

What is the significance of Perea in the Bible?

<https://www.gotquestions.org/Perea-in-the-Bible.html>

Perea is not directly named in the Bible. It is commonly alluded to, though, as the place “beyond” or “across” the Jordan (Matthew 4:15, 25; 19:1; Mark 3:8; 10:1; Luke 6:17; John 1:28-29; 3:26; 10:40). Both Jesus and John the Baptist traveled into Perea during the time of their ministries, and the area was under the jurisdiction of Herod the Great and, later, Herod Antipas.

The Bible does not give specifics about the geography of Perea, but the Jewish historian Josephus names the place and details its geographical information in *The Wars of the Jews*. He describes Perea as containing rough desert in addition to land watered by springs where olives, grapes, and palms were cultivated. The “length of Perea is from Machaerus to Pella, and its breadth from Philadelphia to Jordan; its northern parts are bounded by Pella. . . . The land of Moab is its southern border, and its eastern limits reach to Arabia, and Silbonitis, and besides to Philadelphene and Gerasa” (Book III, chapter 3.3).

The Old Testament states that the tribes of Gad, Reuben, and the half-tribe of Manasseh occupied the southern area of Perea, although it does not specifically name the region (Joshua 1:12-14). Many commentators believe that the area of Perea is almost identical to Gilead in the Old Testament, based on Joshua 22:9, which states, “So the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh left the Israelites at Shiloh in Canaan to return to Gilead, their own land.”

In the New Testament, Perea was an area visited by Christ, and many commentators speak of Jesus’ “Perean ministry,” as opposed to His Judean and Galilean ministries. The

normal route between Galilee and Judea took a Jewish traveler through Perea (thus avoiding Samaria). Jesus probably visited Perea during the part of His ministry recorded in Luke 9:51–18:34, although there is also much activity in that section of Luke that occurred outside of Perea. It also seems likely that Jesus visited Perea in Matthew 19:1 and John 10:40. Matthew relates that Jesus “left Galilee and went into the region of Judea to the other side of the Jordan. Large crowds followed him, and he healed them there.”

John the Baptist also went to Perea during his ministry. Evidently, he baptized people in Perea, since Scripture indicates that he performed baptisms in the Jordan at Bethany, a Perean city (John 1:28; 3:26; 10:40). This Bethany is not to be confused with the city where Martha and Mary lived, near Jerusalem. Perea is also thought to be the burial place of John the Baptist since he was beheaded in the Perean city of Machaerus, according to Josephus (*Antiquities of the Jews*, XVIII, 5.2).

In the first century, the Perean city of Pella proved to be a place of refuge when the Romans attacked Jerusalem. Christians in Jerusalem fled to Pella when Rome besieged the capital, eventually destroying it and the temple in AD 70. Jesus had foretold of this destruction: “Some of his disciples were remarking about how the temple was adorned with beautiful stones and with gifts dedicated to God. But Jesus said, ‘As for what you see here, the time will come when not one stone will be left on another; every one of them will be thrown down’” (Luke 21:5-6). Pella in the region of Perea was a shelter for the Christians when that happened.

Because of its central location and its connection to the Jordan River, Perea is a region that impacted both the Old and New Testaments. Although not mentioned by name in

the Bible, this land “across the Jordan” is significant because of its role in the history of Israel and in the ministries of Jesus and John the Baptist.