

## Lesson 4 The Greatness of a Small Land



## Introduction

If you look at a map, Palestine is hardly noticeable. Its size is smaller than many modern countries and even some individual states. At first glance, such a tiny land could never shape the course of human history. Yet it was here that God began and continued His great plan of salvation.

God showed that greatness is not measured by territory, wealth, natural resources, or the strength of an army. True greatness is defined by His presence and His purpose. Palestine became the spiritual center of humanity because through it God gave us His Word, His Son, and the hope of an eternal Kingdom.

Palestine is like a small seed that seems insignificant but grows into a great tree. It is like the heart in a body—though small in size, it gives life to the whole organism. In the same way, this tiny land became the “heart of the world,” from which light, life, and truth flow to all nations.

**Remember:** What is small in God’s hands becomes great.

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### Lesson Goal

- To understand why God chose little Palestine as the center of His plan.
  - To study the different names of the land and God’s people in order to better understand Scripture.
  - To see the historical and geographical significance of Palestine in the ancient world.
  - To realize that God uses the “small” to reveal His “great.”
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## 1. Names of the Land

The land of Israel was known by different names depending on the historical and spiritual context:

- **Canaan** — named after the descendants of Canaan, the son of Ham (Genesis 10:6, 15–20).

- **The Promised Land** — so called because God promised it to Abraham and his descendants (Genesis 12:7; 15:18–21).
- **The Land of Israel** — because it was inherited by the descendants of Jacob (Israel) (Genesis 32:24–32).
- **Palestine** — originally used for the territory where the Philistines lived, today known as the Gaza Strip. Later, after the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 and 135, the Romans applied the name to the entire region, calling it “Syria Palestina.” In Luke 2:1–2, we see that Judea (Palestine) was under the Roman administration of Syria.

📖 These names appear throughout the Bible, and it is important to know them in order to read Scripture without confusion.

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### ✨ Practical Applications

- **Different names—one land**  
☒ Circumstances and labels may change, but God’s purpose remains the same.
  - **God’s promises never fail**  
 The name “Promised Land” reminds us that God is faithful to His word.  
☒ Trust in God’s promises—they will be fulfilled in your life.
  - **The heritage of faith**    The name “Land of Israel” points to the inheritance given to the children of Jacob.  
☒ Value your spiritual heritage—you too are part of God’s people in Christ.
  - **History cannot cancel God’s plan**    Even when the Romans called the land “Palestine,” it did not change its place in God’s design.  
☒ Do not be shaken by changes in the world: God’s will and His Word remain firm.
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## 2. Names of God’s People

God’s people in this land also had different names:

- **Hebrews** — means “sojourners” or “those who cross over.” The name was first applied to Abraham (Genesis 14:13). Egyptians used it for the

descendants of Jacob. In the New Testament, “Hebrew” emphasized faithfulness to tradition (Philippians 3:5).

- **Israelites** — “the sons of Israel,” descendants of Jacob. The most common name in the Old Testament.
- **Jews** — first used for the people of the southern kingdom (Judah), but after the exile the name was applied to the whole nation (2 Kings 16:6).

📖 These terms help us understand different periods in Israel’s history.

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### ✨ Practical Applications

- **Hebrews—sojourners**  
The name “Hebrews” reminds us that they were strangers on the earth.  
✅ We too are “sojourners and pilgrims” (1 Peter 2:11)—don’t hold too tightly to earthly things.
- **Jews—faithfulness in trials**  
After the exile, the name “Jew” became a symbol of a people who kept their faith.  
✅ Even in hard times, do not lose your identity in God.
- **History teaches faithfulness**  
These names show how God led His people through different times.  
✅ Learn from the history of God’s people and find encouragement for your faith today.

## 3. The Land of Israel — Small in Size

Palestine is a very small country, yet it was here that history took place which changed all of humanity.

Its area is about 12,000 square miles (roughly one-quarter of the state of Alabama). From north (Dan) to south (Beersheba) is only about 150 miles, and its width ranges from 30 to 55 miles. Today, you could cross this land by car in about three hours. In Abraham’s time, a caravan of camels would need about five days. Despite its small size, God divided it among the twelve tribes of Israel.

### ✨ Practical Applications

- **A picture for the church**

A small land became God's tool—just like a small congregation can be used by Him.

✓ Value your church, even if it seems small.

- **Small beginnings—great future**

From this small land came God's Word, Christ, and the Gospel.

✓ Believe that God can use your life to shape the future of your church.

- **Greatness is not about size**

Babylon and Assyria were huge, but they vanished. Palestine remained remembered because it was tied to God's Word.

✓ Treasure what belongs to God, not what is temporary or popular.

- **Strength in humility**

God often chooses the weak to show His strength (1 Corinthians 1:27).

✓ Be ready for God to work through your "weakness."

- **Do not despise small beginnings**

"Who has despised the day of small things?" (Zechariah 4:10).

✓ A small step of faith can start a great story.

- **The value of small groups**

Just as a small land became the center of history, a small youth group can become the center of revival.

✓ Believe that God can move through your group.

- **Every believer matters**

Just like a small land, even a "small" teenager can be God's instrument for great things.

✓ Trust God's calling for your own life.

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#### **4. Strength Is Not in Size, but in God's Plan**

Israel was always small in territory and military strength compared to the mighty empires—Assyria, Babylon, and Rome. These empires had vast armies, wealth, resources, and power, yet all of them disappeared from the stage of history. Israel, however—despite invasions, destruction, and exile—kept its faith, its Scriptures, and its national and spiritual identity.

This cannot be fully explained by human effort. It is a powerful testimony of God's guidance and His faithfulness to the promises He made to His people Israel.



### **Biblical Proof:**

“Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.” (Isaiah 41:10, NKJV)

“‘For I am with you,’ says the Lord, ‘to save you; though I make a full end of all nations where I have scattered you, yet I will not make a complete end of you. But I will correct you in justice, and will not let you go altogether unpunished.’” (Jeremiah 30:11, NKJV)

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### Practical Applications

- **God protects the small**

Even when we feel weak and insignificant, His strength upholds us and makes us firm.

✓ In hard times, rely on God, not on your own abilities.

- **Empires rise and fall**

Human glory fades, but God’s Word and His people remain.

✓ Build your life not on temporary success but on the eternal values of Scripture.

- **God’s faithfulness never changes**

Just as the Lord preserved Israel, He preserves every believer and leads us toward His promises.

✓ Remember: if God has promised to be with you, no “empire” of circumstances can destroy you.

## **5. The Land of Israel — Part of God’s Plan**

God did not choose for His people the rich and mighty lands of empires but the humble and simple land of Palestine. This country was small, yet it stood at the crossroads of roads linking three continents. It was here that the Lord chose to reveal Himself, give the Law, send the prophets, and bring the Savior into the world.

The choice of this land shows us that the strength of God’s plan does not depend on wealth or greatness but on His guidance and presence.

### **Biblical Proof:**

“The Lord had said to Abram: ‘Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you.’” (Genesis 12:1, NIV)

“The land you are crossing the Jordan to take possession of is a land... that the Lord your God cares for; the eyes of the Lord your God are continually on it from the beginning of the year to its end.” (Deuteronomy 11:11–12, NIV)

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### ✨ Practical Applications

- **God acts with purpose**
  - ✓ Live with confidence that your life is part of His plan.
- **Place is not random**
  - God placed you in your city and community for a reason.
  - ✓ See your school or town as your mission field.
- **Faith is rooted in real history**
  - God’s plan unfolded in real places and times.
  - ✓ Study Bible maps to see the reality of Scripture.
- **Small place—great plan**
  - ✓ Expect God to work through your “small” circumstances.
- **Location matters**
  - God determines where we live and serve because He has a purpose for each place.
  - ✓ Accept your location as part of God’s plan for your life.

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## 6. Israel — The Crossroads of Nations

In Palestine, three continents—Asia, Africa, and Europe—meet in a small space. Because of this, it was often called the “center of the ancient world.” Its position gave it influence greater than many larger nations.

Through Palestine ran the main trade and military roads that connected Egypt with Mesopotamia, and Asia with Europe. This made it a crossroads of world civilization, a “bridge between continents.”

Main Roads:

1. **Via Maris (Way of the Sea)**
  - Ran along the Mediterranean coast from Egypt through Palestine to Syria and Mesopotamia.

📖 *Isaiah 9:1* — “The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali... but in the future he will honor Galilee of the nations, by the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan.” (NIV)

- ♦ This is a direct mention of the coastal road — *Via Maris*.

Interesting fact: Jesus grew up in Nazareth, near the Jezreel Valley, close to the Via Maris. From childhood He saw the movement of travelers, merchants, and soldiers from many nations and cultures. (We will return to this theme in the next lesson.)

## 2. The King's Highway

According to historical-geographical studies, this road was a strategic route used by both trade caravans and royal armies. For this reason, it was often called “The Military Road.”

📖 *Numbers 20:17* — “We will go along the King's Highway...” (NKJV)

## 3. The Central Ridge Road

This ancient route followed the central mountain ridge of Palestine—from Shechem in the north, through Jebus (later Jerusalem), down to Hebron and Beersheba in the south.

📖 *Genesis 12:6–8* — Abraham traveled through Shechem, then to Bethel, and farther south—matching this ridge route.

## 4. The Road to Babylon (through Damascus and Mesopotamia)

Linked northern Israel to Assyria and Babylon.

📖 *Ezekiel 21:21* — “For the king of Babylon stands at the parting of the road, at the fork of the two roads to use divination...” (NKJV)

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## ✨ Practical Applications

- **God's strategy**

The land's location was part of God's design.

✅ Believe your place of living is chosen by God.

- **The Gospel at the center**

From this land the Good News spread to the world.

✅ Keep God's Word at the center of your life.



- **Encounters with cultures**

Jesus interacted with Samaritans, Romans, and others.

✓ Learn to embrace people of different cultures and share the Gospel with them.

- **Seeing opportunities**

God uses “crossroads” to spread His message.

✓ Look for chances to share your faith where you are.

- **Small but influential**

Even a small land shaped world history.

✓ Don’t underestimate the influence of your small circle.

- **Digital roads today**

Once armies, merchants, and preachers traveled ancient roads. Today, the “roads” are the internet and social media.

✓ Let your posts and conversations lead others toward Christ.

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## 7. A Land of Remarkable Variety

Though small, Palestine is full of contrasts:

- **Climate:** from mild coastal areas to hot Jericho and snowy Mount Hermon.
- **Winds:** cool sea breezes and the dry, hot east wind (sirocco) (Ezekiel 17:10; Jeremiah 18:17).
- **Terrain:** from +10,000 ft (Lebanon mountains) to –1,293 ft (the Dead Sea).

📖 These natural features help us better understand the imagery and metaphors in the Bible.

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### Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think God chose little Palestine for His plan and not a great empire?
2. What does the example of Palestine teach us about God’s view of the “small” and the “great”?

3. What modern “small” actions or things can have a big spiritual impact?
4. Why has the spiritual heritage of this small land outlived great empires?
5. What in your life may seem insignificant, but God could use for something great?

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## Homework

### ♦ Practical Task

Find a map of Palestine. Mark Dan, Beersheba, Mount Hermon, the Dead Sea, and the Jordan Valley. Think of biblical events connected to these places.

### ♦ Creative Task

Compare the size of Palestine with your state or region. Make a sketch or mini-presentation: *“Why a small land became the center of great history.”*

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## Questions & Answers — Lesson 4 “The Greatness of a Small Land”

1. **Why was Palestine called a “small land”?**  
👉 Because its area is only about 12,000 square miles.
2. **Why did Palestine have influence?**  
👉 Because major trade routes passed through it.
3. **What makes Palestine important in history?**  
👉 This is where Christ lived, preached, was crucified, died, and rose again.
4. **What does God teach through little Palestine?**  
👉 What is small in God’s hands becomes great.
5. **What happened to the great empires compared to Israel?**  
👉 The empires vanished, but Israel remains.