

~TRACHONITIS (45)

(Trach-o-ni'tis) [from a Greek root meaning, rough, probably a rough area]

- That region which, together with Ituraea, was under the administration of Philip, a Roman district ruler during the ministries of John the Baptizer and Jesus.
- In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was district ruler of Galilee, but Philip his brother was district ruler of the country of Ituraea and **Trachonitis**, and Lysanias was district ruler of Abilene. (Luke 3:1)
- The northern limits of **Trachonitis** were some 40 kilometers (25 miles) Southeast of Damascus in the northeastern part of Bashan. In size, it embraced a pear-shaped area of about 900 square kilometers (350 square miles)
- For the most part, exposed lava deposits with their deep fissures and holes cover the central portion of this country, leaving little land suitable for the cultivation of anything other than vineyards.
- It is a wild, inhospitable, and foreboding country, known today by the Arabic name *el Leja*, meaning, **the Refuge**, for **it affords a suitable hideout for fugitives from justice**.
- Judging from the ruins of its ancient cities, at one time the population of **Trachonitis** was much greater than at present. The absence of wood in the construction of these cities indicates that even in ancient times the country was probably as devoid of timber as it is today. Sufficient rainfall and the presence of springs make the raising of sheep and goats possible.
- **Trachonitis** is mentioned only once in the Bible, though Strabo and Josephus make several references to this region. From such secular sources it is learned that Roman Emperor Augustus included **Trachonitis** in the kingdom territory given to Herod the Great.
- Upon Herod's death, his son Philip received **Trachonitis** as part of his tetrarchy over which he ruled down to his death.

