



# 7 STEPS TO BIBLE SKILLS

Step 6: Bible Lands





## STEP 6: BIBLE LANDS

# Why Study Biblical Geography?

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- The Bible is God's story that unfolded in real time to real people in real places.
- Understanding where certain events took place or where certain people lived can help provide context as you read the Bible.

# The Old Testament World

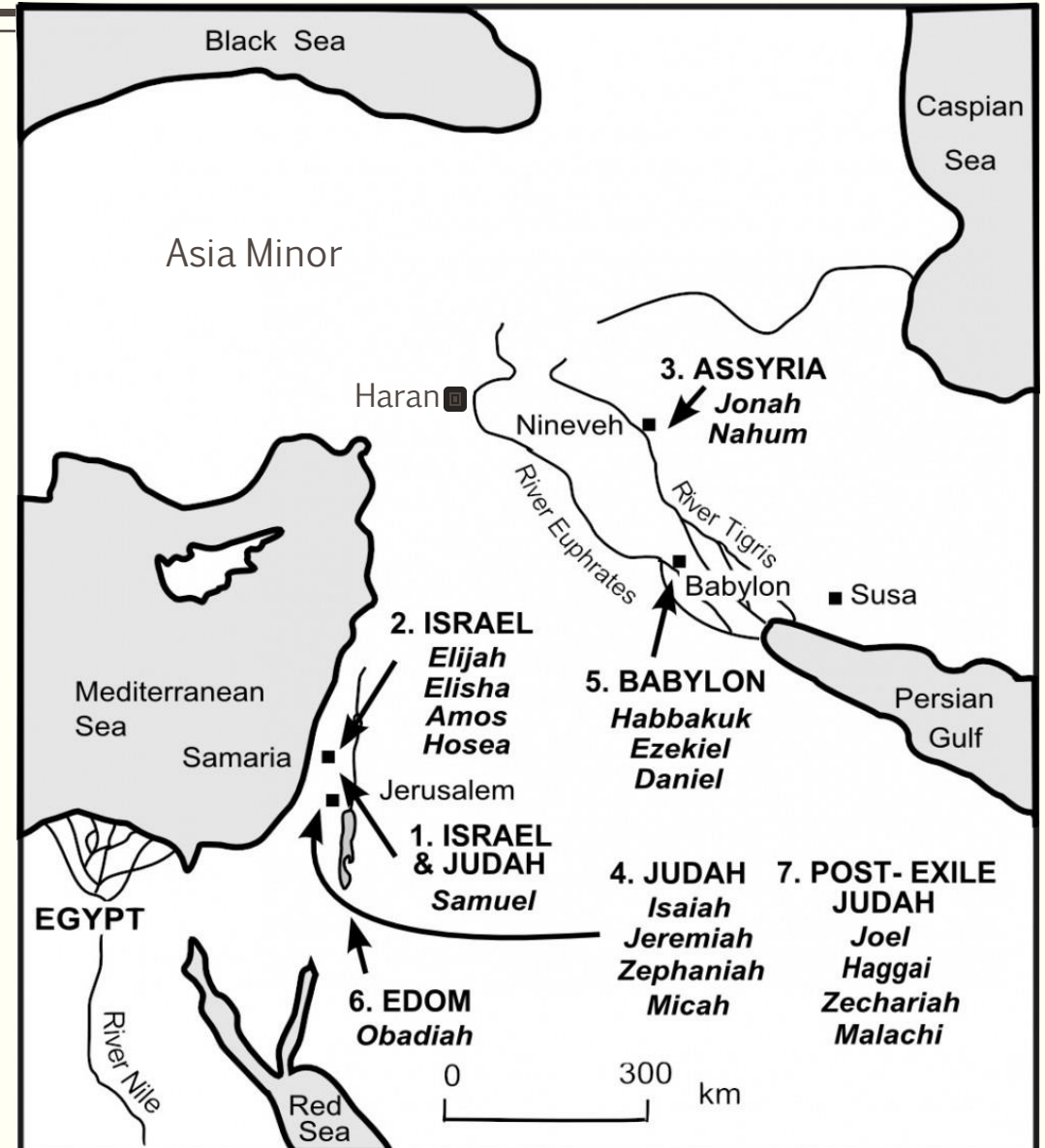
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- The entirety of events that took place in the Old Testament happened in an area of the world that is less than half the size of the continental United States. Of that area, about one third of it is desert.
- The majority of events that took place in the Old Testament were in Israel, which spanned 320 km from north to south, roughly the size of the state of New Jersey.
- Nearly all of the recorded events of Jesus' life took place within 65 miles of His hometown of Nazareth



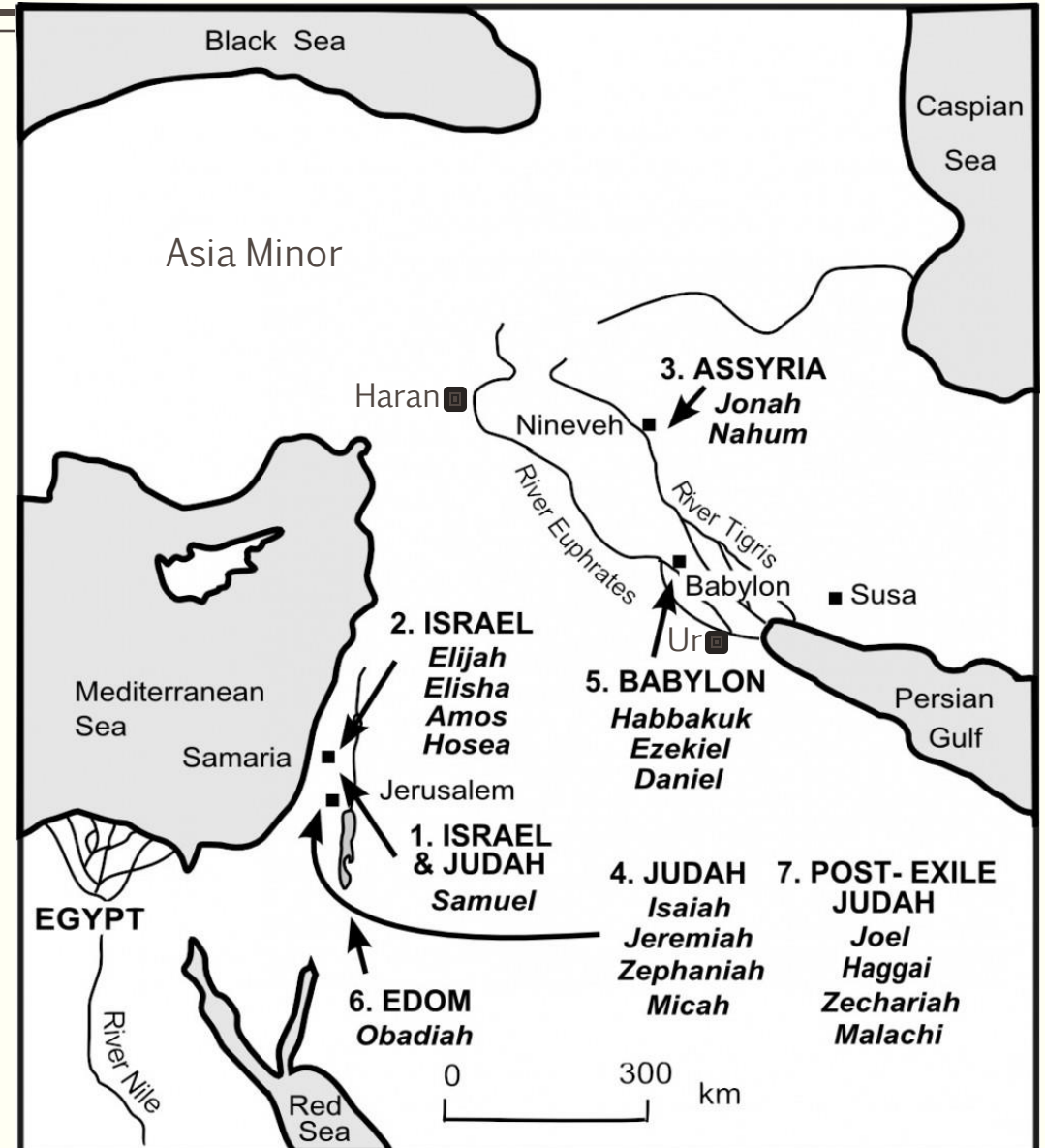
# Important Places/ Features

- **Mesopotamia:** The region to the north of the Persian Gulf. It means "land between two rivers." It is part of the *fertile crescent*, where good soil and adequate rain allow for sustainable farming and life.
- **Tigris & Euphrates Rivers:** The two rivers that border Mesopotamia. They are among the four rivers flowing out of the garden of Eden in Genesis 2:10-14



# Mesopotamia

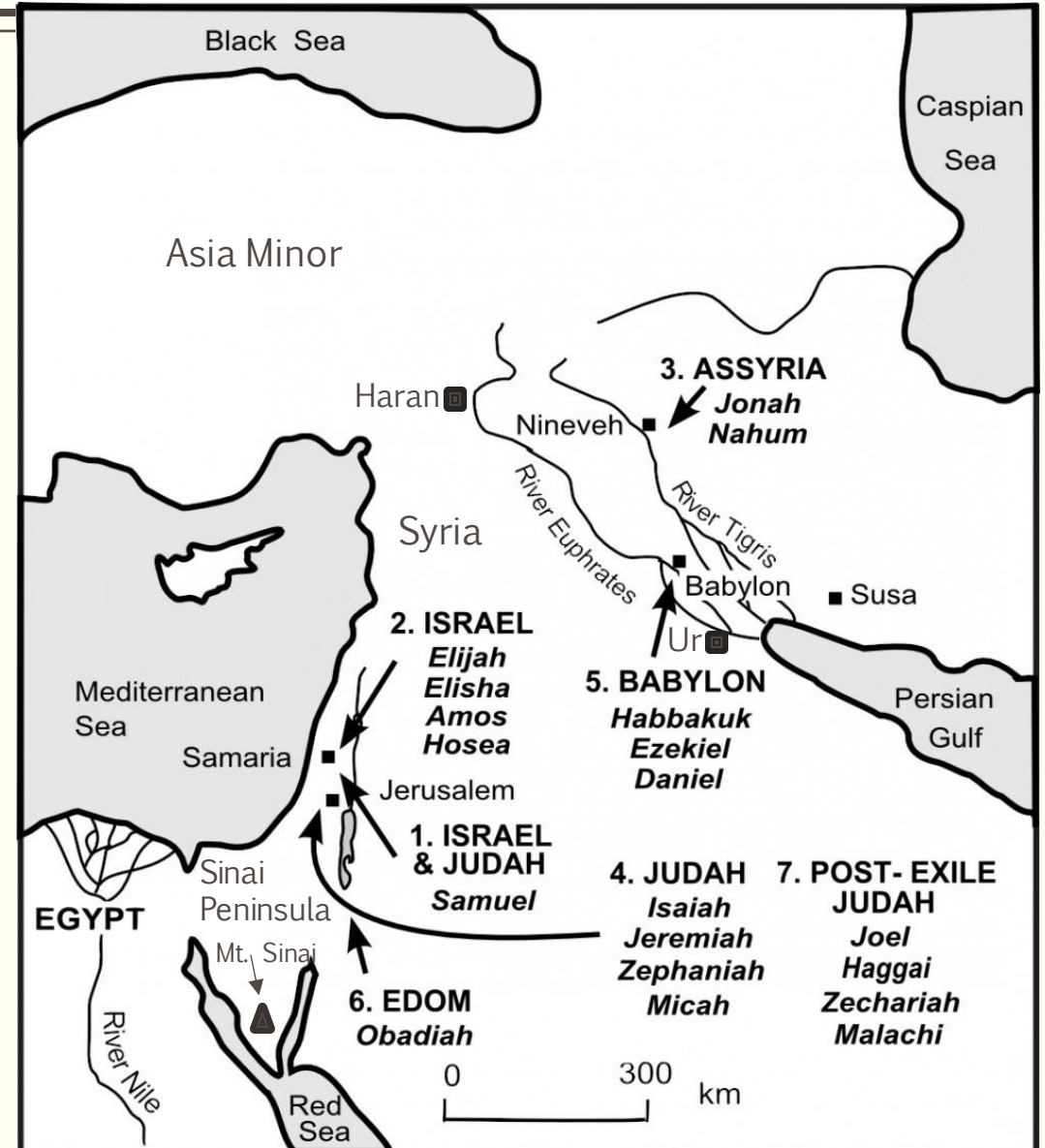
- **Babylonia:** A great nation located in Mesopotamia. It came to power during the latter part of the history of the southern kingdom, Judah. An older name for the Babylonians is the Chaldeans. The Babylonians/Chaldeans besieged Jerusalem and took many Judeans captive.
- **Nineveh:** A large city and capitol of the Assyrian Empire. Jonah was sent by God to prophesy to the Ninevites.
- **Haran:** Abraham lived in Haran after leaving his birthplace of Ur. Isaac's wife was from Haran and Jacob later lived in Haran.





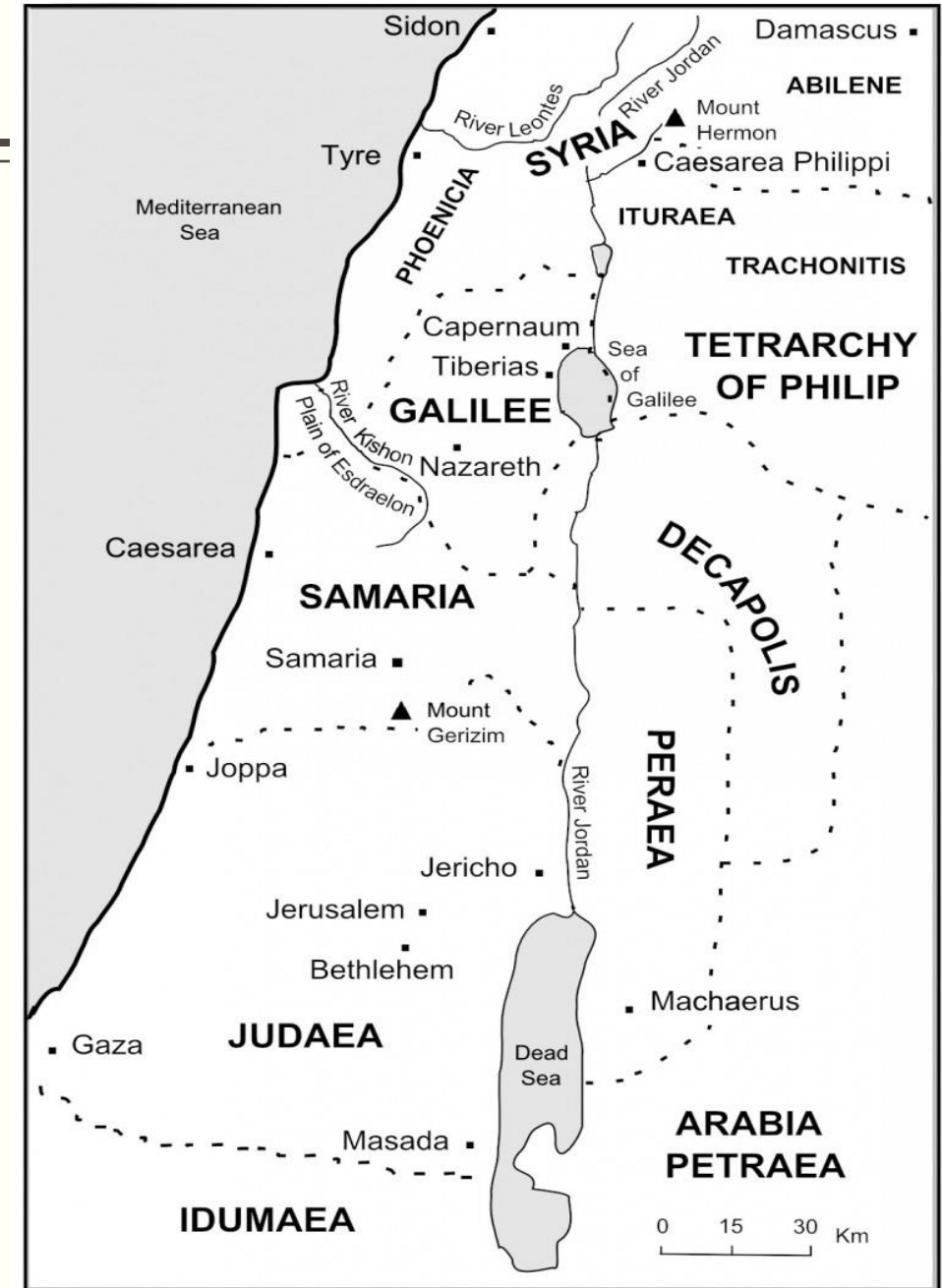
# Other Regions

- **Asia Minor:** Asia Minor was the land of the Hittites; now it is modern day Turkey.
- **Syria:** Syria was the name of the region to the east of the Mediterranean Sea. Damascus is still the capital of Syria today.
- **Palestine:** The region to the south of Syria, where most of the Bible events took place
- **Egypt:** The region to the west of the Red Sea, settled along the Nile River. The Hebrews lived as slaves in Egypt for a long time before the Exodus.
- **Sinai Peninsula:** A mostly desert region where the Israelites wandered for 40 years. God gave Moses the 10 Commandments on top of Mt. Sinai.



# Palestine

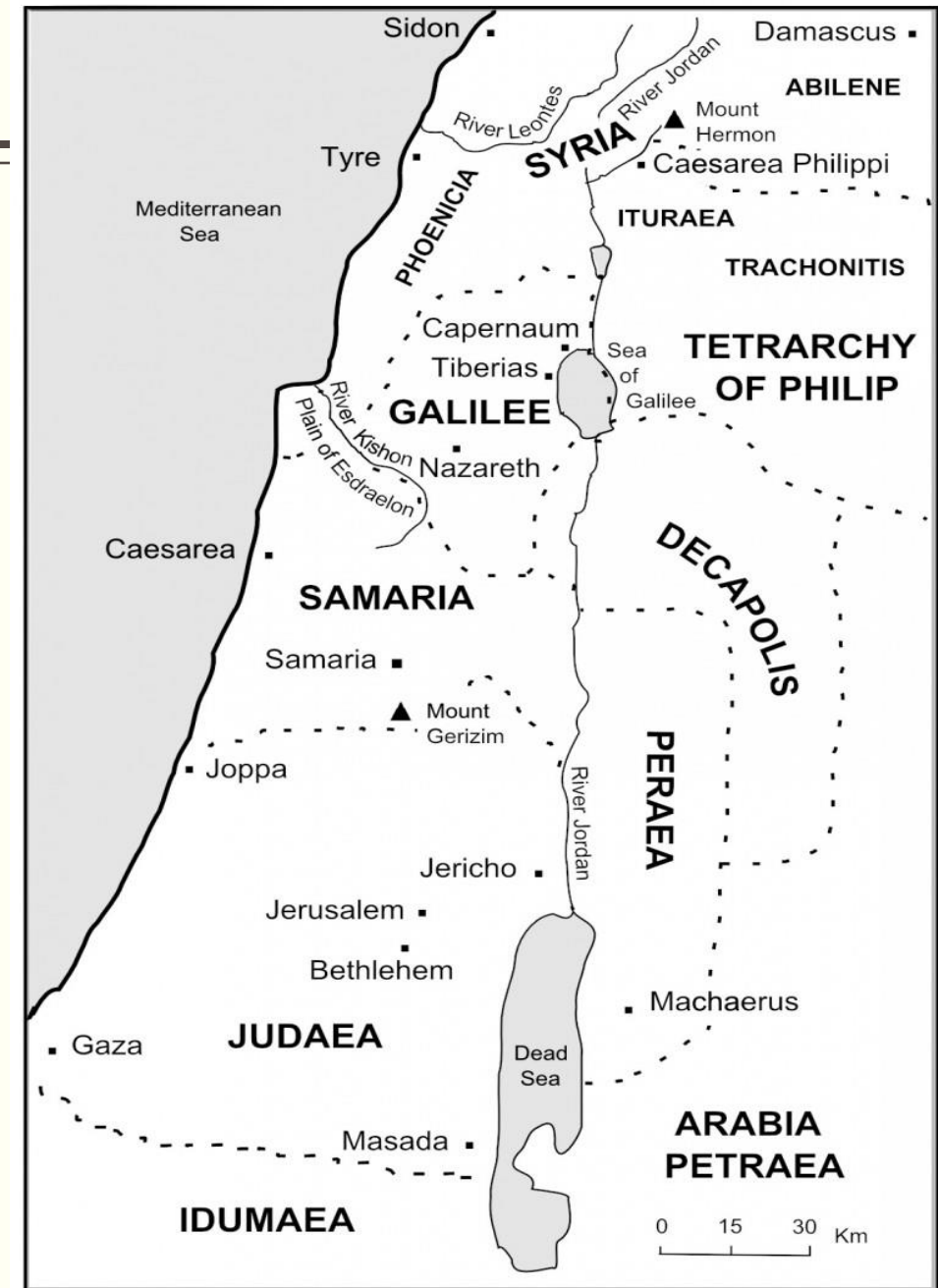
- Palestine is the area located to the east of the Mediterranean Sea, south of Syria and north of the Sinai Peninsula.
- The earliest name for this land was Canaan.
- The name "Palestine" means "land of the Philistines."
- Hebrews called this land the "promised land" because God had promised it to Abraham and his family.
- Today it is called Israel, home of the Israelis.





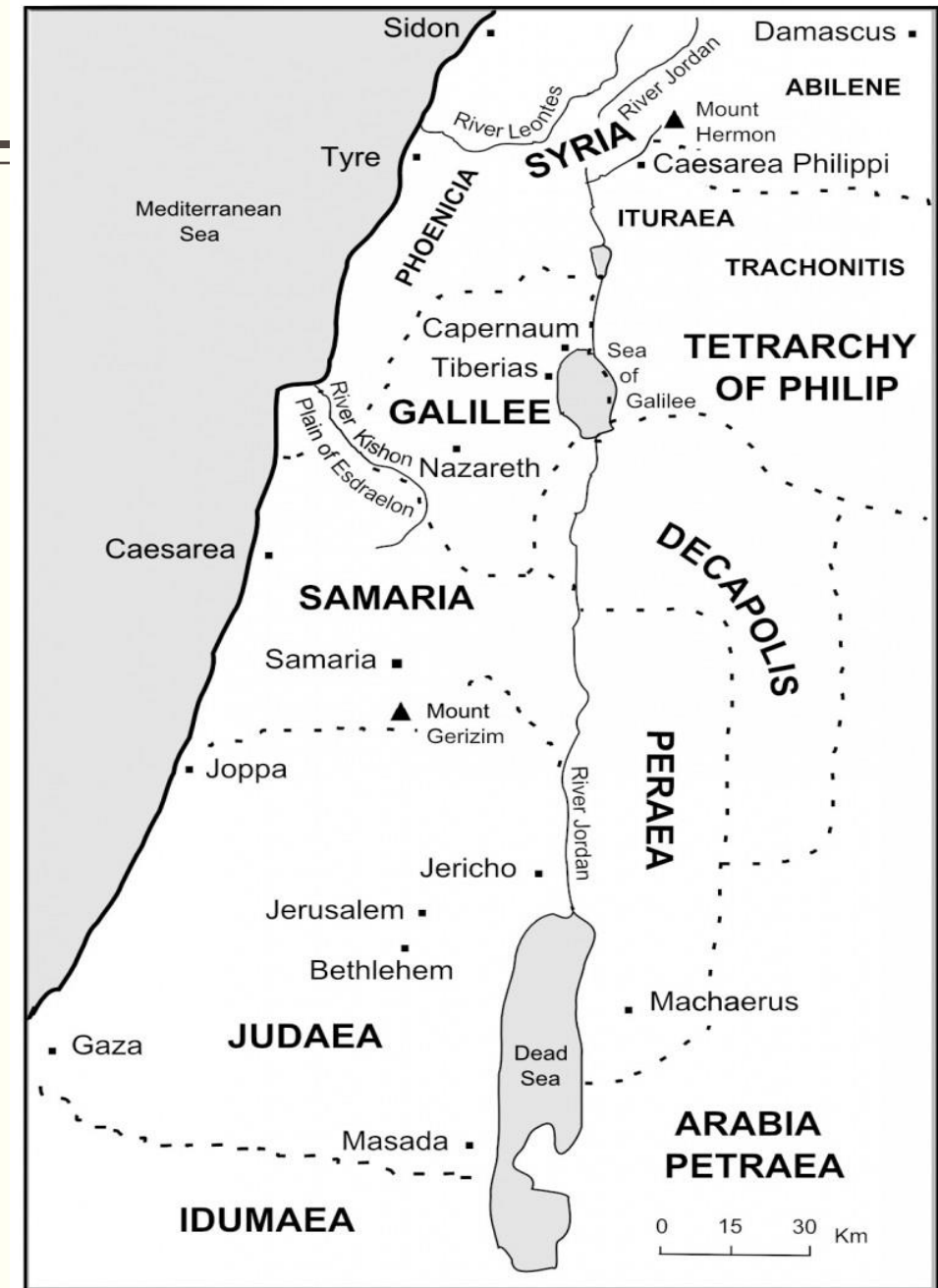
# Palestine's Holy Significance

- By no surprise, this land is highly disputed by several groups because of its historical significance.
- Christians consider this land holy because it is where Jesus was born, lived, ministered, died, and was resurrected. It is the birthplace of the Christian faith and the Church.
- Jews consider this land holy because it is the land promised to them by God.
- Muslims consider this land holy because it is where Mohammed taught and wrote the Quran.



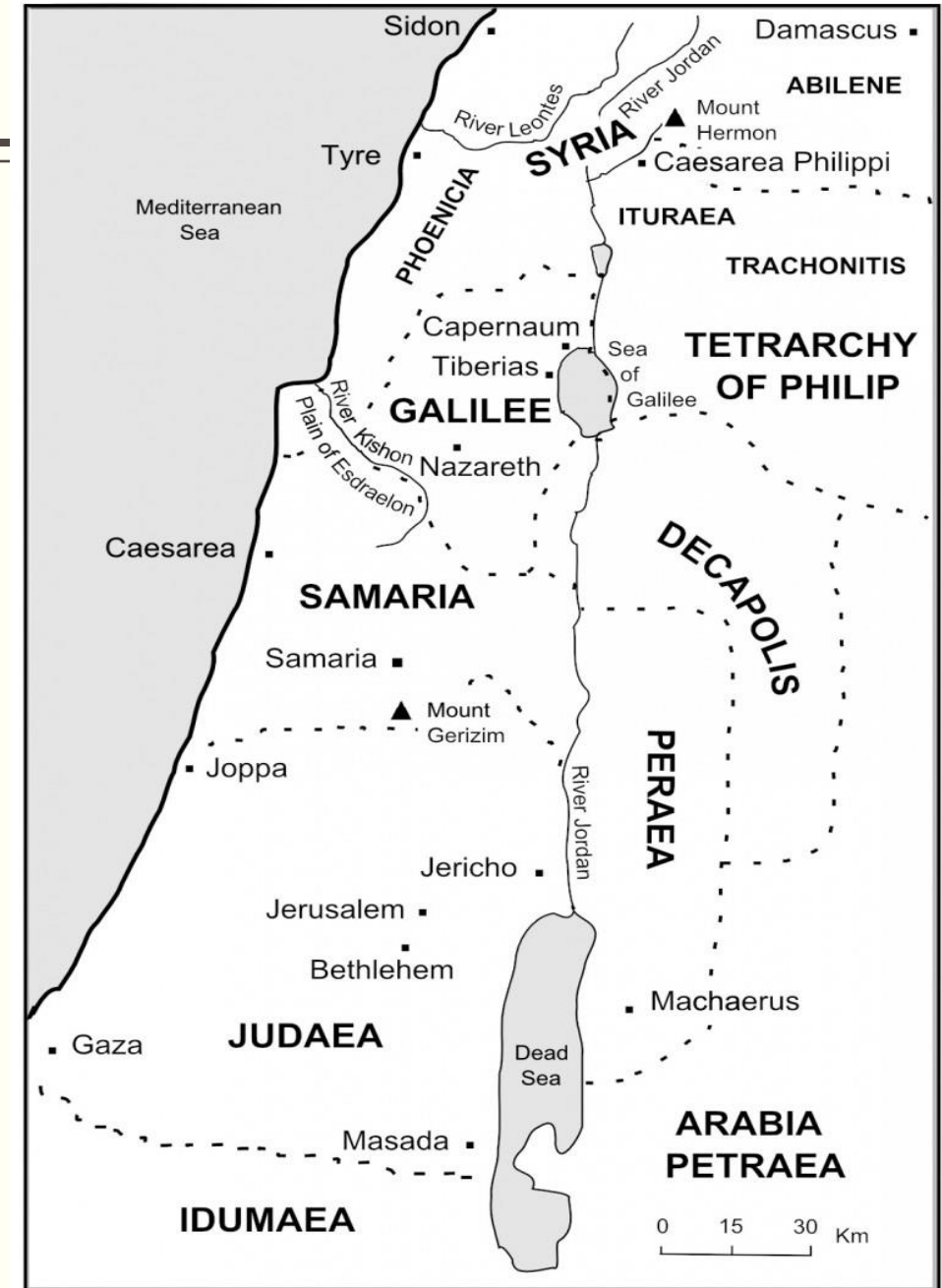
# Geographical Features of Palestine

- **Jordan River Valley:** A deep valley that runs from north to south through Palestine, through which the Jordan River flows and empties into the Dead Sea.
- **Mount Hermon:** A high mountain located in Syria, at the northmost end of the Jordan River Valley
- **Sea of Galilee:** A lake located in northern Israel where many events in Jesus' ministry took place. Most notably, this is where Jesus walked on water. Also known as the Lake of Gennesaret, the Lake of Chinnereth, or the Sea of Tiberias.
- **Dead Sea:** A large sea located at the southmost end of the Jordan River Valley, where the Jordan empties into. It is the lowest place on earth – 1,286 feet below sea level. Due to its high salt content, nothing lives in or near the Dead Sea.
- **Negev:** The desert region west of the Dead Sea.



# West Palestine

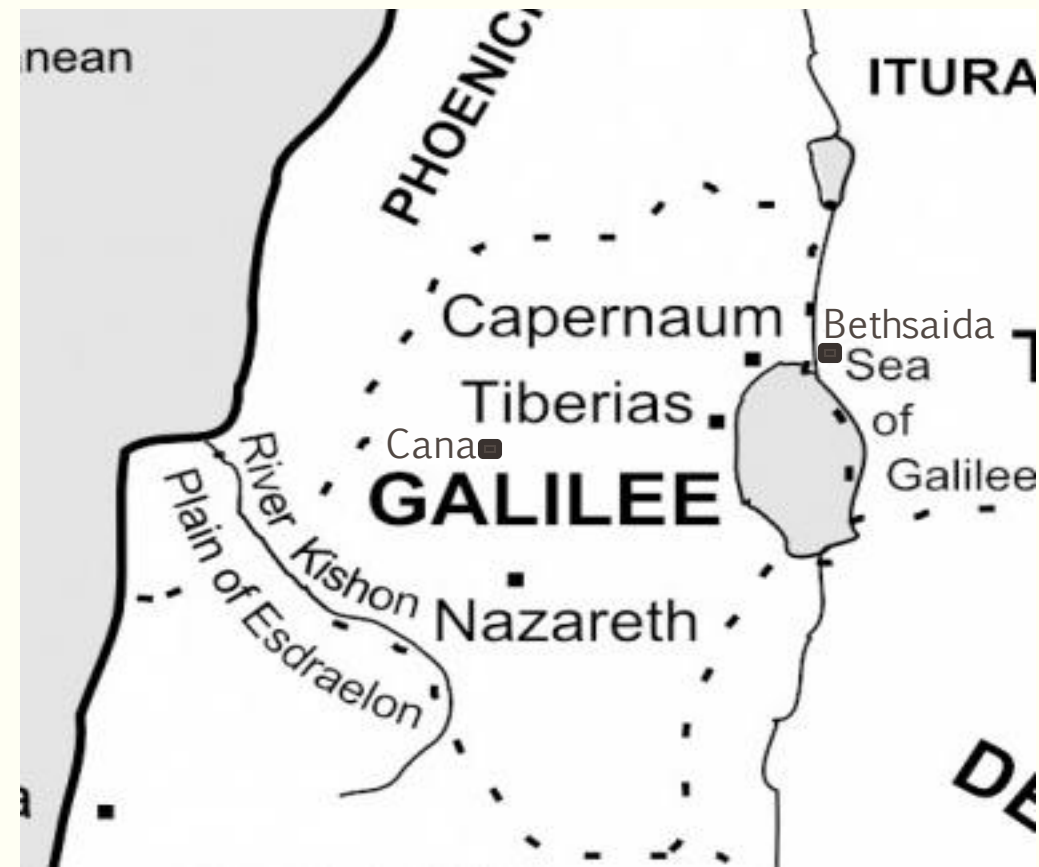
- Since the Jordan River Valley splits Palestine down the middle, it can be separated into East and West
- West Palestine has three main regions, each with a unique topography: plateau in the north, highland in the middle and coastal plain in the south.
- West Palestine is divided into three regions, which you could think of as "states": Galilee, Samaria and Judea.



# Galilee

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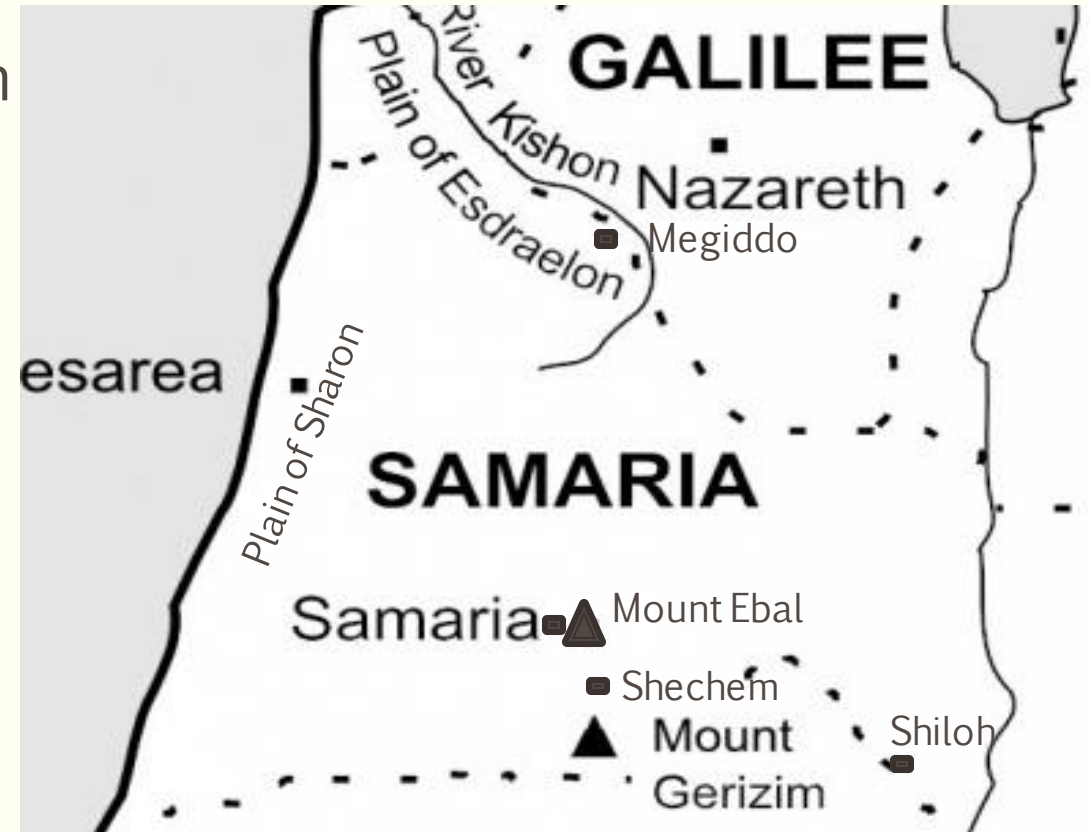
- Located in northern Israel to the west of the Sea of Galilee.
- Separated from Samaria on the south by the Plain of Esdraelon.
- Jesus grew up in Galilee, in His hometown of Nazareth.
- Other biblical cities in Galilee include Cana, Capernaum and Bethsaida.



# Samaria

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- Samaria is the middle section of West Palestine, located to the west of the Jordan River and to the east of the Plain of Sharon.
- Samaria was the homeland of Abraham and his sons, as well as some of the tribes of Israel.
- The main city in Samaria is also called Samaria.
- Other biblical locations in Samaria include Shechem, Shiloh, Mount Ebal, Mount Gerizim and Megiddo.

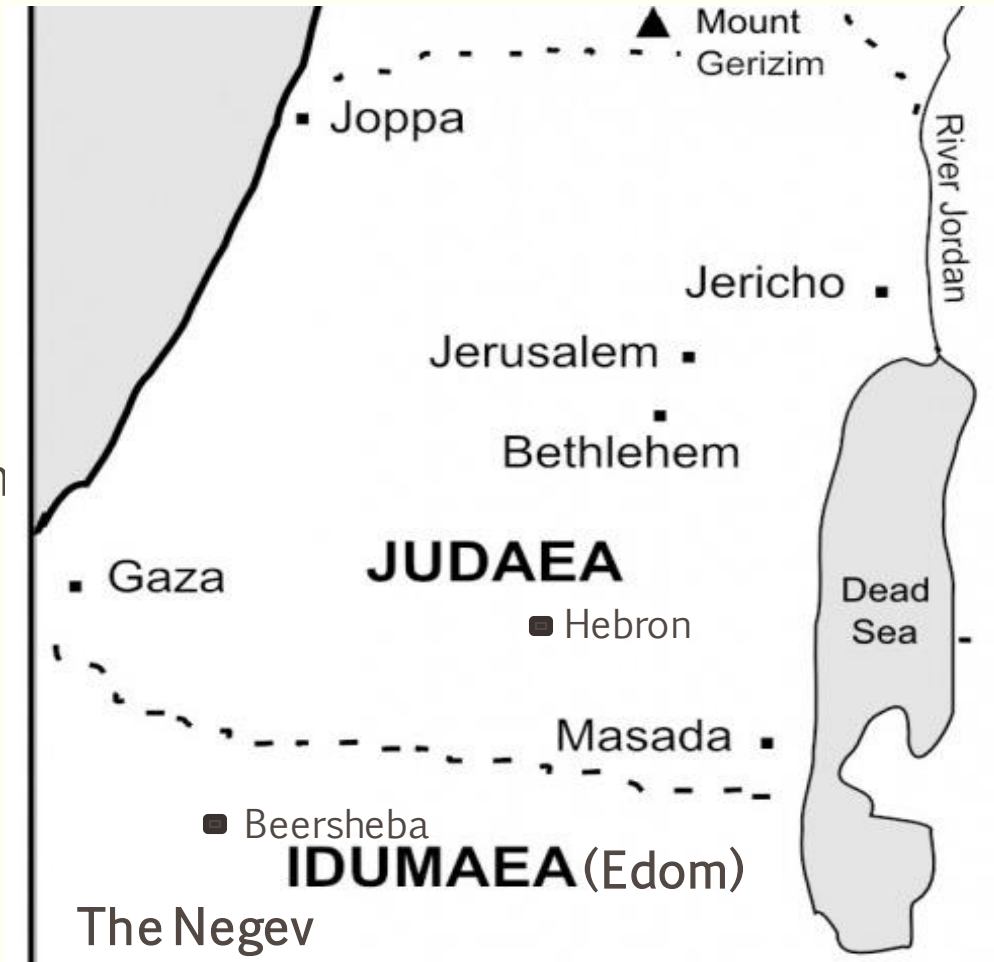




# Judea

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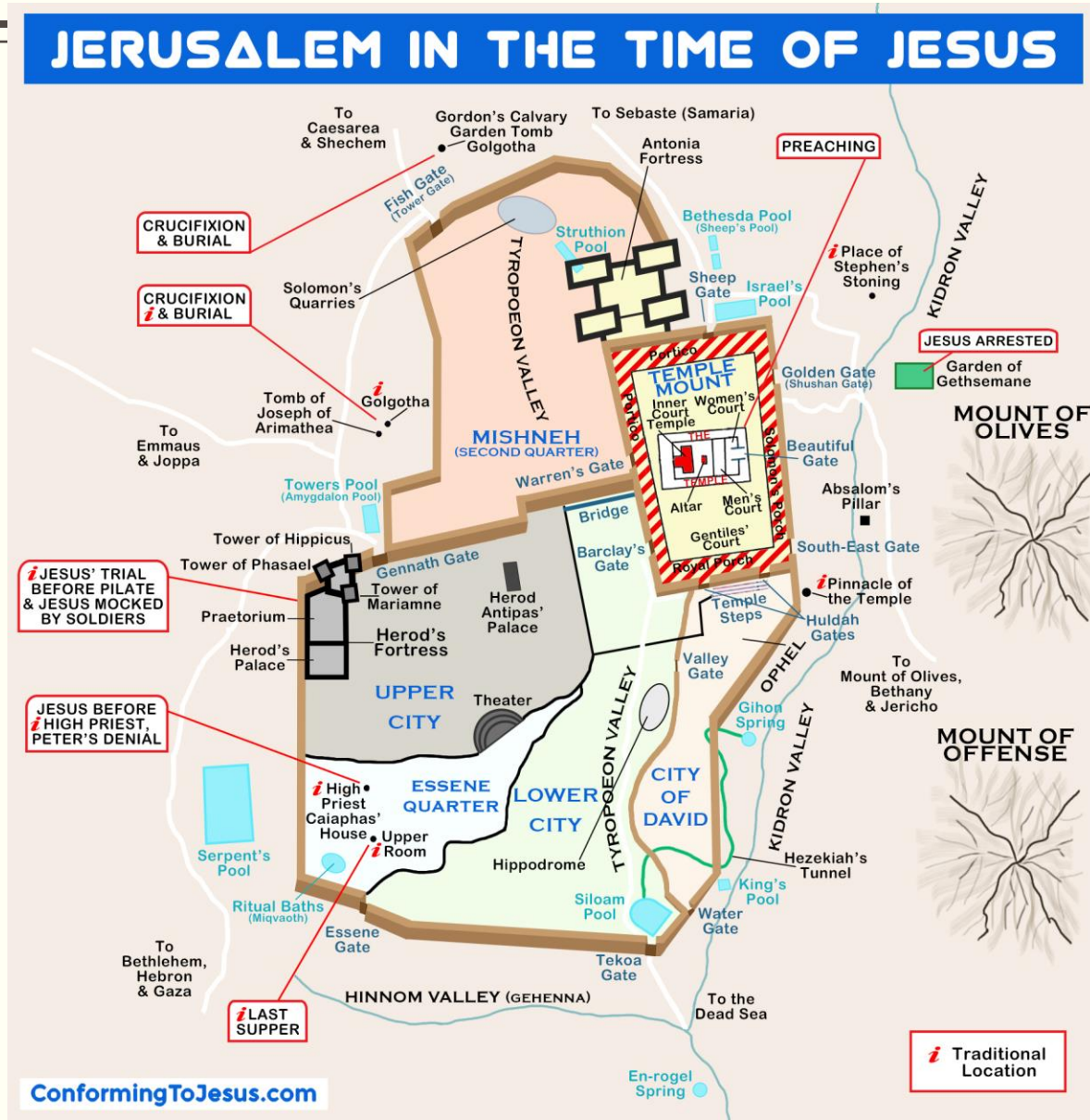
- Judea, or Judah, is the southernmost section of West Palestine.
- Many biblical events happened in Judea.
- Some important locations include:
- **Bethlehem:** The birthplace of Jesus. Today, the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem stands in the place many believe to be the place Mary gave birth to Jesus.
- **Jericho:** The city Joshua and the Israelites walked around and the walls came down.
- **Hebron:** The place Abraham lived when he went to Canaan. Sarah and Abraham are buried here.
- **Beersheba:** Abraham lived here also; the wells he dug were contested frequently.





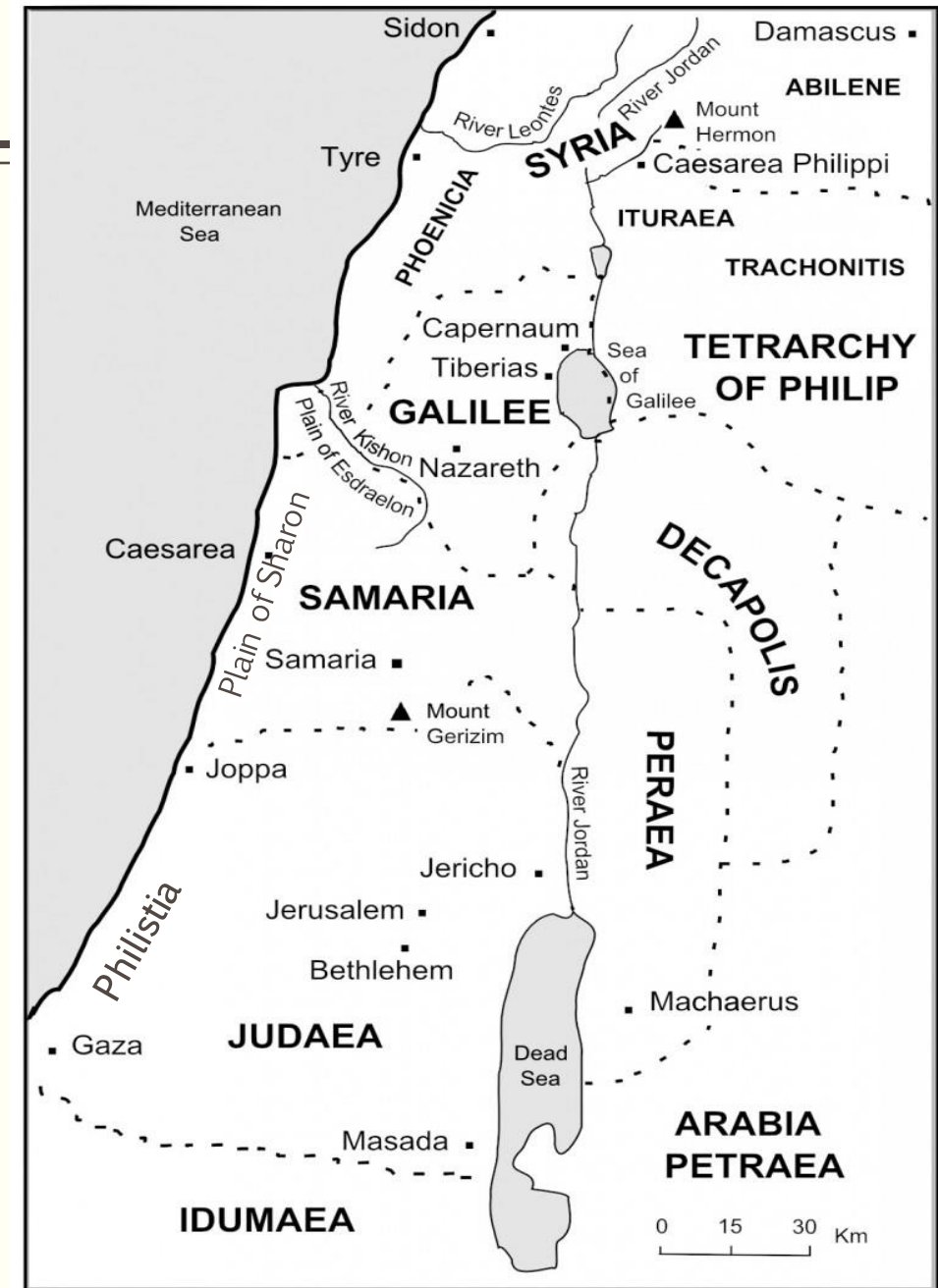
# Jerusalem

- The capitol of Israel, located in Judaea
- Today the city is almost like two separate cities – the old Jerusalem and modern Jerusalem.
- People of many different faith backgrounds live here – Jews, Muslims, Armenians and Christians. The city is divided into four quarters, and each quarter is inhabited predominantly by one of those four groups.
- The temple mount is the site of three temples, built on almost the same spot: the 1st temple, built by King Solomon and rebuilt during Ezra and Nehemiah's time after the return from Babylonian captivity, the 2nd temple, built by Herod the Great, and a future 3rd temple spoken of in Revelation, which will be built during the end times.
- Jesus worshipped and taught in the 2nd temple



# Phoenicia and Philistia

- To the northwest of Galilee is the region of Phoenicia, and to the southwest of Judaea is the region of Philistia.
- The Phoenicians were ship builders and sailors. Famous Phoenician cities mentioned in the Bible are Tyre and Sidon.
- Philistia was the home of the Philistines, who were frequent enemies of the Israelites. Famous Philistine cities mentioned in the Bible are Gaza, Ashkelon and Joppa.



# East Palestine

- Because control of land east of the Jordan has changed hands many times over the years, the regions shown depend largely on the time period being reflected.
- **Bashan:** The region between Mount Hermon and the Yarmuk River.
- **Perea/ Gilead:** The region between the Yarmuk River and the Jabbok River.
- **Ammon:** The region south of the Jabbok River and East of Perea.
- **Moab:** The region south of Perea and East of the Dead Sea.
- **Edom:** The region south of the Dead Sea.

