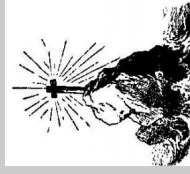


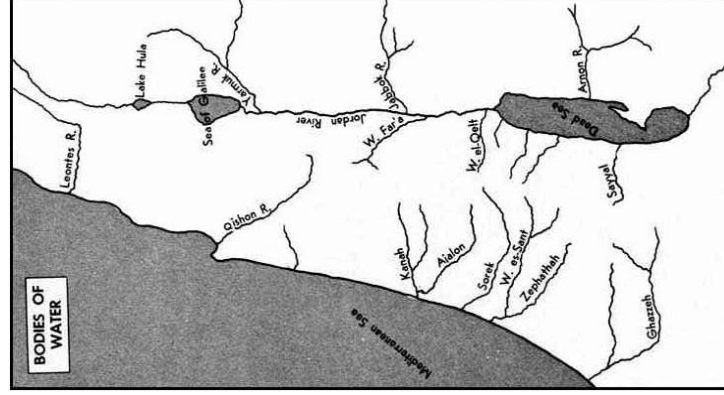
THE WATERS OF HIS EARTH

Part IV: The Jordan River



Location and Geography

The Jordan River is Palestine's only significant body of flowing water. It is formed from four streams on the slopes of Mount Hermon. (Mount Hermon is actually a cluster of mountains with three distinct peaks at the southern tip of the anti-Lebanon range.) Mount Hermon is snow-covered all year, and the runoff from this snow forms the headwaters of the Jordan which then flows south to the Dead Sea.



Over the course of its length, it descends in elevation some 1300 feet. The name *Jordan* means *the descender*. The river's straight-line length is only 70 miles, but taking into account the curves, its distance measures about 200 miles. The river's first major "stop" is Lake Hula, north of the Sea of Galilee. Traveling another 25 miles south it enters the Sea of Galilee. Just south of the Sea of Galilee, it is joined by the Yarmuk River and later on the Jabbok, two of its major tributaries. Over 30 species of fish are found in the Jordan, 16 unique to it. Of the 45 species of birds found in the valley, 23 can be found nowhere else in the world.

The waters of the Jordan are very important to the surrounding countries. As a result, there is much strife between Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Israel, and the Palestinians over it. It is estimated that 70-90% of the Jordan's water is used to supply the region's needs. So much is diverted by man that the flow into the Dead Sea has been much reduced. The Dead Sea is shrinking in size as a result.



The Jordan entering the Sea of Galilee from the north

Scripture and the Jordan

The Jordan was an important waterway in Bible times just as it is today. Many important Old and New Testament events took place at this river. As you look at these Bible stories, consider what the events teach you about your God – and watch especially for connections to God's plan of salvation for mankind in Christ Jesus.

Joshua 3:7-17

2 Kings 5:9-14

Matthew 3:1-6

Matthew 3:13-17

Conclusion

In poetry and literature, “crossing the Jordan” is often a symbolic phrase meaning “crossing from this life into the life eternal.” Just as the Israelites crossed the Jordan to enter the Promised Land, we cross over death to enter the promised life with our Lord Jesus.

If the Jordan River could talk, it would tell of the prophets who foretold the coming Savior. It would also talk about what He did while He was visibly present on this earth. For centuries the river has been a lifeline and a source of income for the people of Palestine, but it will always and most importantly be connected with the lives and ministries of Jesus and His disciples.



On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry
Announces that the Lord is nigh;
Come, then, and hearken, for he brings
Glad tidings from the King of kings.

All praise, eternal Son, to Thee
Whose advent sets Thy people free,
Whom, with the Father, we adore
And Holy Ghost forevermore.

(The Lutheran Hymnal, 63:1, 5)

Resources

<http://www.bible-history.com/maps/>
http://www.ancientsandals.com/overviews/jordan_river.htm
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jordan_River
<http://www.bibleplaces.com/jabbok.htm>