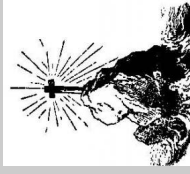


THE WATERS OF HIS EARTH

Part III: The Mediterranean Sea



Location and Geography

The Mediterranean Sea is part of the Atlantic Ocean almost completely enclosed by land. It is the world's largest inland sea with a surface area of some 965,000 sq miles. It is bordered on the north by Europe, on the south by Africa, and in the east by Asia.



East to west it measures about 2,400 miles and north to south ranges from 100 to 600 miles. The sea connects with the Atlantic in the west at the Strait of Gibraltar. In the northeast, the Dardanelles Straits link it with the Black Sea and in the southeast lies the Suez Canal with its opening to the Red Sea. Its deepest point measures 14,400 ft.

Several smaller “seas” are part of the Mediterranean including the Tyrrhenian, Adriatic, Ionian, and Aegean. A few of the major islands of the Mediterranean are Sicily, Sardinia, Corsica, Crete, Cyprus, Malta, and Rhodes.

The Mediterranean is saltier than the Atlantic and shows comparatively little tidal activity because of the narrow openings to the sea. The Nile and Po are two of the chief rivers that flow into it. The shores of the Mediterranean consist mainly of mountain regions (see relief map above). Earthquakes are frequent as well as volcanic activity.

The sea contains 400 species of fish. There are also other natural resources such as oil and natural gas. In recent years there has been concern that the Mediterranean's resources are being depleted at an alarming rate. Being at the crossroads of several continents, this body of water endures heavy traffic. In addition to the sea-related resources, regional agricultural activity includes the growing of olives, grapes, oranges, tangerines, and cork.

History

The Mediterranean has been home to key trade routes for centuries. Port cities rivaled one another in size and importance. All manner of goods were traded (and still are) from one place to another. In the days of the Roman Empire, the Romans arrogantly called it *Mare Nostrum* (our sea). From the 11th to the 14th centuries, the Italian cities like Genoa and Barcelona controlled much of the trade and activity. When the Suez Canal was built in 1869, more trade opportunities were opened to the region. During the world wars, control of the Mediterranean was critical for allies and axis because of the link provides between Europe and Asia.



The Mediterranean In the Bible

History and geography aside, of particular interest to us is the role the Mediterranean has played in the events of the Bible. Consider the following Bible stories where this sea had a prominent part:

Old Testament

1 Kings 5:6-9

How was the Mediterranean used in the building of God's temple?

Jonah 1:1-3

Discuss what you recall about the story of Jonah. What happened to Jonah in the Mediterranean that caused him to realize what he had done to displease God? Do we sometimes go out across the sea in the opposite direction He wants us to go? How does God bring us back?

New Testament

The Apostle Paul's missionary journeys in the Book of Acts took him throughout the region of the Mediterranean. Corinth, Thessalonika, Ephesus, and Athens are just a few of the many stops he made. A study of all the journeys of Paul is worthwhile and exciting, but there is too much to include it all here. Consider here Paul's last trip across this famous sea. It involves a shipwreck and an island of natives!

Acts 27:1 - 28:10

How did the people on the island of Malta treat Paul and the other prisoners? What did Paul do for the inhabitants of the island?

Conclusion

God used the Mediterranean Sea to support the civilizations that first heard the resurrection gospel of Christ Jesus. The first Christian churches were formed around this body of water and it is safe to say that Paul's journeys would have been made much more difficult without the use of this easily accessible waterway. The Mediterranean surely became a servant of God in it's own way!

Resources

<http://community.webshots.com/album/92386069vDArml>
<http://www.factmonster.com/ce6/world/A0832499.html>
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mediterranean_Sea
<http://www.keyway.ca/htm2002/mediter.htm>