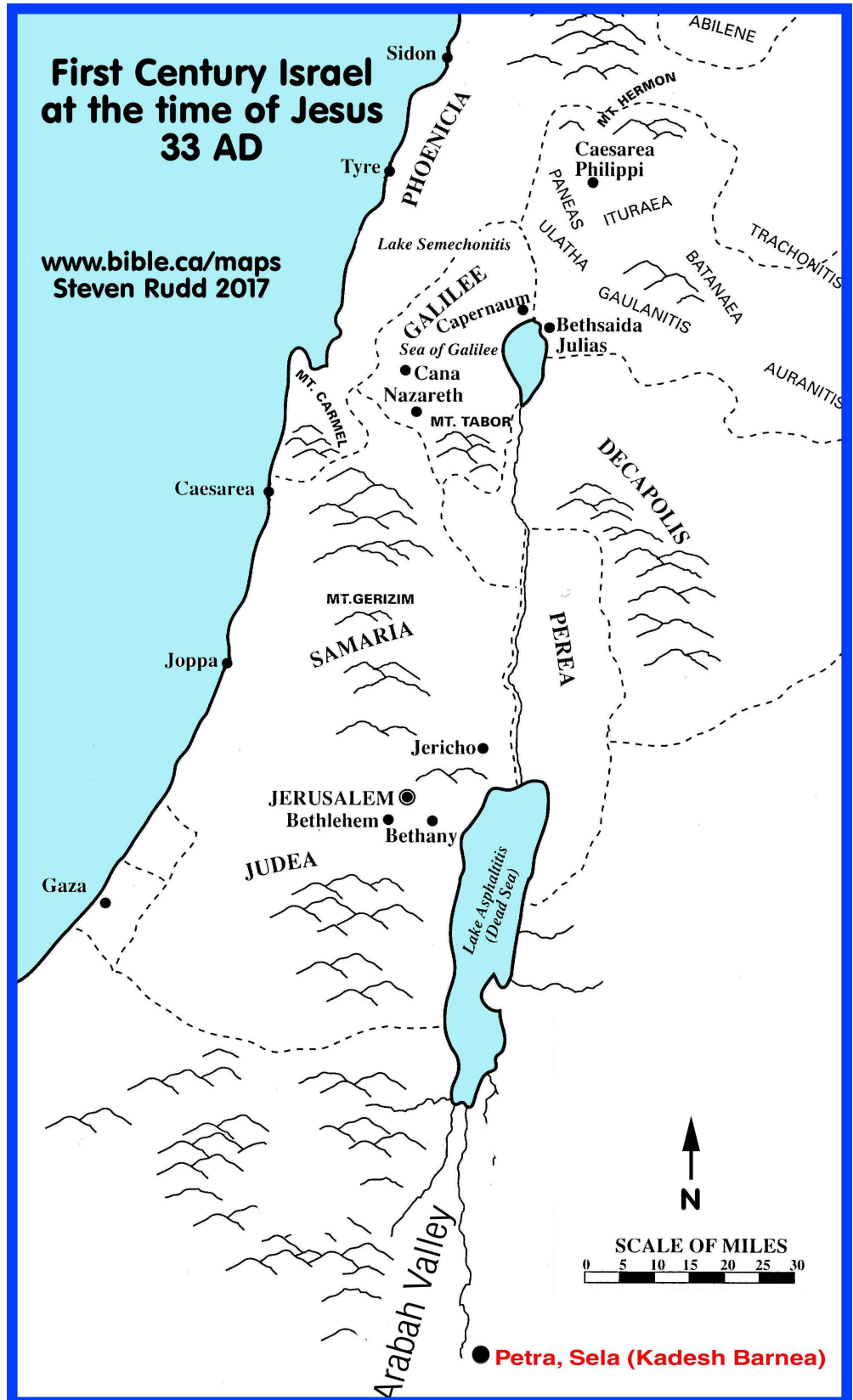


Jesus' Ministry: Geography (Matt 4:23-25)

When you read the Bible, recognizing the geography will help you understand the context of what you are reading. Carefully observe the passage, locate the cities / area on the map, and use a Bible dictionary / atlas to learn about them.

And he went throughout all **Galilee**, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people. So his fame spread throughout all **Syria**, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, those having seizures, and paralytics, and he healed them. And great crowds followed him from Galilee and the **Decapolis**, and from **Jerusalem** and **Judea**, and from beyond the **Jordan**. (Matt 4:23-25, ESV)

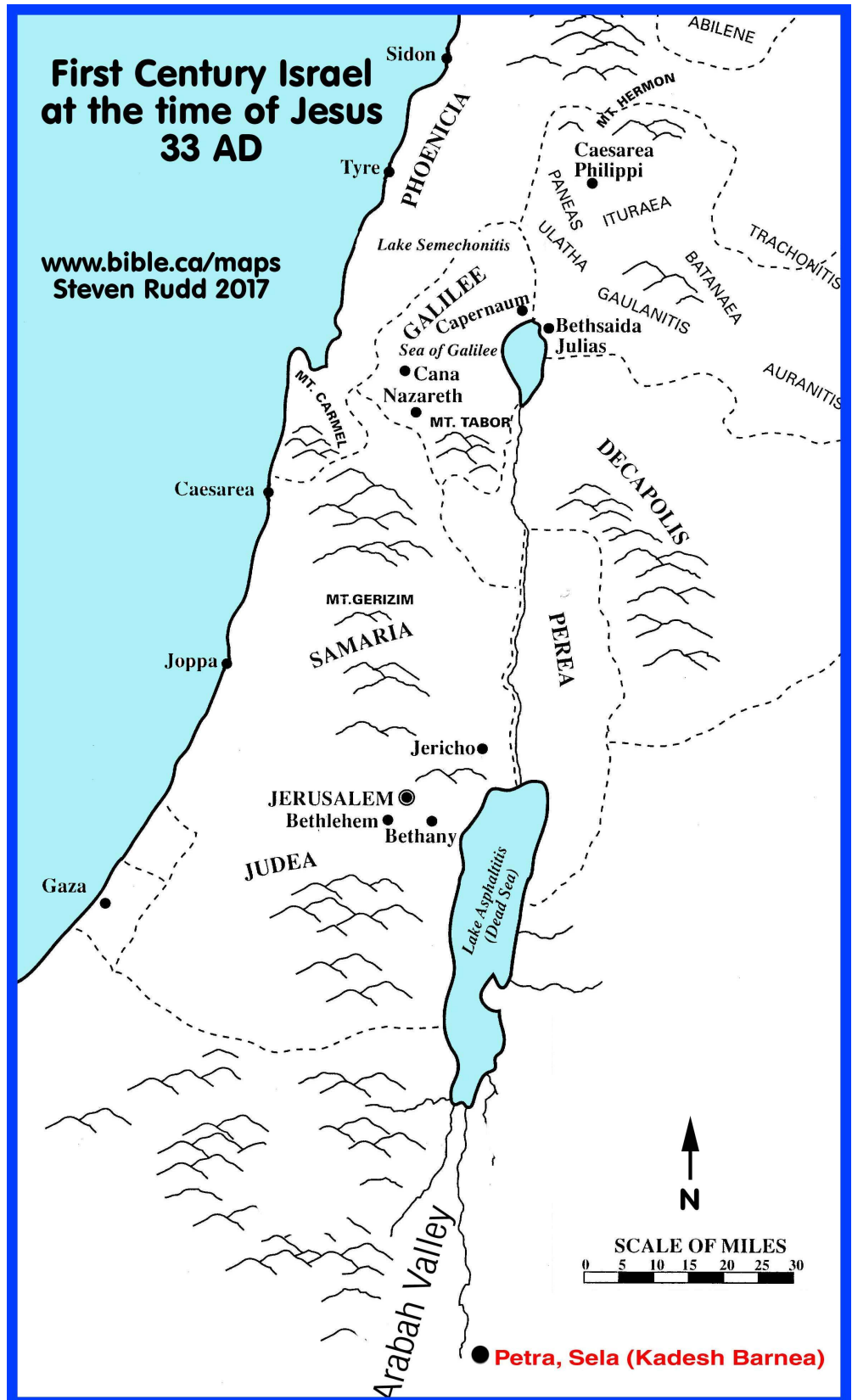
Observations:



Jesus' Ministry: Geography (Matt 4:23-25)
Teacher Notes

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This lesson encourages the student to use a Bible dictionary or a Bible atlas. Encourage the student to circle or color the cities or areas on the map provided. Learning is best when the student can actively engage with the text – mark it up!

Here is an example of an online Bible dictionary that the student can be introduced to. The work can be divided up to make this task easier for this grade:

1. Search “study light Smith Bible dictionary” and select “StudyLight.org – Smith’s Bible Dictionary.”
2. Choose the letter of the word you desire and locate the word of interest. Note: you might need to click through some pages if there are a lot of words sharing the same letter.
3. Often using several dictionaries are necessary to understand a word.

Galilee is the name applied to the northern district of Israel that was surrounded on three sides by foreign nations. The term literally means “circle” or “district,” the fuller expression of which is “district of the Gentiles (Isa. 9:1). According to the Jewish historian Josephus’ description of Galilee, the territory was divided into upper and lower regions. Upper Galilee, being mountainous and isolated, does not enter much into biblical history. Lower Galilee served as the location for most of Christ’s ministry as recorded in the synoptic gospels. The region is divided into a series of east-west valleys and basins.

Syria borders Israel in the north. The general character of the land is mountainous, and its Hebrew name “Aram” is based on a root word signifying “height.” Of the various mountain ranges of Syria, Lebanon possesses the greatest interest. Early in the Christian era this region became Christian, and in that Aramaic dialect called Syriac a large Christian literature exists.

Decapolis is a Greek name that means “ten city” and refers to the region in southern Syria and northeastern Palestine composed of territories of certain Hellenistic cities. There is no evidence of any political, military, or commercial arrangements among the members. As indicated by the name, the number of cities was originally ten, but the number and members varied from time to time. These cities were all Greco-Roman and shared a common Gentile religious and cultural identity. Jesus attracted followers from Decapolis and ministered in this region (Matt. 4:25; Mark 5:1-20; 7:31).

Jerusalem is the chief city of the Holy Land, and lies about 2400 feet above the Mediterranean Sea. Known as the City of David, Herod rebuilt Solomon’s Temple, which became known as the Second Temple. Jerusalem was the city where many of Jesus’ confrontations with Jewish religious authorities took place as well as His death and crucifixion.

Judea is the name used to refer to the southern region of Palestine. Since most of the exiles returning from the Babylonian captivity were of the tribe of Judah, they came to be called Jews and their land, Yehud. The name “Judea” (the Graeco-Latin form of Judah) was used in the Hellenistic period to describe the area where the Jews of the land of Israel lived. Judea provides the geographical background for the greater part of John’s gospel.

Jordan here is in reference to the river Jordan. The Jordan River connects the Sea of Galilee with the Dead Sea. When Mark writes “beyond the Jordan,” he is referring to the areas east of the Jordan River.

Key points:

1. The major portion of Jesus’ ministry was in Galilee, and the center of His Galilean ministry was at Capernaum.
2. Jesus’ ministry was primarily to the Jews and confined almost entirely to Jewish centers free from Gentile influence.