Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION FOR THE STUDENT

The Bible begins with these simple, yet profound words: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). God further prepared the earth as a dwelling place for people by creating great lights to illuminate it, by separating the dry land from the sky and the seas, and by filling the earth with plants and animals. Last of all, God made Adam and Eve and charged them with the care of the earth. "And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good" (Genesis 1:31).

Geography is the study of the earth and its people. One good reason for studying world geography is to learn more about the wonders of God's creation. In Job 37:14, Elihu challenged Job to "stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God." Later, God Himself asked Job many questions that help us realize how small we are, and how great God is.

As you study geographical concepts, take time to ponder the natural wonders of God's creation. What role do marshes and swamps fill in God's plan? What natural provisions from God allow some regions of Asia to support very high population densities? What geographical features on the second-largest island in the world hid the majority of its people from the rest of the world until the 1930s? Even in a natural sense, "the whole earth is full of [God's] glory" (Isaiah 6:3). "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" (Revelation 4:11).

Another reason to study geography is to better understand ethnic groups and cultures that differ widely from your own. God is no respecter of persons, and we should not be either. God "hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth" (Acts 17:26). He declares that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). "But in every nation he that feareth [God], and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:35).

The Gospel of Jesus remains as pertinent and powerful as ever. Jesus commanded His disciples: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). He declared that "this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matthew 24:14). God does not call every Christian to serve in a foreign land. But He does call us all to be faithful witnesses where we are and to intercede in prayer for others. God would "have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4).

This book is divided into nine units, each with two to four chapters. The first two units consider general themes about the physical earth and man's life on it. The other seven units each cover a major region of the earth.

Each chapter is divided into smaller sections, and several sets of study exercises are distributed throughout each chapter. Review exercises are found at the end of each chapter, and a test for every one or two chapters is found in a separate quizzes and tests booklet.

A word printed in ***bold italic*** typestyle is a vocabulary word, which you can find in the glossary in the back of the textbook. Also in the back of the book are an atlas of continent maps, Quick Facts statistics on each country, a pronunciation guide of names and terms that may be unfamiliar to you, a general index, and a map and chart index.

May God bless you as you study for His glory. Perhaps He will use something you learn in this course to help prepare you for a lifetime of faithful service among people in your home community, or in lands far away.

Front Cover: Cape Town, South Africa, overlooks the Atlantic Ocean. The ridge of peaks shown in this photo, known as the Twelve Apostles, marks the western edge of Table Mountain. The Cape of Good Hope lies about 30 miles (50 km) south of Cape Town.

UNIT 1

THE EARTH—GOD'S HOME FOR MAN

A mountain village in Switzerland. Although the Alp peaks are rugged, the Swiss have long inhabited the mountain slopes and valleys. The natural wonders of earth call us to extol our great Creator. "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all" (1 Chronicles 29:11).

CHAPTER

1

"THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S"

Biblical Focus

Psalm 24:1–2

The earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.

Because God created the earth, it belongs to God and not to man. God commissioned Adam and Eve (and their descendants) to subdue the earth and to have dominion over it, but that does not make us owners of the earth. We are only caretakers (stewards) of the earth, so we are responsible to use natural resources wisely.

We should avoid activities that needlessly pollute the air or water, erode the soil, or waste other natural resources. How we use natural resources will help determine what resources are available for future generations, if the Lord tarries. "It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (1 Corinthians 4:2).

However, practicing good stewardship does not mean that we must preserve everything on earth in its natural state. God expects us to use the earth's resources to provide food, clothing, shelter, and other needs. He desires that we receive with thanksgiving (1 Timothy 4:4) all His gifts and use them for His glory. Some people emphasize the conservation of the earth so much that, in essence, they worship "the creature [or creation] more than the Creator" (Romans 1:25). Both our use and our conservation of natural resources should be for the glory of God.

God's Design for the Earth

Isaiah 45:18 states that "God himself . . . formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited." A study of the solar system shows that God designed the earth to support life. None of the other planets could sustain life as we know it.

For instance, God placed the earth exactly the right distance from the sun. If He had put it closer to the sun, temperatures would be so hot that life as we know it would be destroyed. If He had placed the earth farther away, temperatures would be too cold to support life. But God put the world in exactly the right place to support plant, animal, and human life.

God created the atmosphere of the earth with a perfect balance of various elements essential for life. It contains enough oxygen to support human and animal life, yet not so much that common materials would burn too readily, causing a constant threat of explosions. It has enough carbon dioxide to support the process of photosynthesis, yet not so much that it suffocates people and animals. Interestingly, both carbon dioxide and oxygen are by-products of life, with plants producing oxygen as a waste product, and humans and animals producing carbon dioxide as a waste product. Only God could have fashioned such a marvelous, self-supporting system.

God designed the earth not only to support life but also to make life comfortable. For instance, He tilted the earth properly for seasons. He also made the seasons and the year itself with the right length for growing crops. If our year were shorter, like a year on Venus (225 earth-days)—or longer, like a year on Mars (687 earth-days)—we would have very short growing seasons or very long winters.

The earth also rotates at the right speed to provide a 24-hour day. Try to imagine what life would be like if our day extended for 5,832 hours (243 earth-days), like a day on Venus. This would mean 2,916 hours of daylight followed by 2,916 hours of darkness! In contrast, a day on Jupiter or Saturn has only about 5 hours of daylight followed by about 5 hours of darkness. If the earth rotated that fast, our time for work each day would be very limited.

In addition, God provided very carefully for various other needs that we have. He designed the earth to be a gigantic food factory, with a profusion of plants and animals supplying a wide variety of foods. With the exception of the coldest and driest regions, humans and animals can find food in all parts of the earth. God also supplied sources of fresh water in most lands. Other natural resources provide materials to make clothes, to build shelters, and to construct many other useful things.

After God finished His creation, He "saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good" (Genesis 1:31).

God created the earth with a suitable atmosphere, fertile soil, an abundance of water, favorable climates, and many other features that make it an ideal home for the plants, animals, and people that He created and placed here.

Study Exercises (A)

1. Why is it important for a Christian to use natural resources carefully?
2. List at least four proofs that God prepared the earth to contain and maintain life. Try to think of some that are not mentioned in the text.

Introducing Geography

Geography can be divided into two related branches—physical geography and human geography. Physical geography is the study of the physical features and resources of the earth, which include landforms, bodies of water, plant and animal life, minerals, climate, and weather. Human geography is the study of the people and their use of natural resources; it includes population trends, culture, government, religion, industry, and economics.

The History of Geography

The Greeks were the first people known to make a systematic study of geography. They recognized the earth as a sphere more than 1,500 years before Christopher Columbus tried to reach Asia by sailing west from Europe. In fact, several centuries before Christ, a Greek mathematician named Eratosthenes (er′·ə·tos′·thə·nēz′, c. 276–194 BC) calculated the circumference of the earth with reasonable accuracy.

Other contributions were made by a Greek astronomer and mathematician named Hipparchus (hi·pär′·kəs, c. 190–120 BC). He was the first person to locate places by specifying their latitude and longitude (lon′·ji·tōōd′) as we still do today. He also developed a method of calculating the latitude of a place by using the ratio of the length of the longest day of the year to the length of the shortest day of the year.

However, Europeans of the medieval centuries (Middle Ages) based their concepts of geography on the work of an Egyptian mathematician named Ptolemy (tol′·ə·mē, c. AD 100–170). This was unfortunate because Ptolemy made several serious errors. Whereas earlier Greek philosophers had proposed

An old reproduction of Ptolemy's map of the world. Before the invention of the printing press, maps had to be copied by hand. Because of this, various renderings of this ancient map exist today.

(correctly) that the earth moves through space, Ptolemy taught that the earth was stationary and that the sun, moon, planets, and stars traveled in orbits around it.

Ptolemy did realize that the world is a sphere, but his calculation of its circumference was about 30 percent too small. He also placed the equator too far north. He knew nothing about the Western Hemisphere, of course, so he thought that Asia was just west of the Atlantic Ocean.

Much of this knowledge was forgotten in Europe during the first several centuries of the Middle Ages, which lasted from about 400 to 1500. Most people did not read Greek and had no access to earlier research and ideas. The Roman Catholic Church and the medieval governments tried to keep the people in ignorance as a way to maintain control over them. Interest in ancient languages finally revived during the Renaissance (ren′·i·säns′), or "rebirth of learning," in about 1300 to 1600. European scholars made a renewed study of the old Greek writings; but unfortunately, most of them adopted Ptolemy's wrong ideas about the earth.

In 1543 a Polish astronomer named Copernicus (kō·pûr′·nə·kəs) published a book which asserted that the earth revolves around the sun. But the Roman Catholic Church clung to Ptolemy's concept for the next century and eventually declared that the teachings of Copernicus were heretical. It is possible that Copernicus expected his discovery to be rejected by the church, for he waited until near the end of his life to publish his book. Galileo (gal′·ə·lā′·ō), the famous Italian astronomer, was forced to recant his similar beliefs in 1633. But eventually Ptolemy's theory that the heavenly bodies revolve around the earth was proven false.

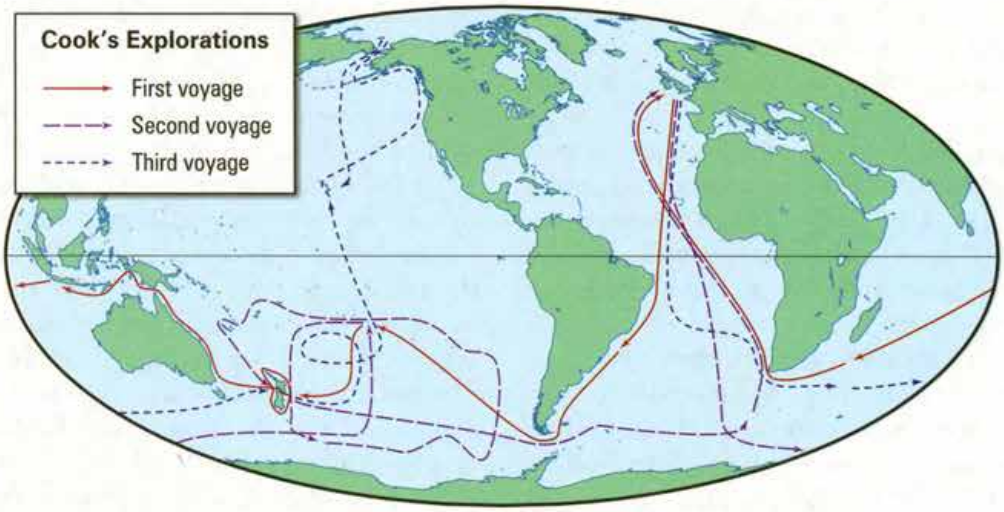
The Travels of Marco Polo

In the 1250s, Nicolo Polo and his brother Maffeo of Venice, Italy, set out on a trading voyage. They visited Constantinople (present-day Istanbul), the lands north of the Caspian Sea, and finally the great ruler Kublai Khan in China. The Khan was greatly impressed with the two Europeans. Eventually he sent them back with a message to the pope, requesting Catholic teachers to be sent to the Khan's people.

When the Polos returned to Venice in 1269, Nicolo found that his wife had died giving birth to his son Marco, who was then fifteen years old. The Polo brothers set out again for China in 1271, accompanied by Marco. The journey back took at least three and one-half years. By the time they arrived, Marco was fluent in four languages. Kublai Khan was much impressed by young Marco. He sent him on many official missions throughout China, and possibly into India and parts of Southeast Asia.

Years passed, and the Polos began to worry that after the death of the Khan, who was now in his eighties, his enemies would imprison them and seize their wealth. They asked the Khan for permission to return home, but he refused to let them go. Finally in 1292, he agreed to allow the Polos to accompany a bride that he was sending to a prince in Persia. The group sailed across the South China Sea, passed through the Strait of Malacca, and rounded the southern tip of India. The Polos left the wedding party in present-day Iran and traveled overland to the Black Sea, where they sailed on to Venice. They arrived home in 1295, twenty-four years after their journey began.

Venice was at war with Genoa when the Polos arrived, and the Genoese captured and imprisoned Marco. While in prison, Marco described his travels to a fellow prisoner, who wrote them in a book titled *Description of the World,* later called *The Travels of Marco Polo.* The book describes fascinating customs of many localities. Marco spoke of Muslim persecution of Christians, excellent breeds of horses, wild game, fruits and other crops, and foods. He detailed cultural practices such as government procedures, marriage, religious beliefs, and funerals. He also described the use of coal and paper money, both of which were new to Europeans. The book helped to excite European interest in travel and exploration.



VOYAGES OF JAMES COOK

GEOGRAPHY AND EXPLORATION

The four hundred years from 1400 to 1800 could be called the age of European exploration. The rediscovery of Ptolemy's theories about geography was only one of many factors that led to this flurry of exploration. In the late 1200s, Marco Polo spent almost twenty years in China before returning to Europe in 1295. He co-authored a book describing what he had seen during his travels, and his book quickly became famous. Various sailors began seeking a route by which European merchants could obtain Asian spices by sea.

In the late 1400s, Europeans were familiar with only about 7 percent of the water surface on earth. The explorations of the Vikings, who discovered North America around AD 1000, had been mostly forgotten. But during the next century, Christopher Columbus rediscovered the Americas (1492); Vasco da Gama sailed around Africa to India (1498); and one of Ferdinand Magellan's ships sailed around the world (1519–1522)—Magellan himself was killed on the journey. By the time Francis Drake completed his voyage around the world (1577–1580), Europeans had discovered all the main water bodies on earth. This was a tremendous step forward in understanding world geography.

Other men also sailed the seas, looking for wealth in the form of trade routes, land, and gold. Many of these explorers added to men's knowledge of the world. However, James Cook likely added more features to the map of the world than any other man. He discovered and mapped the coasts of New Zealand, Australia, New Caledonia, the South Sandwich Islands, and the island of South Georgia. In 1778 he visited the Hawaiian islands and then made a vain attempt to find a passage north of North America from the Pacific Ocean to the Atlantic Ocean. Cook returned to Hawaii later that year, and in 1779 he was killed in a quarrel with the natives.

Study Exercises (B)

3. Name and describe the two main branches of geography.
4. What early Greek astronomer was the first person to locate places by using latitude and longitude?
5. Which of Ptolemy's errors did the Roman Catholic Church cling to, despite the conclusions of Copernicus and Galileo?
6. Tell how each of the following men increased European knowledge of world geography: (a) Columbus, (b) da Gama, (c) Magellan, (d) Cook.

James Cook discovered the Hawaiian islands in 1778, after exploring many other parts of the Pacific region. When he returned to these islands a year later, he was killed in a skirmish with the natives.

Using Maps to Study the Earth

Man naturally expresses himself by drawing diagrams and charts. If you ask a friend for directions to a place, he might draw a sketch to show you how to get there. The first maps were probably crude drawings like your friend's sketch.

We can get a good idea of what men in the past knew about the world by looking at the maps they drew. On page 12 is a map of the world drawn about 130 years after Christ. Find this area on a modern map of the world, and compare the two.

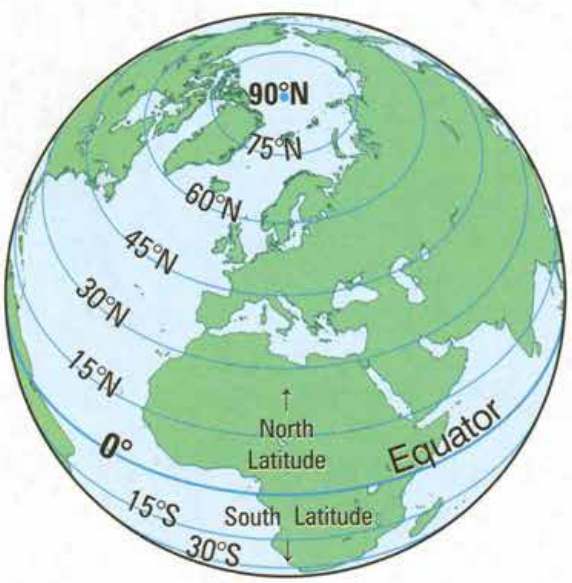
The Earth's Grid

Suppose a volcano formed a new island in the Atlantic Ocean, hundreds of miles from any other land. If you saw the new island from a ship and wanted to tell someone where it was, how would you describe its location? There are no roads or other landmarks in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean.

Mapmakers (called ***cartographers***) face similar challenges. How can they know exactly where to place an island on a map of the world, or a city on a map of North America? To determine this, geographers have marked off the world with a grid of imaginary lines.

Parallels. The grid on a globe or map is made of crisscrossing lines, some running from north to south, and some running from east to west. A line running east and west is called a ***parallel*** because these lines are parallel to each other. The most important parallel is the equator, which circles the earth halfway between the North and South poles. Any number of other parallels can be drawn between the equator and the poles.

Since the earth is a sphere, parallels are labeled



Parallels