

# The Message

## The Coming Of The King

### Small Group Discussion

⇒ *What were one or two of your favorite lessons or insights you gained from your reading this week – either in Knowing the Bible 101 or in your assigned passages from the Bible?*

### The New Testament

*A Quick Overview*

⇒ The \_\_\_\_\_ = The \_\_\_\_\_.

### The Old Testament (39 Books)

| HISTORY (17)    |                   | POETS (5)       | PROPHETS (17) |
|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| PENTATEUCH (5)  | Genesis           | Job             | Isaiah        |
|                 | Exodus            | Psalms          | Jeremiah      |
|                 | Leviticus         | Proverbs        | Lamentations  |
|                 | Numbers           | Ecclesiastes    | Ezekiel       |
|                 | Deuteronomy       | Song Of Solomon | Daniel        |
| HISTORICAL (12) | Joshua            |                 | Hosea         |
|                 | Judges            |                 | Joel          |
|                 | Ruth              |                 | Amos          |
|                 | First Samuel      |                 | Obadiah       |
|                 | Second Samuel     |                 | Jonah         |
|                 | First Kings       |                 | Micah         |
|                 | Second Kings      |                 | Nahum         |
|                 | First Chronicles  |                 | Habakkuk      |
|                 | Second Chronicles |                 | Zephaniah     |
|                 | Ezra              |                 | Haggai        |
|                 | Nehemiah          |                 | Zechariah     |
|                 | Esther            |                 | Malachi       |
|                 |                   | MAJOR (5)       |               |
|                 |                   | MINOR (12)      |               |

### The New Testament (27 Books)

| HISTORY (5) |                 | LETTERS (21)  | PROPHETS (1) |
|-------------|-----------------|---------------|--------------|
| GOSPELS (4) | Matthew         | Romans        | Revelation   |
|             | Mark            | 1 Corinthians |              |
|             | Luke            | 2 Corinthians |              |
|             | John            | Galatians     |              |
|             | Acts            | Ephesians     |              |
|             | Philippians     |               |              |
|             | Colossians      |               |              |
|             | 1 Thessalonians |               |              |
|             | 2 Thessalonians |               |              |
|             | 1 Timothy       |               |              |
|             | 2 Timothy       |               |              |
|             | Titus           |               |              |
|             | Philemon        |               |              |
|             | Hebrews         |               |              |
|             | James           |               |              |
|             | 1 Peter         |               |              |
|             | 2 Peter         |               |              |
|             | 1 John          |               |              |
|             | 2 John          |               |              |
|             | 3 John          |               |              |
|             | Jude            |               |              |
|             | PAUL (13)       |               |              |
|             | GENERAL (8)     |               |              |

## The Coming Of The King

### *The Storyline*

⇒ The Early Years

⇒ The Genealogies

⇒ The Birth Accounts (John The Baptist & Jesus)

She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins. All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"—which means, "God with us."  
(Matthew 1:21-23)

⇒ Flight To Egypt

He got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son."  
(Matthew 2:14-15)

⇒ Return To Nazareth

Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."  
"Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked. "Come and see," said Philip.  
(John 1:45-46)

## ⇒ Jesus At 12 At The Temple

"Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he was saying to them. Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men. (Luke 2:49-52)

## ⇒ John The Baptist

In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." (Matthew 3:1-2)

And this was his message: "After me will come one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." (Mark 1:7-8)

## ⇒ Baptism (Age 30)

"The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)

## ⇒ The Temptation

When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time. Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. (Luke 4:13-14)

## ⇒ Early Ministry Days (John's Gospel)

## ⇒ The Galilean Ministry

Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" (Mark 1:14-15)

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:3)

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:10)

For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:20)





The disciples came to him and asked, "Why do you speak to the people in parables?" He replied, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them." (Matthew 13:10-11)

News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee. As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told Jesus about her. So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them. That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. The whole town gathered at the door, and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was. (Mark 1:28-34)

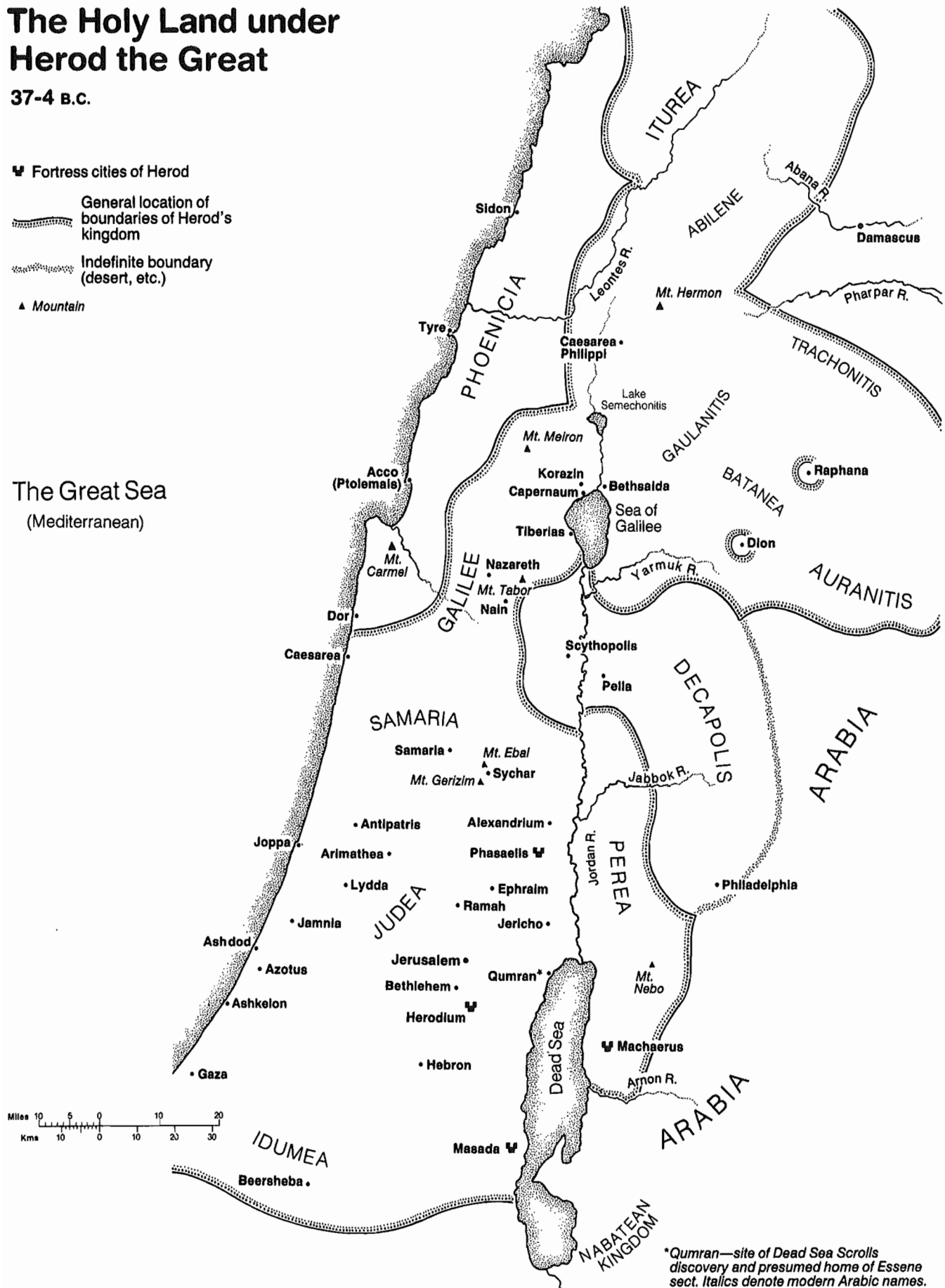
If I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you. (Luke 11:20)

# The Holy Land under Herod the Great

37-4 B.C.

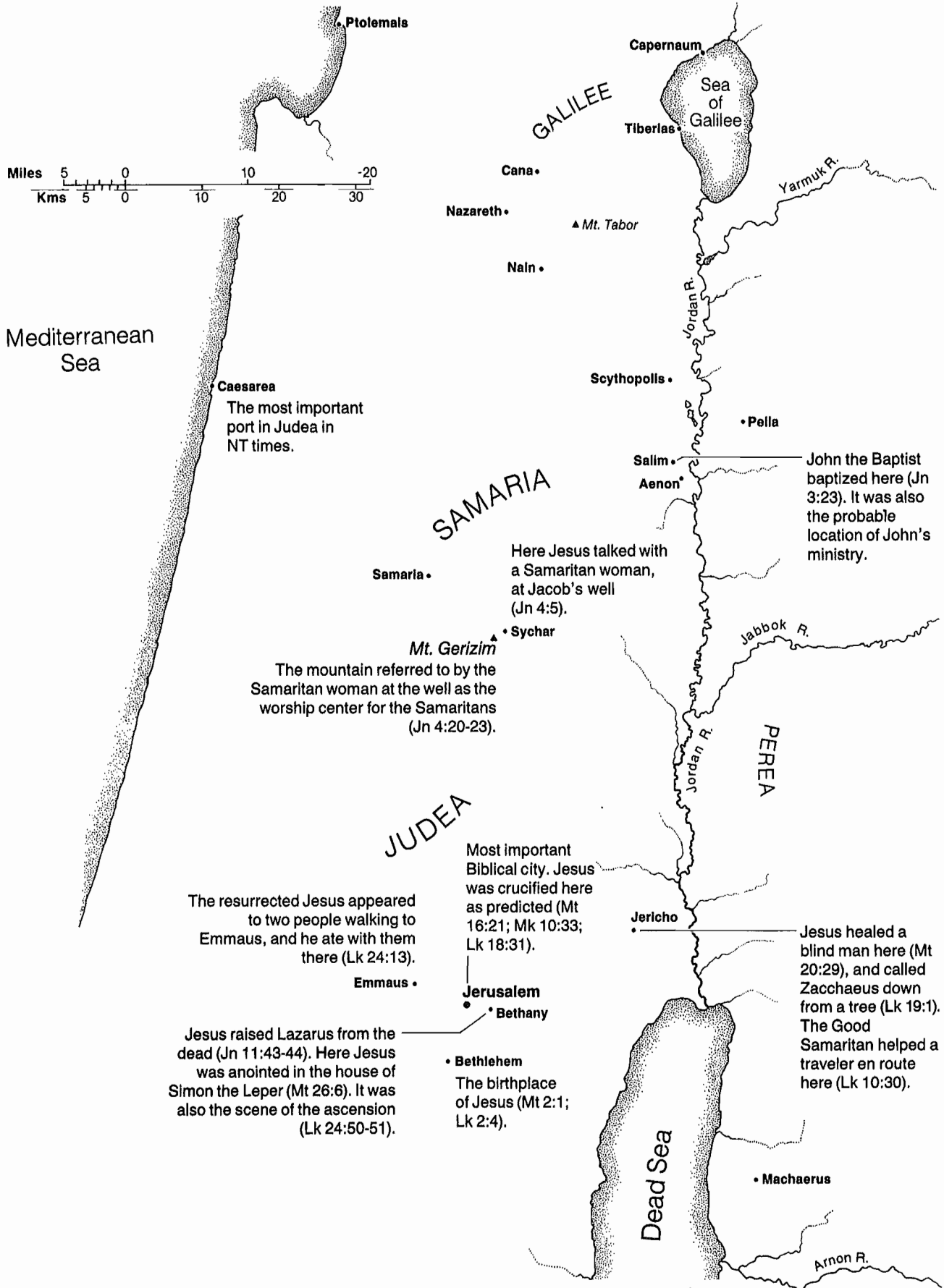
-  Fortress cities of Herod
-  General location of boundaries of Herod's kingdom
-  Indefinite boundary (desert, etc.)
-  Mountain

The Great Sea  
(Mediterranean)

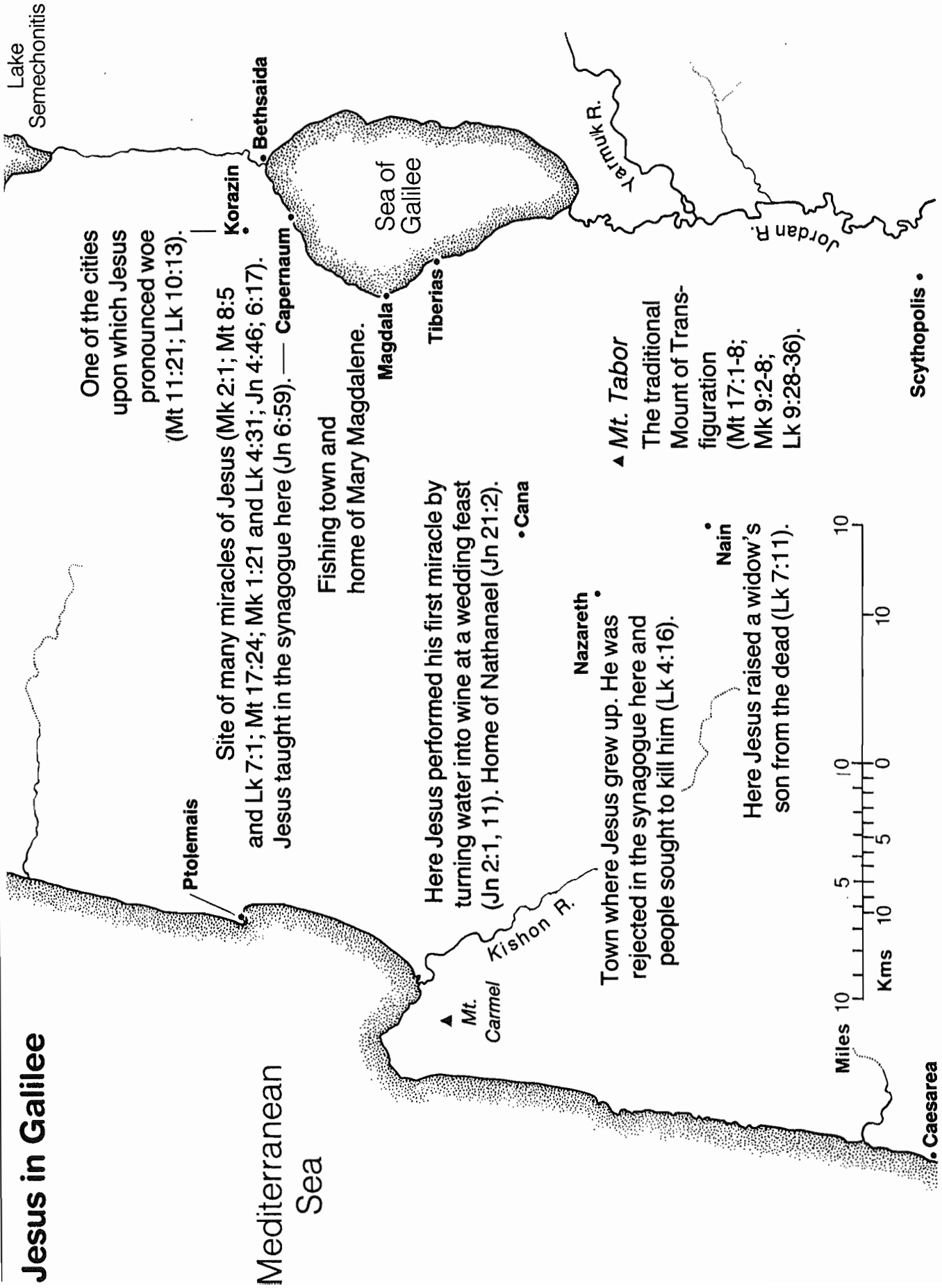


\*Qumran—site of Dead Sea Scrolls discovery and presumed home of Essene sect. Italics denote modern Arabic names.

# Jesus in Judea and Samaria



# Jesus in Galilee



One of the cities upon which Jesus pronounced woe (Mt 11:21; Lk 10:13).

Site of many miracles of Jesus (Mk 2:1; Mt 8:5 and Lk 7:1; Mt 17:24; Mk 1:21 and Lk 4:31; Jn 4:46; 6:17). Jesus taught in the synagogue here (Jn 6:59). — Capernaum

Fishing town and home of Mary Magdalene.

Here Jesus performed his first miracle by turning water into wine at a wedding feast (Jn 2:1, 11). Home of Nathanael (Jn 21:2).

• Cana

Town where Jesus grew up. He was rejected in the synagogue here and people sought to kill him (Lk 4:16).

Here Jesus raised a widow's son from the dead (Lk 7:11).

▲ Mt. Tabor  
The traditional Mount of Transfiguration (Mt 17:1-8; Mk 9:2-8; Lk 9:28-36).



• Caesarea

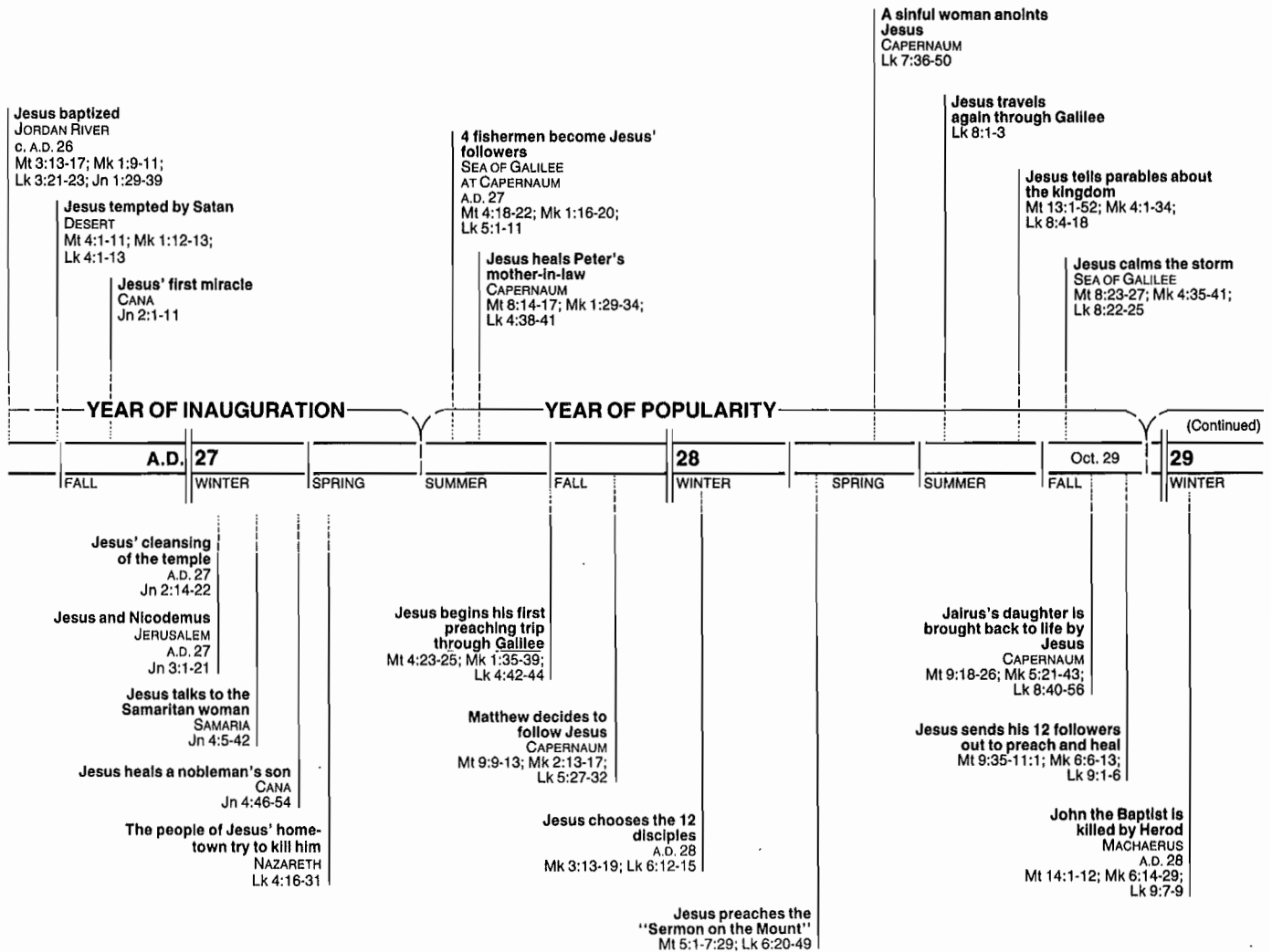
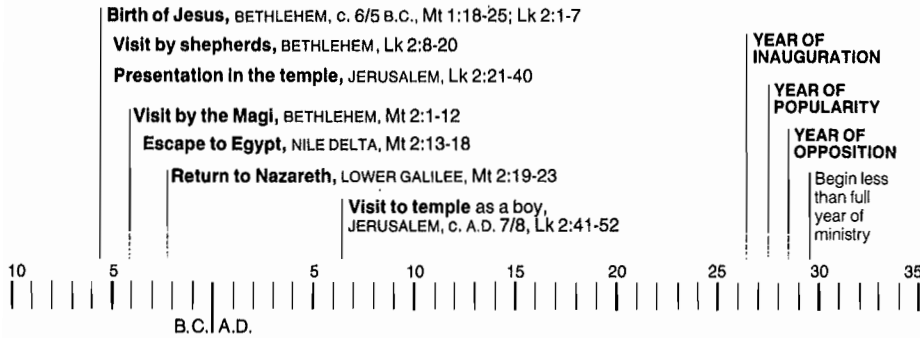
• Scythopolis



# The Life of Christ

## CHILDHOOD

*Italics denote date held in question by scholars*



Dotted lines leading to the timeline are meant to define sequence of events only. Exact dates, even year dates, are generally unknown.

# The Life of Christ

(Continued)

## THE LAST WEEK

**Jesus feeds 5,000 people**  
NEAR BETHSAIDA  
Spring, A.D. 29  
Mt 14:13-21; Mk 6:30-44;  
Lk 9:10-17; Jn 6:1-14

**Jesus walks on water**  
Mt 14:22-23; Mk 6:45-52;  
Jn 6:16-21

**Jesus withdraws to Tyre and Sidon**  
Mt 15:21-28; Mk 7:24-30

**Jesus feeds 4,000 people**  
Mt 15:32-39; Mk 8:1-9

**Peter says that Jesus is the Son of God**  
Mt 16:13-20; Mk 8:27-30;  
Lk 9:18-21

**Jesus tells his disciples he is going to die soon**  
CAESAREA PHILIPPI  
Mt 16:21-26; Mk 8:31-37;  
Lk 9:22-25

**Jesus is transfigured**  
Mt 17:1-13; Mk 9:2-13;  
Lk 9:28-36

**Jesus pays his temple taxes**  
CAPERNAUM  
Later in that year  
Mt 17:24-27

**Jesus begins his last trip to Jerusalem**  
A.D. 30  
Lk 17:11

**Jesus blesses the little children**  
ACROSS THE JORDAN  
Mt 19:13-15; Mk 10:13-16;  
Lk 18:15-17

**Jesus talks to the rich young man**  
ACROSS THE JORDAN  
Mt 19:16-30; Mk 10:17-31;  
Lk 18:18-30

**Jesus again tells about his death and resurrection**  
NEAR THE JORDAN  
Mt 20:17-19; Mk 10:32-34;  
Lk 18:31-34

**Jesus heals blind Bartimaeus**  
JERICHO  
Mt 20:29-34; Mk 10:46-52;  
Lk 18:35-43

**Jesus talks to Zacchaeus**  
JERICHO  
Lk 19:1-10

**Jesus returns to Bethany to visit Mary and Martha**  
BETHANY  
Jn 11:55-12:1

**The Triumphal Entry, JERUSALEM, Sunday**  
Mt 21:1-11; Mk 11:1-10; Lk 19:29-44;  
Jn 12:12-19

**Jesus curses the fig tree**  
Monday Mt 21:18-19; Mk 11:12-14

**Jesus cleanses the temple**  
Monday Mt 21:12-13; Mk 11:15-18

**The authority of Jesus questioned**  
Tuesday Mt 21:23-27;  
Mk 11:27-33; Lk 20:1-8

**Jesus teaches in the temple**  
Tuesday Mt 21:28-23:39; Mk 12:1-44;  
Lk 20:9-21:4

**Jesus anointed, BETHANY, Tuesday**  
Mt 26:6-13; Mk 14:3-9; Jn 12:2-11

**The plot against Jesus**  
Wednesday Mt 26:14-16; Mk 14:10-11;  
Lk 22:3-6

**The Last Supper**  
Thursday Mt 26:17-29; Mk 14:12-25;  
Lk 22:7-20; Jn 13:1-38

**Jesus comforts the disciples**  
Thursday Jn 14:1-16:33

**Gethsemane, Thursday**  
Mt 26:36-46; Mk 14:32-42; Lk 22:40-46

**Jesus' arrest and trial**  
Thursday night and Friday  
Mt 26:47-27:26; Mk 14:43-15:15;  
Lk 22:47-23:25; Jn 18:2-19:16

**Jesus' crucifixion and death, GOLGOTHA,**  
Friday Mt 27:27-56; Mk 15:16-41;  
Lk 23:26-49; Jn 19:17-30

**The burial of Jesus, JOSEPH'S TOMB; Friday**  
Mt 27:57-66; Mk 15:42-47; Lk 23:50-56;  
Jn 19:31-42

## YEAR OF OPPOSITION

(Continued)



**Jesus attends the Feast of Tabernacles**  
JERUSALEM  
October A.D. 29  
Jn 7:11-52

**Jesus heals a man who was born blind**  
JERUSALEM  
Jn 9:1-41

**Jesus visits Mary and Martha**  
BETHANY  
Lk 10:38-42

**Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead**  
BETHANY  
Winter, A.D. 29  
Jn 11:1-44

## AFTER THE RESURRECTION

**The empty tomb, JERUSALEM, Sunday**  
Mt 28:1-10; Mk 16:1-8; Lk 24:1-12;  
Jn 20:1-10

**Mary Magdalene sees Jesus in the garden, JERUSALEM, Sunday**  
Mk 16:9-11; Jn 20:11-18

**Jesus appears to the two going to Emmaus, Sunday** Mk 16:12-13;  
Lk 24:13-35

**Jesus appears to 10 disciples, JERUSALEM, Sunday** Mk 16:14;  
Lk 24:36-43; Jn 20:19-25

**Jesus appears to the 11 disciples, JERUSALEM, One week later**  
Jn 20:26-31

**Jesus talks with some of his disciples, SEA OF GALILEE, One week later**  
Jn 21:1-25

**Jesus ascends to his Father in heaven, MT OF OLIVES, 40 days later**  
Mt 28:16-20; Mk 16:19-20; Lk 24:44-53

Dotted lines leading to the timeline are meant to define sequence of events only. Exact dates, even year dates, are generally unknown.

## ⇒ The Growing Storm

Jesus said to them, "I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?" "We are not stoning you for any of these," replied the Jews, "but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God." (John 10:32-33)

Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus. (Mark 3:6)

They were on their way up to Jerusalem, with Jesus leading the way, and the disciples were astonished, while those who followed were afraid. Again he took the Twelve aside and told them what was going to happen to him. "We are going up to Jerusalem," he said, "and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise." (Mark 10:32-34)

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. (Mark 10:45)

## ⇒ The Last Week

He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you." (Luke 22:19-20)

He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." (Luke 24:44-47)

## ⇒ The Final Forty

After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. (Acts 1:3)

## ⇒ The Ascension

## The Kingdom Of God . . .

### *The Two Stages*

Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:20-21)

If I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you. (Luke 11:20)

While they were listening to this, he went on to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once. (Luke 19:11)

"The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" (Mark 1:15)

Those who desire to be part of Jesus' new community (the church) and part of the Kingdom of God (God's rule in people's hearts and lives) must forsake false gods, renounce self-worship and evil, and turn to Jesus as Lord and Master. The call to repentance is nothing less than a summons to abandonment of sin and to personal faith, whereby people are called to trust in the saving work of the Lord on their behalf instead of thinking they can save themselves. . . . Indeed, the whole of the NT can be understood as a call to repentance and faith.

(*"The Theology Of The New Testament"*, *English Standard Version Study Bible*)

I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. (John 5:24)

## The Synoptic Gospels

*Matthew, Mark & Luke*

### Matthew

⇒ *Author: Matthew (Levi)*

⇒ *Date: Late 50's-Early 60's*

⇒ *Audience: Jews*

⇒ *Purpose: Jesus Is The Messiah*

⇒ *Key Points*

- ✓ Fulfillment Of Prophecy
- ✓ Jesus' Teaching
- ✓ Jesus The King

### Mark

⇒ *Author: John Mark*

⇒ *Date & Place: Rome, Mid-Late 50's*

⇒ *Audience: Roman Gentiles*

⇒ *Key Points*

- ✓ First Gospel Written
- ✓ Docudrama
- ✓ Most Vivid & Detailed
- ✓ Less Teaching
- ✓ Jesus The Servant

**Luke**

⇒ *Author: Luke (Doctor)*

⇒ *Date: Early A.D. 60's*

⇒ *Audience: Theophilus & Gentiles*

⇒ *Key Points*

- ✓ Careful Research
- ✓ Healings, Money, Prayer, Women & The Holy Spirit
- ✓ Unique Teaching (Christmas, Good Samaritan, Prodigal Son, etc.)

**The Gospel Of John**  
*The Rest Of The Story*

⇒ *Author: Apostle John*

⇒ *Date & Place: Ephesus, 70-100*

⇒ *Audience: Both Jews & Gentiles In Asia Minor*

⇒ *Different From The Synoptics*

⇒ *Key Points*

- ✓ Jesus Is God

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. (John 1:1-3)

No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known. (John 1:18)

✓ Eternal Life

He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

(John 1:11-12)

✓ His Driving Passion

By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.

(John 5:30)

## Your Assignment

- Read *Knowing The Bible 101*
  - Chapter 9: The Church Is Born (Part 1) – pages 230-242
  - Chapter 10: The Epistles – pages 257-270 & 281-285
  
- Bible Passages
  - Acts 1:1-11
  - Acts 2
  - Acts 4
  - Acts 5:12-42
  - Acts 6:1-7
  - Acts 8:1-7
  - Acts 9:32-10:48
  - Acts 11:19-21
  - James 1
  - James 2:14-25
  - James 3:1-12
  - James 4:1-10
  - 1 Peter 1:1-9
  - 1 Peter 2:13-3:9
  - 1 Peter 4:7-19
  - 1 Peter 5:6-9
  - 2 Peter 1:1-11
  - 2 Peter 3
  - 1 John 1
  - 1 John 3
  - Hebrews 1:1-4
  - Hebrews 2:14-18
  - Hebrews 4:14-16
  - Hebrews 8
  - Hebrews 9



# BACKGROUND TO THE NEW TESTAMENT

## THE TIME BETWEEN THE TESTAMENTS

Most of the writers of the NT grew up in the world of “Second Temple Judaism,” the time between the temple’s reconstruction (516 B.C.) and its final destruction (A.D. 70). This period introduced changes into the political structure, culture, and religion of the OT world.

### **Sources of Information**

Among the many resources about Second Temple Judaism, the most substantial are the Apocrypha and the pseudepigrapha of the OT, the writings of Josephus (c. A.D. 37–100), and the writings of the Jewish philosopher Philo (c. 20 B.C.–A.D. 50). The 1946–1947 discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls not only provided new documents from the Second Temple era but also led to different ways of reading and understanding previously known material. The Targums (Aramaic translations and paraphrases of the Bible) and rabbinic literature (which developed over centuries but attained its current written form after the time of the NT) also provide some indirect evidence of this period. Because Second Temple Judaism overlaps with the first century, the NT itself is a primary source of information about the life, thought, conditions, and situations of that time.

#### *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha*

The Apocrypha and pseudepigrapha are collections of Jewish writings from the period of Second Temple Judaism. Most of the 15 (or 14) books of the Apocrypha are included in the canon of the Orthodox and Roman Catholic traditions, and excerpts from them are still read regularly in some Anglican churches. (For more information, see *The Apocrypha*.)

The word “pseudepigrapha” means “false inscription” or “false title” (referring to the name of the supposed “author” attached to each one). “False” is more a judgment of the names with which the writings are traditionally associated than of their content. Most of these writings represent the beliefs of distinctive groups or schools (or in some cases just individuals) connecting themselves with the name of a notable person of antiquity, such as Enoch, Noah, Moses, or Ezra. Modern collections of the pseudepigrapha contain more than 60 titles.

#### *The Dead Sea Scrolls*

Thousands of documents and fragments make up the Dead Sea Scrolls. They contain parts of all OT books except Esther, as well as parts of some apocryphal and pseudepigraphal writings. “Sectarian documents” are related to the organization, worship, and thought of the group that collected and wrote them.

### **History**

Second Temple Judaism emerged in the fifth century B.C. during the Persian Empire, which was the dominant power at the end of OT history. The Hebrews, both living in their own land and scattered elsewhere, seem to have had a fairly ordinary existence, apart from events such as rebuilding the temple and the walls of Jerusalem. The book of Esther, however, demonstrates how quickly serious crises could develop for the Jews.

#### *The Hellenistic Period (331–164 B.C.)*

In the 330s B.C. the Persians were supplanted by the Greeks under Alexander the Great (ruled 334–323). In addition to military conquest and political control, Alexander was intent to spread Greek (Hellenistic) culture, including use of the Greek language.

The Jews simply shifted allegiance to Alexander and, at first, were generally left alone. Following Alexander’s death and the ensuing struggles, his empire was divided among four of his generals.

From 320 to 198 B.C., the Jews were controlled by the Egyptian Ptolemaic Empire. A sizable Jewish community also grew in Egypt, and a large Jewish colony in Alexandria was influential well past the time of Christ (cf. Apollos, Acts 18:24). A Greek translation of the Pentateuch was made in Egypt c. 250 B.C., and of the rest of the OT by about 130 B.C. (together commonly called the Septuagint). Most of Palestine’s countryside, outside Jerusalem, adopted Greek culture (Hellenism).

In about 198 B.C., the Seleucid (Syrian) Empire to the north of Palestine gained control over the Jews. The Seleucids attempted to spread Hellenism throughout their empire. The Jews were forbidden, on pain of death, to practice their traditional way of life, including their religion. The Jerusalem temple was turned into a pagan shrine, and persecution became prevalent.

**Major Periods within Second Temple Judaism**

Second Temple Judaism developed as political authority changed hands from the Persians to the Greeks, to the Jewish Hasmoneans, and finally to the Romans.

|                                                                                                                             |                                  |                  |                 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| 539–331 B.C.                                                                                                                | 331–164 B.C.                     | 164–63 B.C.      | 63 B.C.–A.D. 70 |
| The Persian Period<br>The Hellenistic Period<br>Ptolemaic (Egyptian) Period (320–198)<br>Seleucid (Syrian) Period (198–164) | The Hasmonean (Maccabean) Period | The Roman Period |                 |

Mattathias, an aged priest, along with his five sons, led a revolt. After Mattathias’s death, leadership fell to one of his sons, Judas (called “Maccabaeus”). Judas and his successors eventually won independence. In 164 B.C. the temple was cleansed, and the daily burnt offering and other religious ceremonies resumed. The event is still commemorated by Jews each December as Hanukkah, the “Feast of Lights.”

*The Hasmonean (Maccabean) Period (164–63 B.C.)*

During the Maccabean period (164–63 B.C.) all rulers were from the same family of Jewish priests (also called the “Hasmonean” family after the Hebrew name of Simon, an early Maccabean leader). Nine rulers followed Judas Maccabaeus to the throne, including two of his brothers. From the second generation onward, the Maccabean rulers became progressively dictatorial, corrupt, immoral, and even pagan. Internal strife led Jewish leaders to ask the Roman general Pompey to come and restore order. Pompey did so, but he also brought Roman rule, which began in 63 B.C. and lasted into the fourth century A.D.

*The Roman Period (63 B.C.–A.D. 135)*

When Pompey took Jerusalem, he entered the temple and even the Most Holy Place. To the Jews, this was the ultimate insult and sacrilege. The Romans could not understand why the Jews resented the various exercises of privilege and control by their conqueror. Hence, deep suspicion and ill will began growing, lasting over a century until the Jews rebelled and the Romans destroyed the Jewish state. The NT reader must remain aware of this seething undercurrent that colors much of what takes place, even during the ministry of Jesus.

In the centuries before this, Greece had conquered the ancient world and left its intellectual and cultural mark. The Romans built on this through political achievements. Paul and other travelers made good use of the vast system of Roman roads. Roman government, organization, law, money, taxation, culture, religion, army, and demands were everywhere. “Roman Peace”

(*Pax Romana*) was enforced by arms but brought a measure of security and stability to the empire. The levels of its society were clearly understood, and the higher levels often oppressed the lowest. In most strata of society, morals were degenerate. Some captured peoples were restless, yearning to be free from Rome—none more than the Jews. Many, like the prophetess Anna, were patiently “waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem” (Luke 2:38).

Roman influence, good and bad, was an ever-present reality in the NT world. Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, prayed for a salvation that combined deliverance “from our enemies” with increased religious fervor, “that we might ... serve him [the Lord] without fear, in holiness and righteousness” (Luke 1:70–75). One Jewish group, the Zealots, sought violent, armed rebellion for religious reasons. The dominion of the Romans over the land where Jesus lived was most evident through the governmental structures they established, the rulers they appointed, and the actions they carried out. The Jewish Sanhedrin, or Council (a combination civil-religious body), predated the coming of the Romans. It retained broad authority, but always under the watchful eye of Rome. The high priest was the head of these 70 (or 72), but rulers under the Romans removed and appointed high priests at will (in spite of the OT provision that the high priesthood was for life). Tax collectors collected taxes for Rome. They were given, and many used, wide freedom in the amount they collected. The Jews hated them for collaborating with the Romans; they suspected that these tax collectors collected enough to satisfy not only their Roman masters but also their own greed.

In 37 B.C. the Roman senate appointed Herod the Great to be “king” of all Palestine. Until his death in 4 B.C., he maintained this position by cooperating with whatever Roman group or emperor happened to be in power. He was king when Jesus was born (c. 5 B.C.). It was Herod who killed the boy babies in Bethlehem (Matt. 2:16–18), an unsurprising atrocity, similar in character to his treatment of friends and family.

Herod carried out great building projects. About 20/19 B.C. he began enlarging and reconstructing the temple in Jerusalem. The main work was completed fairly quickly, but additional improvements continued until A.D. 64 (cf. John 2:20).

Herod’s will divided his kingdom between three sons. After changing and ratifying Herod’s will, Roman authorities made Archelaus the ethnarch (ruler of half a “kingdom”) of Judea, Samaria, and Idumea. Mismanagement led to his banishment in A.D. 6 (see Matt. 2:22). He was succeeded by governors, the best known being Pontius Pilate, who ruled from A.D. 26 to 36. Pilate was governor during (1) the ministry of Jesus (c. A.D. 27–30 or 30–33), (2) Pentecost, (3) the earliest days of the church, (4) Stephen’s speech and death, and (5) the beginnings of Christian missions.

The second of Herod’s sons, Philip, ruled as tetrarch (ruler of a fourth of a “kingdom”) over Ituraea and Trachonitis, areas northeast of Galilee (Luke 3:1). At his death (A.D. 34) his territory was briefly assigned to the governors who also ruled Judea. Agrippa I (Herod the Great’s grandson) was given this territory, with the title “king,” in A.D. 37.

The third of Herod the Great’s sons, Herod Antipas (often simply called “Herod” or “Herod the tetrarch” in the Gospels and Acts; see chart of Herodian Dynasty) was tetrarch of Galilee and Perea from 4 B.C. until A.D. 39. While visiting his half brother Herod Philip (not the tetrarch), Antipas became infatuated with Philip’s wife, Herodias, daughter of another half brother, Aristobulus, and mother of Philip’s daughter Salome (cf. Mark 6:22ff.). Contrary to OT law (Lev. 18:16; 20:21), Antipas married her. The denunciation of this union precipitated Herodias’s anger against John the Baptist and eventually his imprisonment and death (Matt. 14:4; Mark 6:17–19; Luke 3:19–20).

Antipas (at Herodias's request) asked Emperor Gaius to give him the title of "king," the same as that given to Herodias's brother, Agrippa I. Agrippa charged Herod Antipas with plotting insurrection. Antipas, accompanied by Herodias, was exiled to Gaul (modern France) in A.D. 39. Antipas's former territory was then given to Agrippa.

In A.D. 41 the former territory of Archelaus was added to that of Agrippa, thus giving him the same title and virtually the same territory that his grandfather (Herod the Great) had held. During his kingship James, the brother of John, was beheaded (Acts 12:2), and Peter was imprisoned but freed by an angel (Acts 12:3–19). Agrippa was struck by an angel and died in Caesarea in A.D. 44 (Acts 12:23). Roman governors again ruled after this time. In A.D. 53 Herod Agrippa II (son of Agrippa I) became "king" of Ituraea and Trachonitis. Galilee and Perea were added to his domain in A.D. 56 or 61.

Two other Roman governors, Felix (A.D. 52–60) and Festus (60–62), appear in the biblical account. Paul was held prisoner and given judicial hearings by both (Acts 24:10–27; 25:8). While King Agrippa II and his sister Bernice were visiting Festus, Paul was again called on to make a defense (Acts 25:13–26:31). Festus transferred Paul to Rome for trial (Acts 26:32–28:16).

### **Adjustment after 586 B.C.**

With the Babylonian victory of 586 B.C., the Hebrews faced loss of land, monarchy, the city of Jerusalem, and their temple. They lived under the direct control of foreign rulers, without national identity. Bereft of their own rulers, the Jews found their religious system without political support for protection, implementation, or financial backing.

From this date onward, the majority of the Hebrews were scattered throughout the world. This scattering—the Diaspora, or "Dispersion"—presented a continual threat to racial, ethnic, and cultural identity. The latter included problems related to their distinctive religious outlook, including its ceremonial, dietary, and other practices pertaining to ritual purity. Wherever they lived immediately after 586 B.C. the Hebrews faced a "theological crisis." Why had the Lord permitted his people to be conquered? Was he still good, loving, caring, and able to protect them?

By the mid-300s B.C., the Hebrews had been back in their own land for two centuries. The second temple was functioning. But then the arrival of Hellenism, with the coming of Alexander the Great in 333 B.C. and the subsequent reign of his successors, intensified the crisis and introduced new threats.

The OT law, the Torah, had established twin foundational pillars for the proper response to the Lord with whom the Hebrews were in covenant relationship. These were (1) the *temple-centered, ceremonial* pillar and (2) the pillar of *observance of ethical and moral instructions*. Before the Babylonian exile in 586 B.C. Hebrew religion had been largely temple-centered and ceremonial; it was denounced by the OT prophets when not combined with a proper effect on life and behavior. The prophets insisted on obedience to God and condemned false trust in the temple and abuses of external forms. Unless the people showed the type of repentance that resulted in a godly life and a true relationship with God, the prophets warned that they would experience God's judgment, marked by the loss of their nation and land.

With the captivity of Judah (586 B.C.) the prophets had been vindicated. The corporate life of the nation was gone, and the temple was in rubble and ashes. Ceremonial worship was all but impossible. Under similar circumstances, most other ancient religions simply disappeared.

After the return from captivity (538 B.C.) the temple was rebuilt (516) and the priest-led ceremonial worship was reestablished in Jerusalem. But some Hebrews had decided that their

religion could survive without it. At the moment, they most needed an inspired message from the Lord, yet the prophets were silent (1 Macc. 4:44–46; 9:27; 14:41–42; Josephus, *Against Apion* 1.38–42; Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 11a; *Prayer of Azariah* 15; Dead Sea Scrolls, *Rule of the Community* 11). Even so, the Hebrew religion had begun a remarkable adjustment.

Though the Jewish people retained both the ceremonial pillar of their response to God and the moral-ethical pillar as well, the primary emphasis shifted away from the ceremonial to the moral-ethical. But to obey the law, one needed to know its content, which required study. As a result, the center of worship was no longer exclusively the temple with its liturgy but also the place of learning, the assembly, the local synagogue. The major religious leader was no longer only the priest but also the teacher-rabbi. Such adjustments required careful, detailed study. This resulted in new and different forms of interpretation and the birth of traditions, often additional laws, which supposedly expanded and clarified the written Torah. During the NT period these additional laws were taught and passed on both orally and in written form (note the frequent mention of “scribes” in the NT). Many people regarded these rabbinic traditions as having a divine origin, equal to the laws in the written Scriptures, but Jesus pronounced them “the tradition of men” (Mark 7:1–23, esp. v. 8).

Divisions grew within the Judaism of the Second Temple era. Some Jews lived in their ancestral land, others did not; some adopted Hellenistic culture, while others clung to the Hebraic one. (Such culturally oriented conflicts are behind the complaint of Acts 6:1.) The new interpretative methods and the additional traditions increasingly became the subject of disagreement. Groups competed for religious prestige and authority, political power, recognition as being wise, wealth, the satisfaction that they were really in the “right,” etc. Thus arose numerous parties, denominations, or sects. The best known are the Sadducees, Pharisees, Zealots, and Essenes. (See the article on Jewish Groups at the Time of the NT.) Most of their differences resulted from their distinctive traditions. One example of such differences is seen in the tensions between the Sadducees and Pharisees in Acts 23:6–9 and elsewhere.

Most people in the land of Israel belonged to none of these groups, being too busy earning a living and caring for their families. According to Josephus (*Jewish Antiquities* 18:11–17), the Pharisees were the most influential on the general public; the Sadducees came from aristocratic priestly families and were not generally popular. Most ordinary Jews were devoted to their nation and religion, and some (it is hard to know how many) were genuinely devoted to God (such as Zechariah and Elizabeth, Joseph and Mary, Simeon, and Anna; see Luke 1–2). From such as these came most of Jesus’ early followers. With contempt, the Jewish leaders regarded them as “this crowd that does not know the law” (John 7:49).

## **Conclusion**

The Jews revolted against the Romans in A.D. 66. Before the overthrow of the city and temple in A.D. 70, Jerusalem Christians fled to the Decapolis city of Pella (probably in response to Jesus’ warning and instruction, Matt. 24:15–16; Mark 13:14; Luke 21:20–24; cf. 19:43). Afterward, Jewish Christian activity during the first century in Jerusalem was limited, but seems to have continued in Galilee.

Roman victory over this Jewish revolt brought “The Time between the Testaments” to its end. The third era of Hebrew history, Rabbinic Judaism, began about A.D. 90, under Roman rule, and continues to this day. (See the article on The Bible and Contemporary Judaism.)

From the second century on, Jerusalem was a Gentile city, and Christianity became largely a Gentile movement.

## **Jewish and Roman Rulers**

| Date    | Roman Emperors             | Roman Prefects/ Procurators of Judea and Samaria | Roman Prefects/ Procurators of All Israel | Herodian Dynasty (37 B.C.–A.D. 93) | Herodian Dynasty (37 B.C.–A.D. 93) |            |               | Jewish High Priests |
|---------|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------|---------------|---------------------|
| B.C. 40 |                            |                                                  |                                           |                                    |                                    |            |               |                     |
| 38      |                            |                                                  |                                           | Herod the Great (37 B.C.–4 B.C.)   |                                    |            |               |                     |
| 36      |                            |                                                  |                                           |                                    |                                    |            |               |                     |
| 34      |                            |                                                  |                                           |                                    |                                    |            |               |                     |
| 32      |                            |                                                  |                                           |                                    |                                    |            |               |                     |
| 30      |                            |                                                  |                                           |                                    |                                    |            |               |                     |
| 28      | Augustus (31 B.C.–A.D. 14) |                                                  |                                           |                                    |                                    |            |               |                     |
| 26      |                            |                                                  |                                           |                                    |                                    |            |               |                     |
| 24      |                            |                                                  |                                           |                                    |                                    |            |               |                     |
| 22      |                            |                                                  |                                           |                                    |                                    |            |               |                     |
| 20      |                            |                                                  |                                           |                                    |                                    |            |               |                     |
| 18      |                            |                                                  |                                           |                                    |                                    |            |               |                     |
| 16      |                            |                                                  |                                           |                                    |                                    |            |               |                     |
| 14      |                            |                                                  |                                           |                                    |                                    |            |               |                     |
| 12      |                            |                                                  |                                           |                                    |                                    |            |               |                     |
| 10      |                            |                                                  |                                           |                                    |                                    |            |               |                     |
| 8       |                            |                                                  |                                           |                                    |                                    |            |               |                     |
| 6       |                            |                                                  |                                           |                                    |                                    |            |               |                     |
| 4       |                            |                                                  |                                           | Philip (4 B.C.–A.D.                | Archelaus (4 B.C.–                 | Antipas (4 | Joazar son of | Eleazar son of      |



|    |                       |                                |                                 |                            |  |  |                                    |                                          |                                    |
|----|-----------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|--|--|------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
|    |                       |                                |                                 |                            |  |  |                                    | (A.D. 18–36)                             |                                    |
| 22 |                       |                                |                                 |                            |  |  |                                    |                                          |                                    |
| 24 |                       |                                |                                 |                            |  |  |                                    |                                          |                                    |
| 26 |                       | Pontius Pilate (A.D. 26–36/37) |                                 |                            |  |  |                                    |                                          |                                    |
| 28 |                       |                                |                                 |                            |  |  |                                    |                                          |                                    |
| 30 |                       |                                |                                 |                            |  |  |                                    |                                          |                                    |
| 32 |                       |                                |                                 |                            |  |  |                                    |                                          |                                    |
| 34 |                       |                                |                                 |                            |  |  |                                    |                                          |                                    |
| 36 |                       | Marcellus (A.D. 36/37)         |                                 | Agrippa I (A.D. 37, 41–44) |  |  | Jonathan son of Annas (A.D. 36–37) | Theophilus son of Annas                  |                                    |
| 38 | Gaius (A.D. 37–41)    | Marullus (A.D. 37–41)          |                                 |                            |  |  |                                    | (A.D. 37–41)                             |                                    |
| 40 |                       |                                |                                 |                            |  |  |                                    | Simon Cantheras son of Boethus (A.D. 41) | Matthias son of Annas (A.D. 41–44) |
| 42 | Claudius (A.D. 41–54) |                                |                                 |                            |  |  |                                    |                                          |                                    |
| 44 |                       |                                | Fadus (A.D. 44–46)              | Agrippa II (A.D. 44–92/93) |  |  |                                    | Elionaeus son of Cantheras (A.D. 44–46)  |                                    |
| 46 |                       |                                | Tiberius Alexander (A.D. 46–48) |                            |  |  |                                    | Ananias son of Nedebaeus (A.D.           |                                    |



|    |                                    |  |                                |  |
|----|------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|--|
|    |                                    |  |                                |  |
| 48 |                                    |  | Ventidius Cumanus (A.D. 48–52) |  |
| 50 |                                    |  |                                |  |
| 52 |                                    |  | Felix (A.D. 52–60)             |  |
| 54 | Nero (A.D. 54–68)                  |  |                                |  |
| 56 |                                    |  |                                |  |
| 58 |                                    |  |                                |  |
| 60 |                                    |  | Porcius Festus (A.D. 60–62)    |  |
| 62 |                                    |  | Albinus (A.D. 62–64)           |  |
| 64 |                                    |  | Gesius Florus (A.D. 64–66)     |  |
| 66 |                                    |  |                                |  |
| 68 | Galba / Otho / Vitellius (A.D. 68) |  |                                |  |
| 70 | Vespasian (A.D. 69–79)             |  |                                |  |
| 72 |                                    |  |                                |  |
| 74 |                                    |  |                                |  |
| 76 |                                    |  |                                |  |

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| 47–58)                        |  |
|                               |  |
|                               |  |
|                               |  |
|                               |  |
|                               |  |
|                               |  |
| Ananus son of Annas (A.D. 62) |  |
|                               |  |
|                               |  |
|                               |  |
|                               |  |
|                               |  |

|     |                                     |  |  |  |  |  |
|-----|-------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|
| 78  | Titus<br>(A.D. 79–81)               |  |  |  |  |  |
| 80  | Domitian<br>(A.D. 81–96)            |  |  |  |  |  |
| 90  | Nerva<br>(A.D. 96–98)               |  |  |  |  |  |
| 100 | Trajan<br>(A.D. 98–117)             |  |  |  |  |  |
| 120 | Hadrian<br>(A.D. 117–138)           |  |  |  |  |  |
| 140 | Antonius Pius<br>(A.D. 138–161)     |  |  |  |  |  |
| 160 | Marcus Aurelius<br>(A.D. 161–180)   |  |  |  |  |  |
|     | with Lucius Verus<br>(A.D. 161–169) |  |  |  |  |  |

**Intertestamental Events Timeline**

|                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 334–330<br>B.C. | Alexander the Great (356–323 B.C.) sweeps through Asia Minor and conquers the Persian Empire, including Egypt and Mesopotamia (see notes on Dan. 7:3; 7:6; 8:5; 8:8; 8:20–22; 11:3; cf. 1 Macc. 1:1–7). Alexander imposes the Greek language and culture on all the nations he conquers, marking the beginning of the Hellenistic Age (ranging approximately from the death of Alexander the Great in 323 to the establishment of Roman Imperial rule around 30 B.C.). As a result of Alexander’s imposition of the Greek language on conquered kingdoms, the entire NT will later be written in Greek, and will be understandable throughout the ancient world. |
| 333             | Alexander the Great passes through Palestine (comprised of Judea and Galilee), extending the influence of Greek thought and culture throughout the region and also into the Judaism of the period. (“Palestine” derives from a Latin name the conquering                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

|         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|---------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|         | Romans later gave to this province [c. 63 B.C.] on the east coast of the Mediterranean Sea, comprising parts of modern Israel, Jordan, and Egypt.)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 323–281 | In the absence of legitimate heirs, following Alexander the Great's death in 323 B.C. (cf. 1 Macc. 1:5–9) four of his generals (called the <i>DIADOCHOI</i> , "successors") divide the conquered territory of his empire into fourths (which then included most of the known world throughout Europe and Asia Minor; see notes on Dan. 7:6; 8:8; 8:20–22; 11:4): (1) Antipater (and later Cassander and then Antigonus I Monophthalmus) ruled in Greece and Macedon; (2) Lysimachus took control in Thrace and much of Asia Minor; (3) Seleucus I Nicator assumed power in Mesopotamia and Persia; and (4) Ptolemy I Lagi Soter became sovereign of Egypt and Palestine.                                                                    |
| 310*    | Zeno of Citium (c. 334–262 B.C.) founds Stoicism in Athens, a philosophy which prizes logic, reason, and indifference toward pleasure and pain alike. Paul later encounters Stoics and Epicureans in Athens (see Acts 17:18).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 307*    | Epicurus (c. 341–270 B.C.) founds the Garden, an egalitarian community based upon friendship, in Athens (see Acts 17:18). The philosophical system of Epicureans stands somewhat opposite Stoicism in its pursuit of pleasure, especially emphasizing the importance of friendships and the luxurious enjoyment of eating, drinking, and other comforts.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 277     | By 277 B.C. three Hellenistic kingdoms stabilize out of the four divisions of Alexander the Great's kingdom: (1) the Antigonid dynasty in Macedonia (issuing from Alexander's general Antigonus I Monophthalmus, 382–301, and beginning with his son Demetrius I Poliorcetes in 294/293); (2) the Ptolemaic dynasty in Egypt (issuing from the general Ptolemy I Lagi Soter, 367–283); and (3) the Seleucid dynasty in Syria (issuing from the general Seleucus I Nicator, c. 358–281), the latter which also ruled much of Asia Minor from 312 to 64 (see Dan. 11:4–35 and notes there). Though Judea will later become controlled by the Seleucids in 198 B.C., it is initially under Ptolemaic (Egyptian) rule, with little disturbance. |
| 198     | The Seleucids gain control over Judea from the Ptolemies after the battle at Panium (see note on Dan. 11:15–16). They are led in victory by their king, Antiochus III the Great (reigned 223–187 B.C.; see notes on Dan. 11:10; 11:11–12; 11:13; 11:15–16; 11:17–19), the father of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (reigned 175–164/163; see notes on Dan. 8:9–10; 8:23; 8:25; 9:24–27; 11:21–23; 11:24; 11:25–27; 11:29–30; 11:33–35; 11:37–38).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 190     | Antiochus III the Great and the Seleucids are defeated by the Romans at the Battle of Magnesia (fought on the plains of Lydia, in modern Turkey) and forced to pay an indemnity in 12 annual payments. The Seleucids continue to rule over Judea, however.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 176*    | The Teacher of Righteousness, the founder of the Qumran community (perhaps the Essenes) which produced many of the so-called Dead Sea Scrolls, becomes active.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |

|         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|---------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 174     | The Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes (who reigned from 175 to 164/163 B.C. and was the son of Antiochus III the Great and brother of Seleucus IV Philopator, deposes the Zadokite high priest Onias III (2 Macc. 3:1–4:6), the son of Simon the Just (cf. <i>Sir.</i> 50:1–21). Onias III, who had functioned as the effective head of state for the Jewish people to that time, was replaced with his brother Jason (2 Macc. 4:7–22; see also note on Dan. 8:9–10). Jason in turn would be supplanted by Menelaus (2 Macc. 4:23–26), who was eventually put to death about 162 B.C. following a 10-year reign (2 Macc. 13:1–8). (“Zadokite” refers to the descendants of Zadok, a high priest during King David’s reign. Zadokites held a monopoly on the Jerusalem priesthood from the time of Solomon forward.) Antiochus IV takes on the name “Epiphanes,” meaning “[god] manifest” (cf. 1 Macc. 1:10), however his enemies would call him “Epimanes,” meaning “madman.” |
| 168/167 | Antiochus IV Epiphanes, led into the sanctuary by the high priest Menelaus, loots and desecrates the temple in Jerusalem (1 Macc. 1:20–24; 1:37–64; 2 Macc. 5:11–26; 6:2–5; see also notes on Dan. 11:28; 11:31–32). On Kislev (Nov.–Dec.) 25, 167 B.C. (1 Macc. 1:59), an idol devoted to Zeus (Jupiter) was erected in the temple (“the abomination that makes desolate”; cf. Dan. 11:31; 12:11) and shortly afterwards sacrifices (likely swine) were offered up on the altar in the “Most Holy Place.”                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 167/166 | Mattathias, the father of Judas and his brothers, leads the Maccabean Revolt against Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes (cf. 1 Macc. 2:1–48; see also notes on Dan. 11:28; 11:31–32; 11:33–35), dies (1 Macc. 2:49–70). See Rulers Foretold in Daniel 11.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 164     | Judas “Maccabeus,” third son of Mattathias and second leader of the revolt and later the Jewish government during 166/165–161/160 B.C. (1 Macc. 3:1–5:68; 6:18–54; 7:26–9:22; cf. 2 Maccabees 8; 10:14–38; 11:1–15; 12; 13:9–22; 14–15) purifies the temple—an event still remembered by Jews at Hanukkah (1 Macc. 4:36–61; see also notes on Dan. 8:12–14; 9:24).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 161*    | The Zadokite priest Onias IV migrates to Egypt and founds a rival temple at Leontopolis.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 152     | Jonathan (assumed leadership during 160–143/142 B.C.; cf. 1 Maccabees 9–12), brother of Judas Maccabeus, fifth son of Mattathias, and third leader of the revolt, accepts the high priesthood as a gift from Alexander Epiphanes (Balas) (1 Macc. 10:1–21), the son of Antiochus IV Epiphanes and pretender to the Seleucid throne. Three distinct sects within Judaism become active at this time: the Essenes (or perhaps Qumran community—the sect with which the Dead Sea Scrolls are most closely connected), the Pharisees (see note on John 1:24), and the Sadducees (see note on Matt. 3:7). See also Jewish Groups at the Time of the New Testament.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 142     | Jewish independence is recognized by Seleucid king Demetrius II Nicator (d. 125 B.C.; cf. 1 Macc. 13:31–42). Simon, brother of Judas Maccabeus and second son of Mattathias, is named “high priest and commander and leader” of the Judeans (1 Macc. 13:42; cf. 14:35, 41), effectively establishing the Hasmonean Dynasty. Simon rules                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

|               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|---------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|               | 142–135 B.C. (cf. 1 Maccabees 13–16). (“Hasmonean” is derived from the name of Hashman [see Josephus, <i>Jewish Antiquities</i> 12.265], great-grandfather of Mattathias.)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 135/134–104   | John Hyrcanus I, son of Simon, rules following his father’s murder (cf. 1 Macc. 16:11–24).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 113           | The Hasmonean king John Hyrcanus I destroys the Samaritan temple.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 104–103       | Judah Aristobulus I, oldest son of John Hyrcanus I, rules.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 103–76        | Alexander Jannaeus, youngest son of John Hyrcanus I, rules.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 88            | The Seleucid king Demetrius III Eukairos (son of Antiochus VIII Grypus) is invited by the opponents of Alexander Jannaeus to invade Palestine.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 76–67         | Salome Alexandra, wife of Alexander Jannaeus, rules.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 73–71         | Spartacus, a gladiator-slave, leads an ultimately unsuccessful slave revolt (known as the Third Servile War) against the Roman Republic.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 67            | Civil war breaks out in Judea between supporters of Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II, Hasmonean brothers. Aristobulus II, older son of Alexander Jannaeus, rules from 67 to 63 B.C. Hyrcanus II, younger son of Alexander Jannaeus, rules from 63 to 40 B.C. Herod the Great would eventually marry into the Hasmonean Dynasty through his union with the granddaughter of Aristobulus II, Mariamne I.                                                                                                                   |
| 64            | Syria becomes a Roman province, effectively establishing Roman rule on Palestine’s northern boundaries.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 63            | Aemilius Scaurus leads Pompey’s armies into Palestine, leading to Roman control over Palestine and thus marking the definitive end of Jewish political independence.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 47            | The Library of Alexandria is burned. Once the largest library in the world, probably containing half a million scrolls or volumes, it suffers the loss of many primary sources of ancient Greek literary texts, as well as translations or adaptations of important works written in other languages. According to the <i>Letter of Aristeas</i> , the Greek translation of the OT called the Septuagint (LXX) was begun for the needs of this library. No works housed in this once great library survived antiquity. |
| 44 (March 15) | Julius Caesar is murdered.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 43–40         | Parthian invasion and interregnum: Phasaël, Herod’s brother and tetrarch of Judea (“tetrarch” is a ruler of one of four divisions of a Roman country or province), is killed when the last Hasmonean, Antigonus, the son of Aristobulus II and nephew of Hyrcanus II, gains the support of the Parthians to the east and invades Judea.                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 40–37         | Mattathias Antigonus, son of Aristobulus II, rules from Jerusalem.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 40            | The Roman Senate declares Herod the Great “King of the Jews,” giving him vassal                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

|       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|       | rulership over Palestine (comprised of the provinces Judea and Galilee). His rule does not truly begin until 37 B.C., however, when he is able to recapture Jerusalem from Antigonus.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 37–4  | Herod the Great rules from 37 to 4 B.C. and is the “legitimate” successor to the Hasmonean Dynasty through his marriage to Mariamne I, granddaughter of both Aristobulus II and Hyrcanus II (her parents were first cousins). Herod recaptures Jerusalem from Antigonus and the Parthians in 37 B.C. through the help of Roman forces, to whom he had fled for help three years earlier.                                                            |
| 37–31 | Herod the Great fortifies Masada, a mountaintop fortress in southeast Israel on the southwest shore of the Dead Sea, as a refuge in case of revolt. (Masada would be the site of the last stand of the Zealot Jewish community against the Romans during the revolt of A.D. 66–73. After a two-year siege, the Zealots chose to commit mass suicide rather than surrender to the Romans.)                                                           |
| 31    | Octavian (later called Caesar Augustus) defeats Antony and Cleopatra in the Battle of Actium, effectively consolidating his de facto power as the sole ruler of the Roman Empire. His reign lasted until his death in A.D. 14, with Tiberius assuming power after him.                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 30    | Egypt becomes a Roman province.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 20/19 | Herod the Great begins rebuilding the temple proper in Jerusalem.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 5*    | Jesus of Nazareth is born within the province of Judea in the town of Bethlehem during the final years of the reign of Herod the Great (cf. notes on Matt. 2:1; Luke 1:5–7; 2:2).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 4     | Herod the Great dies, and his kingdom is divided between his three surviving sons: (1) Herod Archelaus (“Herod the Ethnarch”) became ethnarch of Judea, Samaria, and Idumea (or Edom; ruled 4 B.C.–A.D. 6; “ethnarch” refers to ruler of a people under the Roman Empire); (2) Herod Antipas became tetrarch of Galilee and Perea (ruled 4 B.C.–A.D. 39); and (3) Herod Philip II became tetrarch of Iturea and Trachonitis (ruled 4 B.C.–A.D. 34). |

### **The Herodian Dynasty**

This simplified version of the Herodian family tree focuses on those most relevant to NT study. Dates indicate period of reign, unless marked otherwise. Solid lines signify descent; dotted lines signify marriage. Abbreviations: d. = died; c. = circa (around, about).

# THE ROMAN EMPIRE AND THE GRECO- ROMAN WORLD AT THE TIME OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

The first-century Roman world of the NT lay culturally at the intersection of Hellenism (Greek language and culture) and Roman imperial rule. Hence, to understand this world, it is important first to explore the spread of Hellenism and the rise of Roman might.

## **History**

Although the Greeks had settled and conducted commerce throughout the Mediterranean world long before Alexander the Great (356–323 B.C.), this Macedonian conqueror is most associated with the spread of Hellenistic (i.e., Greek) culture. Alexander, tutored in Greek philosophy and culture by Aristotle, inherited the reins of Macedonian and Greek leadership from his father, Philip, in 336 B.C. In short order, Alexander marched through Asia Minor, continued south through Syria and Palestine, was welcomed as ruler of Egypt, and conquered the forces of Persia. Alexander was received with awe in many of these lands, which led their inhabitants (esp. members of the various ruling elites) to accelerate their reception of Hellenistic culture—including Greek language, education, and religion.

In 330 B.C. Alexander received the title of “Great King” of Persia. Yet his short life ended in 323 B.C. without a clear successor. Eventually a few of Alexander’s generals (later termed the *DIADOCHOI*, meaning “successors”) claimed different portions of his former territory, establishing their own dynastic lines—the Ptolemies of Egypt, the Seleucids of Persia (and portions of Asia Minor), and the Antigonids of Macedon (see map, *The Empires of Daniel’s Visions: The Greeks*).

### **The Rise of the Roman Empire**

*c. 753 B.C.–A.D. 117*

From its earliest beginnings as a small kingdom centered in Rome, the Roman Empire eventually grew to become one of the most powerful empires the world has ever known. After solidifying control over the Italian peninsula, the Romans fought a series of wars (the Punic Wars) with the growing Carthaginian Empire and absorbed their territory in Africa and Hispania. Pushing eastward into Greece, Asia, and Syria, and westward into Gallia (Gaul) and western Hispania, the Romans continued to expand their territory until they ruled the entire Mediterranean region by A.D. 117.

As it had so frequently before, Judea again lay between the competing powers of Egypt and Mesopotamia. Although first under Ptolemaic control, Judea was absorbed into the Seleucid Empire (198 B.C.) during the reign of Antiochus III “the Great” (see maps, *The Empires of Daniel’s Visions: Early and The Empires of Daniel’s Visions: Late*). The appeal of Hellenism was not lost on the Judeans, and some sought a wholesale adoption of Greek practices through sending their sons to Greek secondary schools. Pro- and anti-Hellenistic factions formed in Judea. Meanwhile, the Seleucid ruler Antiochus IV “Epiphanes,” desiring a subservient and financially supportive Judea, decided to force Hellenistic religious practices on the Jewish people. Circumcision was declared illegal, scriptural texts were destroyed, and pagan worship was instituted. In 168/167 B.C. the Jerusalem temple was despoiled, as prophesied in Daniel (Dan. 11:31; cf. 9:27; 12:11; 1 Macc. 1:54); Jesus draws on this image of the “abomination of desolation” in reference to future events (Matt. 24:15–16).

In reaction to the policies of Antiochus IV, the Hasmonean family (also known as the Maccabees) launched an uprising led by Mattathias and his sons (esp. Judas Maccabeus, Jonathan, and Simon). A combination of guerilla warfare and larger geopolitics (esp. Seleucid losses in Asia Minor and internal coups) led to the success of this Jewish rebellion (see map, *The Maccabean Kingdom*). For several decades Jews regained autonomy over Judea. The Hasmoneans established their own royal dynasty, with Jonathan also proclaiming himself high priest (152 B.C.) although he was not of the proper Zadokite lineage. Many of the Jewish factions

known during the time of the NT (e.g., Pharisees, Essenes, etc.) likely stem from reactions pro and con to the Hasmonean reign.

### **The First Jewish Revolt**

*A.D. 66–73*

Years of growing Jewish resentment toward Roman rule and paganism eventually erupted in full-scale revolt in A.D. 66. The revolt was ignited in Caesarea and quickly spread to Jerusalem, Judea, Idumea, parts of Samaria, and Galilee. The following spring, the Roman general Vespasian began his systematic campaign to crush the rebellion, beginning in Galilee and then moving south into Samaria and along the coast. Meanwhile, Jewish forces began to fight among themselves in a bitter power struggle between various Zealots and aristocratic leaders, thus weakening their ability to fend off the Romans as they advanced into Judea. In A.D. 70 the Romans captured Jerusalem and destroyed the temple, but isolated resistance still continued even as late as A.D. 73, when the stronghold of Masada was finally taken by the Romans.

Meanwhile, in the west, Roman power was growing. Successive wars with Carthage and Macedon left Rome victorious over the western Mediterranean by 146 B.C. Roman expansion continued eastward toward Syria (see map, *The Rise of the Roman Empire*). In 63 B.C. Pompey marched into Jerusalem and entered the temple. Feuding Judean leaders found that the surest way to secure the Judean crown was to align oneself with Rome. Herod the Great, who was not even fully Jewish, befriended Rome and thus captured for himself the kingship of Judea and surrounding territories (37–4 B.C.; see note on Matt. 2:1 and map, *The Setting of Matthew*).

However, Roman internal politics were far from stable in the first century B.C. The historic rule of the Roman senate was diminishing with Roman military expansion. The senate attempted to play various generals (notably Julius and Pompey) off one another. In 49 B.C. Julius crossed the Rubicon River beyond his allotted territory, won handily against Pompey, and assumed dictatorial power. A later senatorial revolt led to the assassination of Julius Caesar (44 B.C.). Quickly a new alliance was formed as Antony and Octavian defeated the senatorial rebels at Philippi (42 B.C.). Friction arose between these men, and eventually Octavian destroyed the forces of Antony and Cleopatra at Actium (31 B.C.). By 27 B.C. Octavian received the title “Augustus,” and the lifelong tribuneship was his in 23. The empire had begun. Throughout much of the NT period the family of Augustus held the imperial title (see chart).

### **Roman Emperors (31 B.C.–A.D. 68)**

|                |                 |
|----------------|-----------------|
| Augustus       | 31 B.C.–A.D. 14 |
| Tiberius       | A.D. 14–37      |
| Gaius Caligula | A.D. 37–41      |
| Claudius       | A.D. 41–54      |
| Nero           | A.D. 54–68      |

Judean politics after Herod the Great continued in subjection to Rome. Herod’s last will was validated by Augustus, leaving Herod Antipas over Galilee and territory to the north (4 B.C.–A.D. 39; see notes on Matt. 14:1; Mark 6:14a), Herod Philip over northern Transjordan (4 B.C.–A.D. 34; see note on Luke 3:1), and Archelaus over Judea (4 B.C.–A.D. 6; see note on Matt. 2:22 and map, *The Setting of Matthew*). The Romans, judging the rule of Archelaus to be inadequate, removed him in favor of a string of Roman governors over Judea. The most famous of these governors, Pontius Pilate (who reigned A.D. 26–36), was much despised for his despotic acts (see



note on Luke 23:1). Favor with Rome allowed Herod's grandson Agrippa I to rule briefly over Judea (A.D. 41–44; see notes on Acts 12:1; 12:20–25), but his early death again left the governorship of Judea in the hands of Roman procurators. The Jewish historian Josephus graphically depicts the unwise and often heinous acts of this string of procurators.

Eventually anger with Rome spilled over into the Jewish revolt (A.D. 66–73/74). The Romans could not permit rebellion in any of their territories, let alone in an important commercial trade center such as Palestine. Thus Vespasian and his son Titus (both future emperors) were sent as generals to suppress the rebellion, which they accomplished with precision and cruelty (see map, The First Jewish Revolt). The destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish temple (A.D. 70) transformed Jewish religion forever. Subsequently, there was a suppressed uprising of Diaspora Jews (esp. in Egypt, A.D. 115–117) during the reign of Trajan. Some Jews hoped for a rebuild of the Jerusalem temple, but the ineffective Second Jewish Revolt in Judea under Bar Kochba (A.D. 132–135, during the emperorship of Hadrian; see map, The Bar Kochba Revolt) resulted instead both in a ban on Jews entering Jerusalem and in the building of a temple to Zeus on the former Temple Mount.

Amid this history, Jesus Christ launched his ministry in a Galilee governed by a Roman client king, a Judea under Roman procurators, and a Judaism tinged with Hellenism. After his crucifixion by the Romans and his resurrection, his gospel was carried by the apostles directly into the heart of Greek culture and Roman power.

### **The Bar Kochba Revolt**

*A.D. 132–135*

News of Hadrian's plans to transform Jerusalem into a thoroughly Roman city, complete with pagan temples, dashed Jewish hopes of one day rebuilding the temple of the Lord. In response, Jewish leaders prepared for revolt by stockpiling weapons and supplies in various underground caverns and other fortresses. The leader of this new revolt, Simeon Bar Kochba, was supported by the Sanhedrin and was even hailed as the "Messiah" by many prominent Jews. Resistance, however, was limited primarily to Judea, and eventually the Romans systematically reclaimed all territory in revolt. After the fall of the Sanhedrin fortress of Bethther, the last vestiges of resistance fled from Engedi to nearby caves, where some survived but most perished at the hands of the Romans.

### **Social Structure, Economics, Politics, and Law**

The social structure of the Roman world differed in some important ways from modern life. For example, it is debated whether ancient Rome had a "middle class." Outside the cities, agrarian life largely consisted of either subsistence farming or of great estate farms. Commerce was key to the life of the empire, and the *Pax Romana* ("peace of Rome") largely relied on safe, well-guarded trade routes (both by land and by sea). Cities thrived with commercial enterprise, as well as with artisan, religious, and intellectual life. Public entertainment included theater, musical performance, rhetorical contests, athletics, and gladiatorial combat.

The central Greco-Roman social unit was the family. Marriage was deemed of great importance, even if sexual activity outside marriage was prevalent (marital unfaithfulness was esp. committed by men) and divorce was widely practiced. Patriarchal assumptions were strong, with the father possessing control over, and legal responsibility for, the family. Inheritances were normally passed substantially to male children (whether biological or adopted for purposes of inheritance). The role of women varied throughout the empire: some had great autonomy and wealth while others were cloistered and rarely appeared in public. Children were commonly seen as a blessing, though infanticide and abortion were sometimes practiced. Most households, aside from the poorest, included slaves.

The Roman economy was highly dependent on slavery. Slaves came from conquest in war, voluntary entrance into slavery, or birth into a slave family. There was thus no single racial profile for a slave. The lives of slaves also varied considerably. State-owned slaves who worked in the brutal conditions of the mines had a short life expectancy. Agricultural slaves toiled in the fields. Household slaves served as cooks, hairdressers, servants, and concubines; yet, they could also be trained to positions of significant authority, even administering businesses for their owners. Such slaves could be granted their freedom, thus achieving the status of “freedmen” and earning the economic benefits of a continued patronage relationship with their former owners. For this reason, some people voluntarily entered into a set period of slavery to wealthy aristocrats (for more on this, see note on 1 Cor. 7:21).

Patronage relationships were central to economic and political life. The wealthy would agree to be the “patron” of certain “clients,” assisting them economically. In return the clients would support their patron by voting for him in his run for political office and by furthering his economic interests. In theory, a chain of patron/client relationships extended from the less prosperous in society all the way up to the emperor, who was the great patron of all Rome.

Citizenship in the NT-era empire was gained by birth to citizen parents, emancipation from slavery to citizens, military service, or special edict. Laws generally prescribed less severe punishments for Roman citizens (see notes on Acts 16:37; 22:22–29), and citizens could appeal their legal cases to Rome (cf. Acts 25:10–12). Despite apparent inequities, a clear legal code, administered through various political officials, is often considered Rome’s great contribution to Western society.

Roman government applied a centralized hierarchy of control, while simultaneously granting some freedom of local self-government. Large cities often retained the right to vote for their leaders, who served in economic, religious, and political civic duties. Some regions (such as much of Palestine in the 1st century) were governed by “client kings,” whose monarchical rule was validated by the emperor. The empire was divided into senatorial and imperial provinces, depending upon whether the Roman senate or the emperor appointed the provincial governors. Generally the more outlying (and less militarily secure) provinces were imperial appointments (such as Syria and the regions throughout Palestine), although the emperors also retained control of some important agricultural regions (esp. Egypt).

### **Education and Philosophy**

Most people in antiquity could not afford an extensive education. Slaves were trained for their specific duties; the poor continued in family agrarian life or were apprenticed to a specific craft. However, education was central to the Hellenistic ideal. Formal education was generally private. Certain slaves, called *PEDAGOGUES*, could be responsible for overseeing the education of their master’s children through hiring teachers (see “guardian” in Gal. 3:24–25). That teacher would educate the children in a set curriculum, including reading and writing, literature, mathematics, Greek and/or Latin, rhetoric, and philosophy. Rhetoric (the study of verbal persuasion) was necessary for political and legal life, and philosophy was considered the highest expression of learning.

Philosophy involved investigation into the physical and conceptual makeup of the world (metaphysics as well as science) and into ethics. Most religions in antiquity did not substantively address ethical matters (Judaism and Christianity were significant exceptions); rather, this was the realm of philosophy. Various competing philosophical systems were taught around the first century (see chart).

### **Philosophical Systems of the First Century A.D.**

|                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Middle Platonists | Expanded and dogmatized upon Plato's concept of the realm of ideas/forms as more substantial than their individual physical expression.                                                                                                                                        |
| Sophists          | Enamored with the successful execution of rhetorical argumentation (sometimes regardless of the particular position taken in the argument).                                                                                                                                    |
| Cynics            | Contended for a more naturalistic way of pious living, often engaging in shocking verbal and physical feats to make their points.                                                                                                                                              |
| Epicureans        | Believed that all that exists were miniscule packets of matter (atoms), that humans were entirely composed of aggregate matter (thus ceasing to exist upon death), and that life was consequently about maximizing earthly pleasure through friendships and enjoyment of life. |
| Stoics            | Argued that the world was fundamentally the expression of a rational force (the <i>logos</i> ), and that harmonious good living required an exaltation of reason over spontaneous emotions in all of life.                                                                     |

### Religion and Magic

Most today think of Roman religion in terms of its pantheon of gods and goddesses, such as Jupiter, Venus, and Mars (or their Greek counterparts Zeus, Aphrodite, and Ares). Certainly, this pantheon was central to civic life. Touring an ancient city, one would see dozens of temples (some of immense size) dedicated to such deities. These gods were thought to act as benefactors both to the individual and to the city. Yet, should one neglect these deities, they could become angry and injure the individual or society. Thus, the charge of "atheism" against early Christians (who refused to worship such gods) was effectively a concern that rejection of civic gods could lead to widespread catastrophe. Ancient pagan worship assumed a kind of ritual contract where, if specific words were said, and if certain sacrifices or libations were performed, the god/goddess was obligated to respond to benefit the worshiper.

Nevertheless, beyond the great gods of the pantheon, each household also worshiped some of the hundreds of other lesser deities that were thought to rule every aspect of human life. Thus Roman houses typically had at their entrance a shrine, a *lararium*, where daily libations were poured to these household gods.

Hero worship in antiquity could lead to the elevation of great conquerors as gods. Thus some revered Alexander the Great as a god in his lifetime. Perhaps it was this tendency that allowed the emperor, as patron of the whole empire, to be received as a god, especially in Asia Minor where extravagant temples to the emperors were built even before the NT period. Some emperors (esp. Gaius Caligula, Nero, and Domitian) were known to encourage their own worship.

By the first century A.D. mystery religions had become widespread throughout the empire, conducting secret ceremonies to gods and goddesses of Asian or Egyptian origin. The inductees learned the mysteries and participated in secretive worship practices.

Magic, though often viewed with suspicion, still played a central role in Roman life (e.g., Acts 13:6; 19:13–20). Alongside the worship of gods of healing (such as Asklepies), magic provided healing remedies, as well as promoting potions, incantations, and charms to provide material and physical blessings or curses. The Romans were also concerned with knowing the future through dreams, prophetic oracles, and various forms of divination (i.e., the reading of portents such as animal entrails, astrological signs, etc.; cf. Acts 16:16).

Most people in antiquity were involved in syncretistic worship of multiple deities. Yet some were attracted to monotheistic beliefs, especially those of Judaism and Christianity. Judaism had been granted official legitimacy by Rome, and evidences of Diaspora Jewish communities abound throughout the Mediterranean and Mesopotamia. While some admired Judaism's worship of a single god and its high ethical ideals, others believed its practices (esp. circumcision, Sabbath, and food laws) to be ridiculous. Christianity was often suspected and persecuted for its "atheistic" beliefs (since it rejected all other gods), its worship of a crucified Lord, its practice of the Lord's Supper, and its view of all Christians as "brothers and sisters." Nonetheless, the Christian hope thrived; it was declared a legitimate religion under Constantine in the fourth century and eventually grew to become the dominant faith of people throughout the Roman Empire.

## JEWISH GROUPS AT THE TIME OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

When Jesus began to proclaim the gospel, the Sadducees, Essenes, and Pharisees were also laying claim to Israel's heritage. Josephus (*Jewish Antiquities* 13.171) mentions the groups for the first time during the high priesthood of Jonathan (152–142 B.C.) after the demise of the Zadokite priesthood, which had dominated the religious life of Judea for centuries. The Essenes eventually dropped out of public life and became a network of close-knit communities. It is probably for this reason that the NT does not mention them. The Sadducees and Pharisees continued to compete for control of the temple and Sanhedrin. By the first century, the Sadducees were dominant (cf. Acts 5:17). However, the Pharisees remained an influential minority in Jerusalem, and had mounted a successful campaign to win the hearts of the people.

### **The Sadducees**

The Sadducees, including the high priest Caiaphas (A.D. 18–36), were primarily of wealthy, priestly families in Jerusalem. Josephus claims they were unfriendly—even to one another—and were unpopular (*Jewish War* 2.166; *Jewish Antiquities* 13.298). They could be cruel judges (Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 20.199; Mishnah, *Sanhedrin* 7:2; *Makkot* 1:6). When Jesus disrupted their financial interests in the temple, he was arrested and condemned (Mark 11:15–19; 14:53–65). James, the brother of the Lord, was later killed by a Sadducean high priest (Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 20.200).

The Sadducees rejected the extrabiblical traditions of the Pharisees, perhaps embracing only the Pentateuch as canonical (Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 13.297; 18.16). This narrow canon may explain why they did not believe in the general resurrection of the dead (Mark 12:18; Acts 4:1–2; 23:6–8), since it is not explicitly mentioned in the Pentateuch. Perhaps for the same reason, they embraced human responsibility, which is emphasized in the Law of Moses (e.g., Gen. 4:7; Deut. 30:19–20), in contrast to the determinism of the Essenes (Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.164; *Jewish Antiquities* 13.173). Jesus, when arguing for the resurrection (Mark 12:18–27), meets the Sadducees on their own ground by showing the implications of Exodus 3:6 instead of appealing to a more straightforward passage (e.g., Dan. 12:2).

### **The Essenes**

The Essenes lived communally in villages and cities throughout Palestine and Syria (Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.124; 11.1; Philo, *Hypothetica* 11.1). According to Pliny the Elder, an Essene community resided near the Dead Sea (*Natural History* 5.15.73). Some of the Dead Sea

Scrolls, which were discovered in caves at Qumran, probably reflect the ideology of this community.

The Essene communities shared all things in common, including food and clothing (Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.122, 127; Philo, *Good Person* 86). Wages were given to a steward, who would purchase and distribute goods to those in need (Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.123; Philo, *Hypothetica* 11.10). They cared for their elderly and sick (Philo, *Good Person* 87). The Jerusalem church adopted a similar way of life (Acts 2:44–45; 4:34–35; James 1:27), except that giving was voluntary (Acts 5:4).

Many of the Essenes did not marry (Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.120; Philo, *Hypothetica* 11.14; Pliny, *Natural History* 5.15.73; but see *Jewish War* 2.160). The group survived by attracting converts. Pliny claims they drew large crowds (*Natural History* 5.15.73). A convert would follow their way of life for a year (Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.137). He could then be baptized, but was not allowed to live with them for another two years (*Jewish War* 2.138). Followers of Jesus were similarly baptized into the church, but without a probationary period (cf. Acts 2:37–47; 8:37–38).

The Essenes believed God was the cause of all things (Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 13.172; 18.18; Philo, *Good Person* 84). Consequently, they viewed all government as divinely ordained (Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.140). However, the Dead Sea Scrolls assume belief in two spirits—one divine, the other satanic—that will be in conflict until the end of the age (e.g., 1QS Col. 3.17–19; Col. 4.16–17). Paul similarly ties spiritual warfare with God’s ultimate sovereignty over all things, including government (Rom. 13:1–7; Eph. 2:1–3).

The Essenes were especially scrupulous about maintaining purity. They dressed only in white linen (Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.123). They no longer participated in the sacrifices of the temple, because, in their view, the priests were defiling the sanctuary (Dead Sea Scrolls, *Damascus Document* 5.6–7, 14–15). Josephus claims they offered their own sacrifices (*Jewish Antiquities* 18.19), while Philo assumes they abstained from animal sacrifice altogether (*Good Person* 75). The Dead Sea Scrolls claim prayer is an acceptable sacrifice (Dead Sea Scrolls, *Damascus Document* 11.21; 1QS Col. 9.3–5). They also strictly observed the Sabbath. Whereas Jesus assumes most Jews would pull an ox out of a well on the Sabbath (Luke 14:5), the Dead Sea Scrolls forbid it (*Damascus Document* 11.13).

## **The Pharisees**

The Pharisees resided primarily in Jerusalem (but see Luke 5:17) and were divided into at least three schools: the disciples of Shammai, Hillel, and Gamaliel. These schools were especially concerned about the proper administration of the temple.

The disciples of Shammai, who represented the more conservative wing of the group, were dominant before the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70 (Mishnah, *Shabbat* 1:4). But Hillel, representing a more liberal interpretation of the Jewish Scriptures, had moved from Babylon to Jerusalem about a generation before Jesus, and gained wide influence as well.

Gamaliel, the son (or grandson) of Hillel, was a renowned teacher of the law in Jerusalem. The apostle Paul had been a disciple of Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). Gamaliel is remembered for his wisdom (Acts 5:34) and careful management of the Jewish calendar. Most Jews followed a lunisolar calendar, which consisted of 12 lunar months, totaling 354 days. Every three years or so a thirteenth month had to be added, in order to bring the average total days of the year up to the 365.25 days of the solar year. Otherwise, the seasons would not have matched the festivals and sacrifices in the temple. Gamaliel determined when to add the thirteenth month (Mishnah, *Rosh Hashshannah* 2:8; *Sanhedrin* 2:6). Ironically, if the Galatian Christians had adopted the calendar

of Jewish religious holidays advocated by Paul's opponents (Gal. 4:10), they would have found themselves under the authority of his old teacher!

These three schools attempted to shape the religious life of the ordinary Jew through the dissemination of their traditions (Matt. 23:15; Mark 7:1–13; Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 13.297). Galilee was also a part of their mission. The Jerusalem Talmud (*Shabbat* 15d) claims that Johanan ben Zakkai, a disciple of Hillel, spent 18 years—probably from A.D. 20 to about 40—teaching in the Galilean town of Araba (or Gabara). So Johanan and Jesus were teaching in Galilee at the same time.

The Pharisees also had considerable influence over local scribes, who would preach in the synagogue according to their interpretations (Matt. 7:29; 23:1–2; Mark 2:16). When the Pharisees in Jerusalem were alerted by some scribes that Jesus was preaching a new teaching with authority, they sent a delegation, which, after observing some alarming behaviors, attributed his miraculous power to Beelzebul (Mark 3:22; 7:1). Since the Pharisees were highly respected by the people, the accusation may have had devastating consequences for Jesus' mission (cf. Matt. 11:20–24).

The Pharisaic tradition was pragmatic and relevant to the needs of the time. For instance, the Law of Moses requires all loans to be forgiven in the sabbatical (seventh) year (Deut. 15:2). The intention was to provide relief for borrowers, but the reality was that lenders refused to give loans near the seventh year. Hillel addressed the problem by establishing the *PROSBOL*, a contract that requires a borrower to pay back a lender even in the seventh year (Mishnah, *Shabbat* 7:1). His school was also highly pragmatic (at least for husbands wanting a divorce) when it came to rules for divorce, interpreting the ambiguous phrase in Deuteronomy 24:1—“some indecency in her”—as allowing a husband to divorce his wife for almost any reason, including burning his dinner (Mishnah, *Gittin* 9:10). However, the school of Shammai interpreted the law more narrowly, allowing divorce only in the case of adultery.

The Dead Sea Scrolls accuse the Pharisees of being “Seekers of Smooth Things,” that is, passing on easy interpretations to the people (e.g., 4Q169 Fragment 1; cf. Isa. 30:10). While Jesus too was vulnerable to this criticism in some areas of his teaching, especially his indifference to matters of ritual purity and Sabbath observance, he is even more stringent than Moses when it comes to justice. Instead of recommending the *PROSBOL*, he flatly commands his disciples, “do not refuse the one who would borrow from you” (Matt. 5:42). Concerning divorce, he adopts a similar position to the school of Shammai, but also notes that divorce was not God's original plan and is not required (Matt. 5:31–32; 19:9).

The difference in stringency can be further illustrated by the summations of the law provided by Hillel and Jesus. Hillel says, “What is hateful to you, do not to your neighbor: that is the whole Torah, while the rest is commentary thereof; go and learn it” (Babylonian Talmud, *Shabbat* 31a). Jesus says, “So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets” (Matt. 7:12). We find the negative wording of Hillel's teaching in earlier Jewish writings (*Tobit* 4:15; Philo, *Hypothetica* 7.6–8). Jesus' summation is more challenging, requiring nothing less than a universal love for all people, including one's enemies (Matt. 5:44).

However, despite the curious quality of some of their tradition, the Pharisees were especially scrupulous to maintain a righteous status before God. Many were probably like Paul, who claimed that as a Pharisee he was “blameless” as to the Law of Moses (Phil. 3:6). While many Jews tithed, Pharisees even tithed their garden herbs (Matt. 23:23). While others fasted periodically, they fasted twice a week (Mark 2:18; Luke 18:12). They also maintained purity at

their meals to the point of “straining out a gnat” from a cup (Matt. 23:24; cf. Mark 7:4), and they avoided sharing a table with “sinners,” those like tax collectors who habitually broke the law (Mark 2:16; Luke 7:39).

All three expressions of piety come together in the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18:9–14). Jesus depicts the Pharisee as distinguishing himself from the tax collector because he fasted and tithed in order to retain a righteous status before God. Elsewhere, Jesus affirms tithing but claims the Pharisees neglect the “weightier matters of the law”—justice, mercy, and faithfulness (Matt. 23:23).

The Pharisees took their personal relationship with God seriously, in part because they believed that the resurrection of the dead was a reward for living a righteous life (Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.163; *Jewish Antiquities* 18.14; Acts 23:8; *Aboth of Rabbi Nathan* 5A). But Jesus says, “For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:20). On another occasion, he tells the Pharisaic teacher Nicodemus that he needs to be “born again,” or “born from above” (*anōthen*, John 3:3). Despite the blameless way of life many Pharisees pursued, such effort, in Jesus’ view, was not enough: like all people, they needed to repent and believe in the gospel. From this perspective, Paul could anticipate being found by God, at the resurrection, “not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ” (Phil. 3:9).

1

---

<sup>1</sup>Crossway Bibles. (2008). *The ESV Study Bible* (1781). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

