

### Biblical Geography

*Rev. George H. Smith, D.D.*

"I never can locate the Bible countries," said an otherwise intelligent young man to the writer a short time ago. We are well aware that this ignorance is common to the great majority of sermon hearers and Sunday School scholars. The names of Nineveh, Armenia, Syria, or even Egypt, convey no more knowledge to many than does the mention of the nebula of Orion.

In the face of the almost numberless facilities for acquiring knowledge now accessible to everyone, such ignorance is unpardonable, and we can little wonder that the Old Testament story is so often regarded as dry and uninteresting. It is impossible to understand the sacred narrative, or to follow the vicissitudes of God's ancient people, without some fair idea of the location of the places mentioned. The full interest and value of the present course of studies on the lives of the Patriarchs cannot be attained without a thorough acquaintance with the geography of Bible lands. Teachers and scholars should be as conversant with this as with that of their own country.

For the study of the present course no more serviceable map can be found than that in this issue of *THE TEACHERS MONTHLY*. But before examining this pink picture with the blue spots around it, the pupil must know how the part of the world here pictured stands in its geographical relation to his own and to other countries. Therefore the teacher should provide himself with a miniature map of the world. On this it can easily be shown that the geography of the Bible is comprised almost entirely within a circle having Jerusalem for its centre and drawn at a radius of 800 miles (see map). On the map of the world, teacher and class should take an imaginary journey, tracing the route with pencil, from the Sunday School room to Jerusalem. This may be made extremely interesting by the introduction of pictures or descriptions of the places touched in such a journey and incidents likely to be met with on the way.

From Jerusalem as a centre, other imag-

inary journeys may be made to the places mentioned in the quarter's lessons. Such a book as Smith's *Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, McCoun's "Holy Land in Geography and History" (2 small vols.), or a good Bible Dictionary or Teacher's Bible, will be very helpful.

The line in the lower left hand corner of the map marking the scale of miles may be used to good purpose. Fold a narrow strip of paper and divide it into spaces each representing 100 miles by the scale. With this at hand all distances may be readily calculated.

With the third lesson, the geography of the quarter's study really begins. The ark rested on Mt. Ararat, marked near the middle of the top of the map. From this as a radial point the descendants of Noah began to multiply. As the population increased, the territory of habitation became too small and, like the waters in spring time bursting the confines of the lakes and spreading in all directions over the surrounding country, great floods of emigration spread out from Armenia to all the points of the compass.

Terah, a descendant of Shem, went south to Chaldea, and this is the geographical location of the fourth lesson. Terah had three sons, Abram, Nahor and Haran. Lot was the son of Haran. Abram's history begins in the city of Ur of the Chaldees. It is from Ur we really begin our journey through the Holy Land, and with the map before us every Sunday, we can trace with pencil the journey along which the lessons will take us till the end of the year.

The first move was in a north-westerly direction to Haran in Mesopotamia, about 500 miles from Ur. After a sojourn of five years at Haran the call of Gen. 12:4 came and at the age of seventy-five "Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came."

The journey could have been only two or three hundred miles, which brought them