

# THE JEWISH FOUNDATIONS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT



Class I – Introduction / The Land & the Bible

January 14, 2017



# An Introductory Reading

- Part of the famous Dead Sea Scrolls
- Discovered by a Palestinian shepherd boy in 1948 in caves near the Dead Sea
- Hidden by the Essene community when the Romans invaded in 70 CE
- Copies of the OT (except for Esther) plus their own additional writings
- Confirmed the faithfulness of the contemporary Masoretic OT Hebrew text
- Gave us a view of one of the major 1<sup>st</sup> century Jewish groups



# Introduction

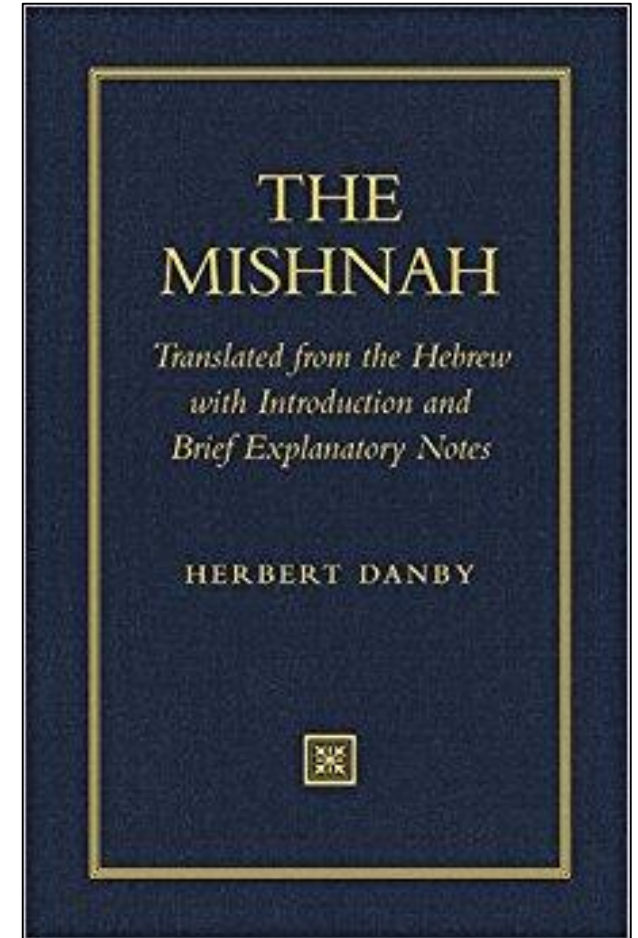
- Why do we care about the background of the Bible?
  - Context – biblical interpretation is grounded in the original audience
  - Submission to the Word – danger of reading our own anachronisms into Scripture
  - Worship of God - called to worship with our whole being, including the mind
- What are we trying to accomplish in this study?
  - *NOT* – an entirely complete view of every possible idea on these subjects
  - *NOT* – be experts reading Greek, or be experts in some obtuse academic subject
  - A framework for understanding Scripture that takes into account the historical/cultural background and assumptions of the original audience
  - Develop a hunger to ask more questions and do further study on your own
  - *Grow a deeper relationship with God through encountering the Bible on a deeper level*

# Introduction

Simeon ben Gamaliel said:

“All my days have I grown up among the Sages and I have found nothing better for a man than silence; and not expounding [of the Law] is the chief thing but the doing [of it]; and he that multiplies words occasions sin.”

- Aboth 1.17



# Where are We Going (Tentative)?

- Class I: Introduction & the Land of the Bible
- Class II-III: What Happens After the Old Testament Ends?
  - If worshiping YHWH means sacrificing at the Temple, what do you do when it no longer exists or you can't get to it?
  - When an independent Jewish kingdom is established, how do you rule?
- Class IV-VI: Judaism in the First Century
  - What is Hellenistic Judaism?
  - How has the church misrepresented Judaism?
  - What were the priorities of Hellenistic Judaism and what did they believe?
  - How does that affect how we interpret Jesus' mission and message?

# Where are We Going (Tentative)?

- Class VII-VIII: What is the New Testament?
  - What is the NT?
  - How did we get the NT?
  - How come we have so many translations?
  - What are all of these other books (OT/NT Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha) and how do they relate to the New Testament?
  - How do faithfully interpret and apply Scripture to our lives?

# The Land and the Bible

Today, we are going to build a map!

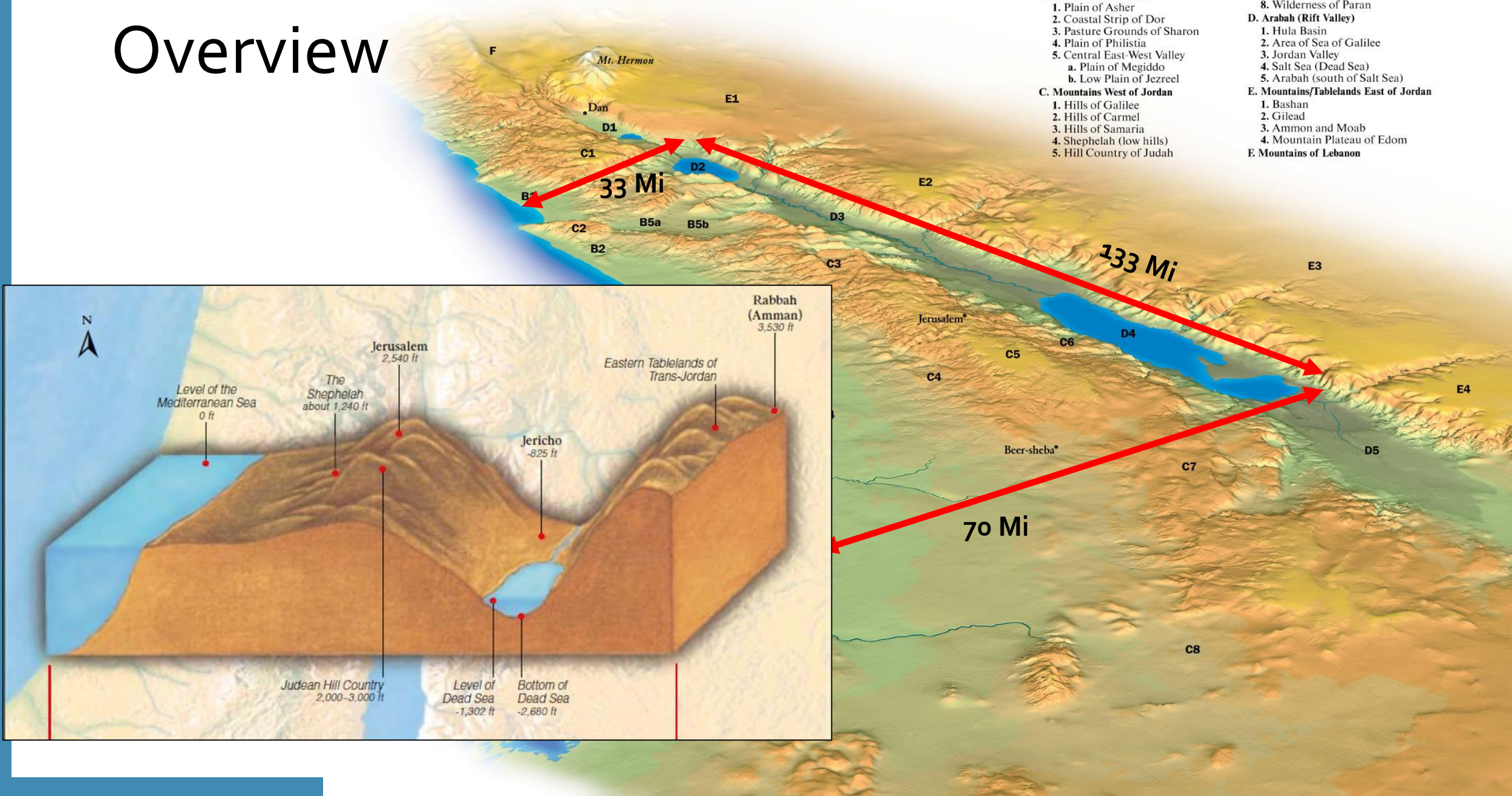
- Why are we doing elementary school work?
  - We want a resource to keep with us
  - Active learning > passive learning
  - Visual learning > auditory learning
- 3 ways the land affects how we understand the Bible:
  - Ethnic /political boundaries
  - Cultural themes
  - Keeps us honest on interpretation



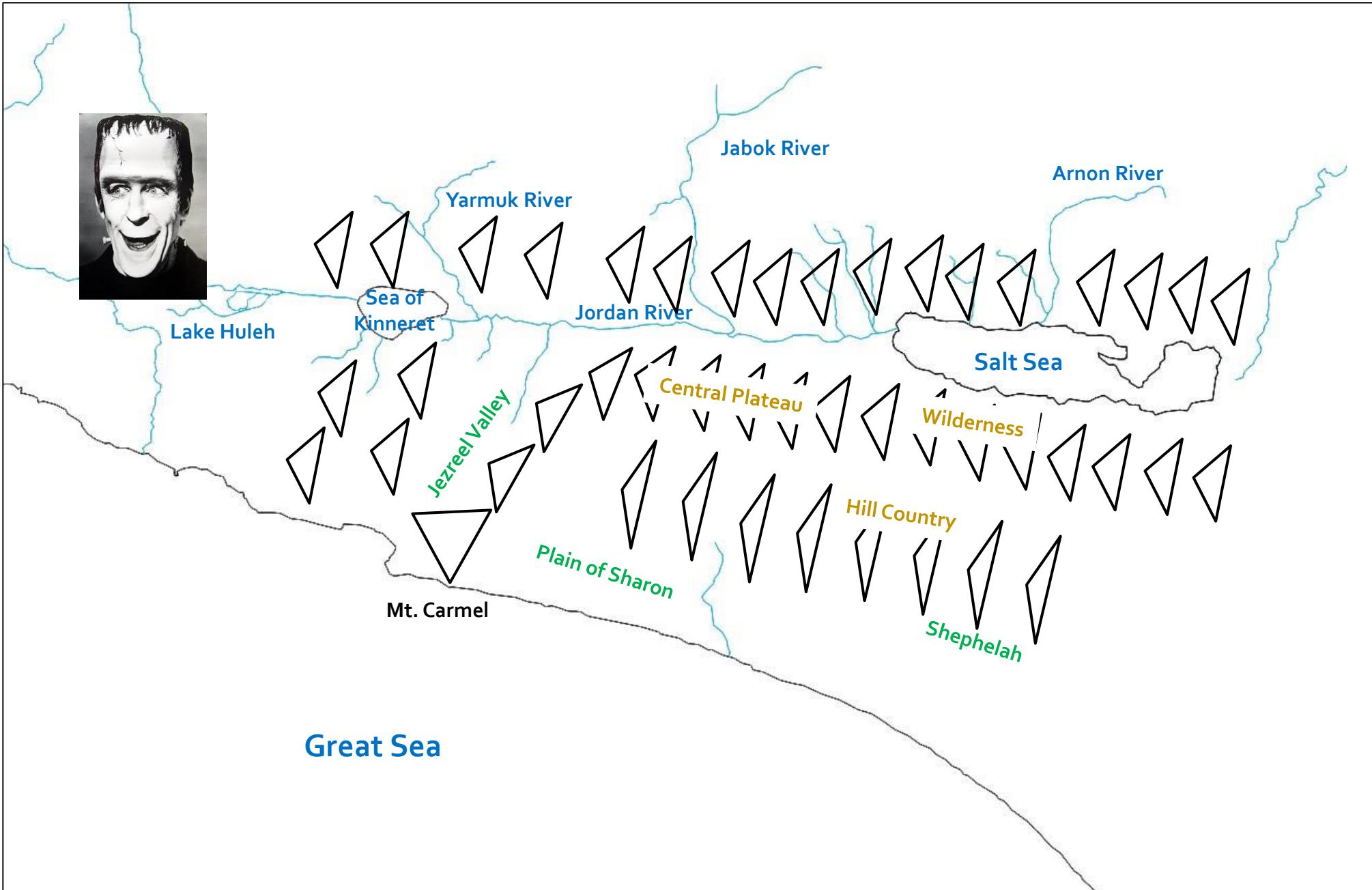
# Overview

## CHART OF NATURAL REGIONS

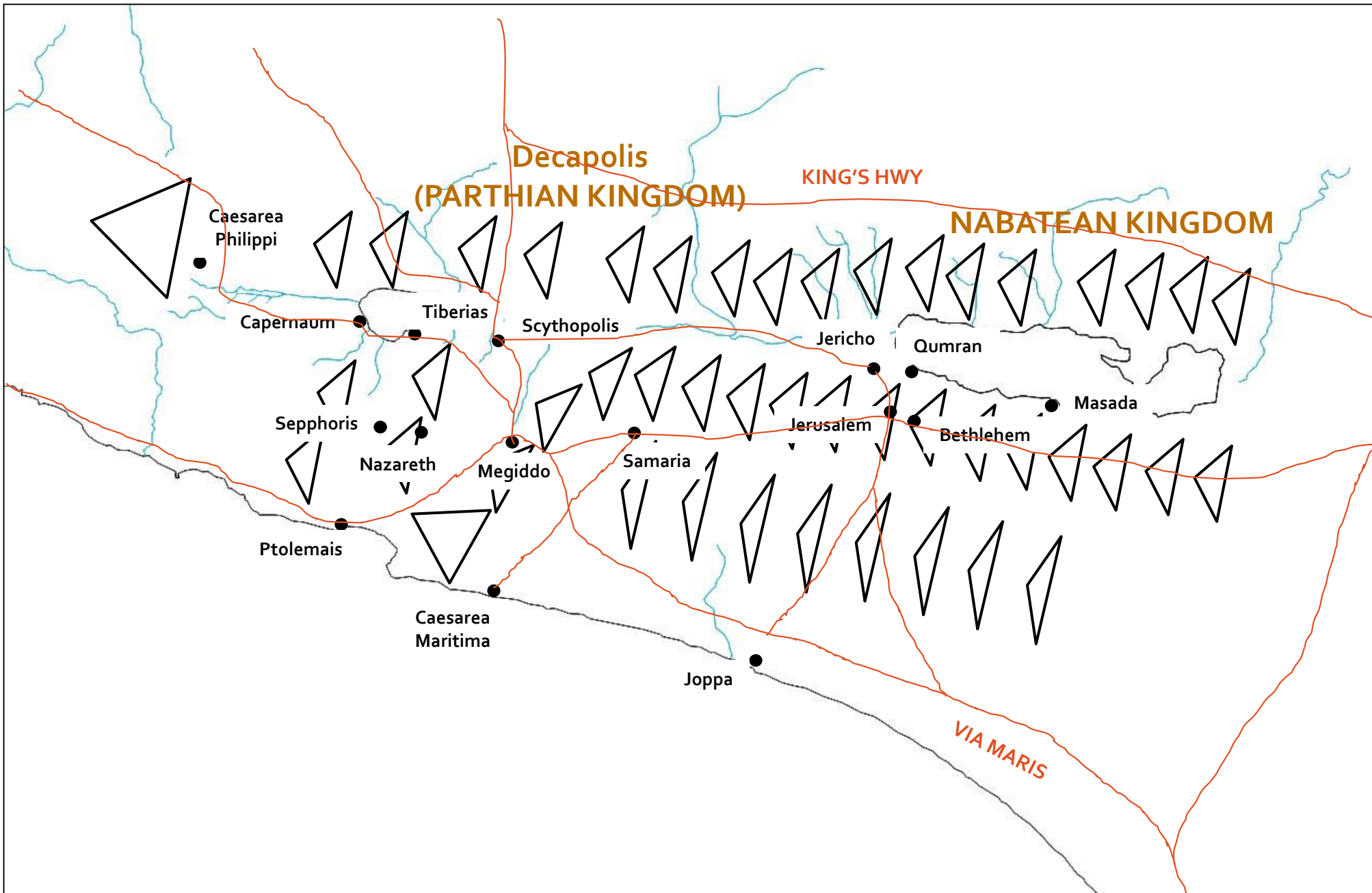
- A. Coast of Great Sea**
- B. Plains West of Jordan**
  - 1. Plain of Asher
  - 2. Coastal Strip of Dor
  - 3. Pasture Grounds of Sharon
  - 4. Plain of Philistia
  - 5. Central East-West Valley
    - a. Plain of Megiddo
    - b. Low Plain of Jezreel
- C. Mountains West of Jordan**
  - 1. Hills of Galilee
  - 2. Hills of Carmel
  - 3. Hills of Samaria
  - 4. Shephelah (low hills)
  - 5. Hill Country of Judah
- D. Arabah (Rift Valley)**
  - 1. Hula Basin
  - 2. Area of Sea of Galilee
  - 3. Jordan Valley
  - 4. Salt Sea (Dead Sea)
  - 5. Arabah (south of Salt Sea)
- E. Mountains/Tablelands East of Jordan**
  - 1. Bashan
  - 2. Gilead
  - 3. Ammon and Moab
  - 4. Mountain Plateau of Edom
- F. Mountains of Lebanon**
- 6. Wilderness of Judah**
- 7. Negeb**
- 8. Wilderness of Paran**







- Label:**
- 1. Bodies of Water**
  - 2. Mountains**
  - 3. Hills**
  - 4. Valleys**



- Label:
1. Major Cities
  2. Roads
  3. Other Kingdoms

# Today's Takeaways

- The land has a big influence on the narrative of the Bible
- While the land itself is small, it has huge differences in geology/geography
- In order to properly understand some stories, we need to understand the location and the cultural assumptions of the place
- Three ways the land influences the Bible:
  - Ethnic/political boundaries
  - Cultural themes
  - Helps ground our interpretation

# Next Week's Homework

- Read Mark 5:1 - 20
- Where does the setting of this story occur?
- What information can you gather about the inhabitants?
- How did they respond to Jesus?

The Gerasene Demoniac by  
Sebastian Bourdon (1653)

