

Chapter Three

PLACE STUDIES

A. DEFINITION

One of the most foundational methods of Bible research is place studies. With this method all the various places mentioned in Scripture can be researched. These may include land forms such as mountains, valleys and plains; bodies of water such as seas, lakes and rivers; types of vegetation such as forest, grasslands and desert; and population groupings such as nations, provinces and cities. The aim of this kind of study is to discover a place's geographical and historical significance as well as its possible prophetic and symbolic significance.

B. IMPORTANCE

One cannot study Scripture very long before he realizes that the Bible is historically oriented. The twenty-two historical books are plainly so and the others more indirectly. This is because the focus in Scripture is on the fulfilment of God's heavenly purpose on earth. It depicts God's involvement in human history. In that history revolves primarily around people and places it should be evident that places are constantly interwoven in the tapestry of Scriptural revelation. They have a prominent position in historical accounts, are often in the focus of Biblical prophecy and are even to be found having significance in poetry and doctrine. For example, much of Bible history is centred around Jerusalem, which is also the subject of much prophecy, has a special place in the Psalms and even has significance in the doctrinal books of Galatians and Hebrews. Thus place studies are foundational to coming to a full understanding of Scriptural teaching.

C. METHOD

As with other types of study the procedure for place studies is somewhat flexible but should contain certain basic areas of consideration. In selecting a place to research the student should generally allow his choice to arise out of his Bible reading or study, thus complementing them. However, some places in Scripture make good topical studies on their own (e.g. Jerusalem, Mt Zion, Judah, Babylon, Jordan River, Egypt, Bethel, etc.)

The basic procedure is as follows:

1. List the name of the place and its meaning. Most places have their name for a certain reason, thus the meaning can be significant. Be careful not to confuse two places with the same name and to identify other names for the same place. (Refer to Boyd's Bible Dictionary of Names, etc.)
2. Using a map note what kind of a place it is (city, mountain, nation, etc.) and what its location is.
3. Using a concordance discover how often it is referred to in Scripture.
4. Accumulate information from your Bible dictionary, Bible Encyclopaedia and from all of its references in Scripture (using your concordance and Bible). This should be done with the following four areas in mind:

- a. **Geographical Significance** — Gather basic geographical information concerning the place such as: location, terrain, climate, vegetation, etc.
- b. **Historical Significance** — Determine the role that place played in the events of history by tracing it through the Biblical record.
- c. **Symbolic Significance** — Discover any possible figurative or representative usage of the place in Scripture.
- d. **Prophetic Significance** — Locate any prophecy concerning the place and determine whether it has been or is yet to be fulfilled.
- e. **Spiritual Significance** — Discover what spiritual and practical lessons can be learned and applied to believers and churches today.

Note — It is important once again in using the three-column approach as in the Workshop Assignment that the context principle be used in noting the use of the name of the place. The name and its use must be seen in its verse, passage and chapter and book context.

PLACE STUDIES

WORKSHOP #1

TOOLS NEEDED: Strong's Concordance, Bible Dictionary, Oxford Bible Atlas, I.S.B.E., Volume I and a King James Version of the Bible.

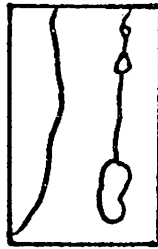
ASSIGNMENT: Do a place study on *Bethel* in the Old Testament using Genesis 31:13 as a foundation text. Complete the steps as listed below.

I. List the names for Bethel and their meanings.

Bethel =
=
=

II. What kind of place is it?

Locate it on a map and fill it in on a "mini-map" at the right.



III. How many times is it referred to in Scripture? _____

IV. Geographical Significance

A. Size: _____

B. Near or in what other significant places:

(country, mt. ranges, etc.)

C. Natural characteristics of the region:

1. Climate:

a. Temperature range: _____

b. Annual rainfall: _____

c. Other information: _____

(droughts, wind storms, etc.)

2. Altitude: _____

3. Vegetation: _____

4. Terrain: _____

(hilly, rocky, plain, etc.)

5. Resources: _____

(crops, mining, grazing, etc.)

Scripture Information

Scripture	Brief Verse Quote	Insights/Details

V. Historical Significance

Trace the role this place played in history including people, events, etc. Also include significant Scriptural statements about the place.

Endeavour to make important notes in this section which include the following; if possible:

1. Political (Time Period)
2. Cultural:
 - a. Language _____
 - b. Religion _____
 - c. Morality _____
 - d. Level of civilization _____
 - e. Race of people _____

VI. Symbolic Significance

What was this place symbolic or representative of?

What did it represent before God? Before the people?

VII. Prophetic Significance

List any prophetic statements about the place, their fulfillment, and whether they have been or are yet to be fulfilled.

VIII. Spiritual Significance

What spiritual and practical lessons can be learned from a study of this place and applied to our times, to believers and to churches today?

PLACE STUDIES

WORKSHOP #2

TOOLS NEEDED: Strong's Concordance, Bible Dictionary, Oxford Bible Atlas, I.S.B.E., Volume I and a King James Version of the Bible.

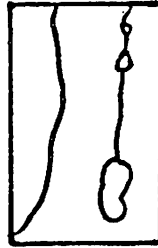
ASSIGNMENT: Do a place study on *Bethlehem* in the Old Testament using Genesis 35:19 as a foundation text. Complete the steps as listed below.

I. List the names for Bethlehem and their meanings.

Bethlehem =
=
=

II. What kind of place is it?

Locate it on a map and fill it in on a "mini-map" at the right.



III. How many times is it referred to in Scripture? _____

IV. Geographical Significance

A. Size: _____

B. Near or in what other significant places:

(country, mt. ranges, etc.)

C. Natural characteristics of the region:

1. Climate:

a. Temperature range: _____

b. Annual rainfall: _____

c. Other information: _____

(droughts, wind storms, etc.)

2. Altitude: _____

3. Vegetation: _____

4. Terrain: _____
(hilly, rocky, plain, etc.)

5. Resources: _____
(crops, mining, grazing, etc.)

Scripture Information

Scripture	Brief Verse Quote	Insights/Details

V. Historical Significance

Trace the role this place played in history including people, events, etc. Also include significant Scriptural statements about the place.

Endeavour to make important notes in this section which include the following; if possible:

1. Political (Time Period)
2. Cultural:
 - a. Language _____
 - b. Religion _____
 - c. Morality _____
 - d. Level of civilization _____
 - e. Race of people _____

VI. Symbolic Significance

What was this place symbolic or representative of?
 What did it represent before God? Before the people?

VII. Prophetic Significance

List any prophetic statements about the place, their fulfillment, and whether they have been or are yet to be fulfilled.

VIII. Spiritual Significance

What spiritual and practical lessons can be learned from a study of this place and applied to our times, to believers and to churches today?