

MYSTERIES OF THE MESSIAH

Mini-Vol. 5: Unit 03 Significant People and Events of the Old and Inter-Testamental Periods

William H. Heinrich

Updated October 18, 2015

Categories of Topics

Unit 03 Historical Background

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03.02 First Temple Period and Exile (1040 – 515 B.C.)

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03.03 Second Temple Period (515 B.C. – A.D. 70)

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***“It is good to be highly educated; it is better to be educated from on high;
but it is best to be both.”***

- Author Unknown

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03.05.12.V A scholar will discuss the effect of the influx of Hellenism, Maccabean Revolt, and the establishment of the major religious sects in Jerusalem. Emphasis can be on how the secular culture influenced the Jewish people in a similar manner as the secular culture is influencing the church today. Since this is a rather broad subject, this could be two separate videos.

[03.05.31.V](#) Professor Gary Byers discusses the expansion of Herod's temple of the first century and Dr. Paul Wright discusses the Temple Mount as it is today. But first, a discussion of Herodian buildings and an introduction by Dr. Bill Heinrich. ()

Unit 03

Historical Background

Chapter 01

Ancient Judaea (4000 – 1040 B.C.)



03.01.00.A. THE SACRIFICE OF ISAAC by Godfrey Durand. 1896. Abraham, depicted as holding the knife to sacrifice his one and only son, is the recognized father of Judaism and Christianity. While human sacrifice is strictly forbidden in the Bible, in the pre-biblical period of Abraham, it was a common practice. This event challenged Abraham's faith to see if he was prepared to do

anything for God – a profound test of devotion. However, unknown to him, God never intended to have Isaac sacrificed.

03.01.01 Introduction

It is impossible to comprehend Messianic thoughts and opinions of the Jews without first highlighting important events and persons of the Old Testament and Inter-Testament era. Some topics of conversations and actions by Jesus and His adversaries were deeply rooted in history. The chronological history overview below provides insight to this critical background that shaped the first century Jewish mindset and, therefore, the actions of Jesus.

03.01.02 c. 4000 B.C. +/- Adam and Eve

God created Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. They lived in close relationship with God, but soon accepted the temptation of Satan, fell into sin, and lost their close relationship. Since that time the entire history of the Bible has been focused on God and His work of reconciliation of mankind unto Himself. This work of God was completed by the ministry of Jesus the Messiah. Therefore, from the beginning, there was a prophecy predicting a coming Redeemer (Gen. 3:15 cf. Rom.16:17-20). That Redeemer would be Jesus. When Luke wrote his gospel to someone with the Greek name Theophilus (Lk. 1:3), he recorded a genealogy that traced Jesus to Adam since the Greeks believed in a creation account, although not necessarily the narrative found in Genesis.

03.01.03 2100 - 1850 B.C. Abraham

Abraham is the patriarch of the Israelite people who many centuries later became known as the Jews. With his father Terah, Abraham left his home in Ur, approximately 600 miles east of modern Israel, traveled around the northern edge of the Arabian Desert (as it was known in ancient times) to the small city of Salem (modern Jerusalem). They left their flourishing community at the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers to find a land where a nation could be established free of idolatry. It was in Salem where Abraham (then known as Abram) was welcomed by its king, Melchizedek (Gen. 14). God chose to make a covenant with Abraham and the Judeo-Christian faith began to take shape and promise.

There is no place in the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) where Jesus was symbolized more than upon Mount Moriah in the story of Abraham and Isaac. God tested the faith of Abraham by asking him to sacrifice his only son Isaac (Heb. 11:17-19), when the young man was 25 years old.¹ This was an event that looked into the future when Jesus, the only Son of God, would die for the sins of the world.² Abraham took his only son high upon Mount Moriah, which in the first

1. Josephus, *Antiquities* 1.13.2.

2. See Appendix 6 concerning Old Testament sacrifices and Jesus.

century was the sacrificial temple site now known as Mount Zion.³ Isaac was a precious and only child to Abraham, who at this time was in his old age. In obedience, but deep sorrow, he made the decision to obey God and make the sacrifice. Abraham is considered a “type and shadow”⁴ of God, as shown: Isaac was dearly beloved of Abraham just as Jesus was dearly beloved by God the Father. Isaac willingly honored His father and allowed himself to be bound and laid upon the altar. Likewise, Jesus willingly honored His Father and allowed Himself to be bound and crucified. Isaac carried the wood to die on the altar just as Jesus carried His cross to die for the sins of humanity.

Abraham had made the decision to sacrifice his most precious gift. Just when he slowly raised his knife for the impending death, a sacrificial ram appeared in a nearby bush and God told him to release his son. Isaac’s life was spared; his life was restored. The ram was sacrificed in Isaac’s place. Centuries later Jesus would die a horrific death, but He would be restored to life. Isaac was the means by which God demonstrated his love and means of provision to Abraham. In ancient times, children were the security of parents in their old age. Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice his only son was symbolic of God the Father demonstrating His love and means of provision to the Jewish people and all humanity through Jesus. Then God and Abraham entered into an everlasting covenant⁵ in which God would give him three important promises.

1. Land (Deut. 28-29)

2. Descendants (Davidic Covenant, 2 Sam. 7)

3. Blessings (Mosaic Covenant, Ex. 19-20; New Covenant, Jer. 31)

The land promise was developed in the Palestinian Covenant; the promise of descendants was promised in the Davidic Covenant⁶ and includes Jesus (a Son of David); and the Blessings

3. In Biblical times, “Mount Zion” was one of three hills upon which was Jerusalem was located. The name became associated with the Temple site, but over time was applied to the hill top located in the western part of the Old City of modern Jerusalem.

4. See “Type and shadow” in Appendix 26.

5. Gen. 12:2-3; 15:17-21; 17:9; 1 Kg. 2:4; 3:8; Micah 7:20; Zech. 2:11; Rom. 9:4; 15:8; 1 Cor. 7:14; Gal. 3:19; Heb. 6:13, 18.

6. The messianic title “Son of David” appears in the following three groups of passages in the gospels where it is always reflective of the Davidic Covenant: 1) In various healings by Jesus – Mt. 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30-31; Mk. 10:47-48; Lk. 18:38-39. 2) In connection of the harassment the religious leaders gave Jesus – Mt. 22:42-43, 45; Mk. 12:35, 37; Lk. 20:41, 44, and 3) The praise the crowds gave Jesus at His entry into Jerusalem – Mt. 21:9, 15; Mk. 11:10. See Rogers, “The Davidic Covenant in the Gospels,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*. Part 1 of 2. 158-78.

Covenant is the New Covenant, also known as the New Testament.⁷ The latter was the result of the completed work of Jesus at Calvary. The original Promised Land far exceeds the borders of modern Israel today.

The Old Testament prophets had spoken frequently about the fulfillment of God's covenants given to Abraham,⁸ to David (Ps. 89:1-4; 2 Sam. 7:16), to Jeremiah (Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:25-30), and to Moses (Deut. 28-30). By the first century, the Jewish people waited anxiously for the Messiah to come and fulfill these eternal and unconditional covenants.

Video Insert >

03.01.03.V *The Importance of the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants to First Century Jews.* Dr. Darrell Bock discusses how the first century Jewish people viewed the importance of their two ancient covenants. Click here if Internet connection is available.

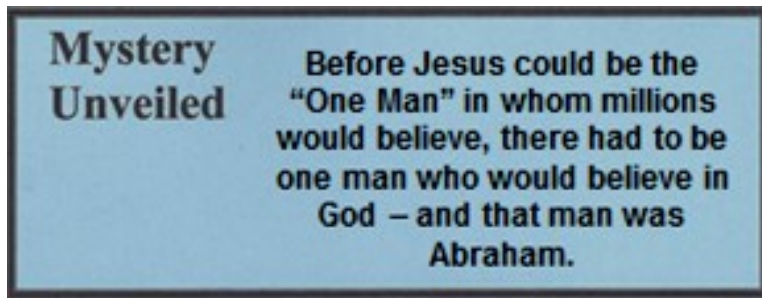
Furthermore, God promised Abraham that among his descendants there would be a line of kings (Gen. 17:6, 16) who would come from the tribe of Judah and would rule over alien people, including the tribes of Moab and Edom.⁹ Yet when his only nephew Lot, left him, Abraham must have wondered, "How can I be the ruler of many nations if I cannot even rule my own house?" As he discovered, the call of God came with blessings as well as difficulties.

The first century Jews recognized a problem concerning the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant because the reigning Herod the Great was not a descendant of King David, but a descendant of the hated Edomites. Neither he nor any of his sons could fulfill the biblical requirement as the true king of the Jews. Hence, the tension was heightened during the days of Jesus for a messiah to come, depose the Herodian Dynasty, end Roman occupation, and fulfill the promises of the covenant. When Matthew wrote his gospel to Jews dispersed in other lands, he recorded a genealogy that traced Jesus to Abraham since he was the patriarch of the Jews. In essence, he made a connection to the covenant. Likewise, the writer of the book of Hebrews affirmed the promises God gave to Abraham (Heb. 6:13-18).

7. Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology*. 575-76; Rogers, "The Davidic Covenant in the Gospels." 458-78.

8. Gen. 12:1-3, 7; 13:14-16; 15:18; 17:6-8.

9. Gen. 49:10; 2 Sam. 22:44-51; Num. 24:17-19; Ps. 2.



03.01.04 1876-1446 B.C. Sojourn in Egypt

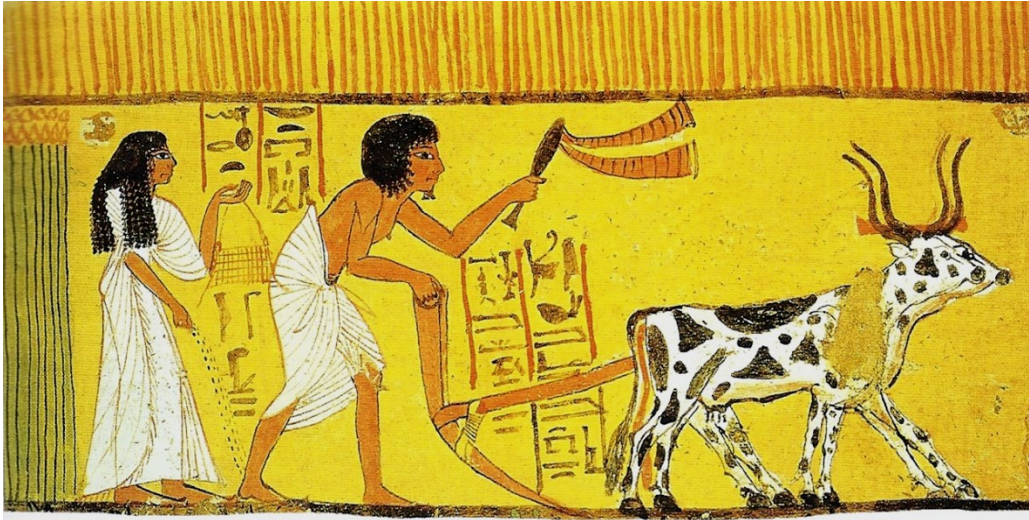
In 1850 B.C., a severe famine came upon the land of Canaan. The descendants of Abraham traveled to Egypt, where they remained for the next 430 years. The reason they remained in Egypt for this extended period of time, after God promised both land and descendants, was for three reasons:

1. To save them from the famine of Canaan.
2. For them to grow in population.
3. For them to grow in a cultural incubator, as they were isolated from both the Egyptians and Canaanites.

In Egypt they would grow as God's Chosen people. The most significant character for the Israelites at this time was Joseph, who was responsible for bringing salvation to not only his extended family, but also to the nation of Egypt. For that reason, he too is seen today as a prophetic picture or "type and shadow" of Christ.¹⁰

At some point during their stay in Egypt, they became enslaved as the result of a change of monarchs. Later, God, through the leadership of Moses, delivered them out of Egyptian slavery in a miraculous walk through the Red Sea known as the *Exodus*. The celebration and remembrance of that historical event became known as *Passover*.

10. See Appendices 2 and 26.



03.01.04.A. ILLUSTRATION FROM AN EGYPTIAN TOMB. Tilling and sowing, a mural from Thebes, Egypt. This shows one of two ways of sowing until the year 1701. Cain, “the tiller” (Gen. 4:2) was the ancestor of those who had livestock (Gen. 4:20).

03.01.05 1446 B.C. The Exodus; the Torah; Moses and a Pagan Seer Predict the Redeemer

As the adopted son of Pharaoh, Moses was privileged to receive the highest level of education (Acts 7:22) as well as leadership and military training. He was familiar with the Egyptian holy books, including the *Papyrus Ebers*,¹¹ and the political and religious systems of his day. Josephus recorded some of his military adventures.¹² The Exodus story of the Israelite children in Egypt and how Moses delivered them from slavery has been repeated for centuries. The celebration of deliverance from death that occurred at this time became known as the *Passover*. Moses was chosen by God to lead His people through the Red Sea, out of Egypt, and to the Promised Land of Canaan. This event became symbolic of how Jesus would lead humanity out of the slavery of sin into a new freedom in Himself.¹³ Among his works is this verse that was considered prophetic of the coming Messiah by the Jews.

11. The *Papyrus Ebers*, written about 1552 B.C., contains over eight hundred prescriptions and remedies for various human ailments. Egyptian physicians were highly skilled in diagnosing illnesses, but their prescriptions of primitive superstitions were deadlier than the illnesses they tried to cure. The directives for cleanliness prescribed by Moses were radically different than that of the Egyptians or Babylonians. Obviously, this is indicative of a different source of information. Furthermore, he did not include any directions to perform exorcisms and incantations as were popular among the Egyptians. See Ben Hobrink, *Modern Science in the Bible*. 2-3, 5. As a whole, the Egyptian worldview was focused on death, and the worship of deities controlled life and death.

12. Josephus, *Antiquities* 2.10.1.

13. See Appendix 3.

**The Scepter will not depart from Judah
Or the staff from between his feet
Until He whose right it is comes
And the obedience of the peoples belongs to Him**

Genesis 49:10

Moses was personally given the Ten Commandments from God on Mount Sinai. Later he wrote the first five books of the Hebrew Bible that includes history as well as the Mosaic laws. These laws are foundational to the faith of Jews, Samaritans, and Christians. The Torah is considered to be the most sacred of all Jewish writings. The fact that Jesus often made reference to the Torah is indicative of its continued importance.

Due to the many similarities of his life and accomplishments, Moses is seen today by Christians as a “type and shadow” of Jesus.¹⁴ However, to first century Jews, their concept of a Messiah according to Deuteronomy 18:15 was someone who would be like Moses. The key word is “like” which does not mean “identical to,” so when Jesus arrived on the scene, they had difficulties accepting Him.

The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet *like* me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him.

Deuteronomy 18:15¹⁵

In his history of the Israelites, later known as “Jews,” Moses mentioned a pagan prophet by the name of Balaam. Moses recorded a prophecy given by Balaam in the book of Numbers that would become significant to the Parthian magi centuries later. An interesting event happened when Balaam, a devout pagan, believed he had sufficient demonic powers to curse the Israelites and manipulate their God. So when he was asked by an enemy to curse them, God intervened and told him to bless the Israelites instead, curse the enemy who made the request, to and give a prophecy that is recorded in Numbers 24:17 concerning a future Redeemer. It reads,

**I see him, but not now;
I perceive him, but not near.
A star will come from Jacob,
And a scepter will arise from Israel.**

14. See Appendix 2 and 26; an example of “type and shadow” is found in Hebrews 10:1a, “Since the Law has only a shadow of the good things....”

15. Emphasis mine.

**He will crush the forehead of Moab,
And strike down all the Shethites.**

Numbers 24:17

To first century Jews, no biblical figure was of greater significance in the affairs of daily life than was Moses. All religious rites and beliefs began with his writings. He recorded the Mosaic Code (Ten Commandments, and the 613 laws affecting all areas of life).¹⁶ By the first century, however, these laws had taken a secondary position to the Oral Law. Therefore, the major conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees was because Jesus held the Mosaic Code in the superior position, while the Pharisees held their Oral laws in superior position. On an important side note, the Church has adopted a Roman view of *Law*, in that it means *restriction* and therefore, *bad*, while the Hebrew Bible views *Law* as *Instruction* and *freedom* and, therefore, *good*.

However, because Moses had written these three messianic passages (Gen. 49:10; Deut. 18:15; Num. 24:17), not only were first century Jewish people waiting for a messiah, but for the previous fifteen centuries, wherever they wandered, they told others of the coming messiah. As will be seen, the second and first century B.C., people everywhere in the ancient Middle East were expecting Him, including the three magi who came from the east.

Now concerning the non-Israelite prophet, some critics have discounted the Balaam account as mythological folklore, saying that he never existed. However, in 1967 archaeologists digging in Deir' Alla in Western Jordan, made an interesting discovery of a temple. These ancient ruins are situated about five miles east of the Jordan River and less than one mile north of the Jabbok River. Evidently the ancient seer had incredible fame. Josephus said he lived by the Euphrates River,¹⁷ yet he was remembered and honored centuries later and hundreds of miles to the west. In these ruins a painted inscription was found of a prophecy given by the same Balaam mentioned in Numbers 22-24 by Moses. This prophecy is considerably different from the biblical narrative, but it does make reference to the "Shaddai gods," which is close to the Hebrew *El Shaddai*, meaning "God Almighty." This inscription was dated to 840 – 760 B.C., and portions of it are, understandably, missing while others are difficult to read. However, various sections are of sufficient quality that, with sophisticated scientific equipment, could be read and was translated as follows:

¹ [VACAT] The sa[ying[s of Bala]am, [son of Be]or, the man who was a seer of the gods. Lo! Gods came to him in the night [and spoke to] him ²according to these w[ord]s. Then they said to [Bala]am, son of Beor, thus: "Let someone make a []

16. The 613 laws were observed only during the times of the tabernacle or temple. Today, only 271 of those Mosaic commands can be observed. See Parry, *The Complete Idiot's Guide to the Talmud*. 221.

17. Josephus, *Antiquities* 4.6.1.

hearafter, so that [what] you have hea[rd may be se]en!”³ And Balaam rose in the morning [] right hand [] and could not [eat] and wept⁴ aloud. Then his people came in to him [and said] to Balaam, son of Beor, “Do you fast? [] Do you weep?” And he⁵ said to them, “Si[t] do]wn! I shall inform you what the Shad[dayin have done]. Now come, see the deeds of the g[o]ds!. The g[o]ds have gathered⁶ and the Shaddayin have taken their places in the assembly and said to Sh[slave, thus:] ‘Sew the skies shut with your thick cloud! There let there be darkness and no⁷ perpetual shining and n[o] radiance! For you will put a sea[l upon the thick] cloud of darkness and you will not remove it forever! For the swift has⁸ reproached the eagle, the voice of vultures resounds. The st[ork has] the young of the NHS-bird and ripped up the chicks of the heron. The swallow has belittled⁹ the dove, and the sparrow [] and [] the staff. Instead of ewes the stick is driven along. Hares have eaten¹⁰ []. Freemen [] have drunk wine, and hyenas have listened to instruction. The whelps of the¹¹ f[ox] laughs at wise men, and the poor woman has mixed myrhh, and the priestess¹² [] to the one who wears a girdle of threads. The esteemed esteems and the esteemer is es[teemed.] and everyone has seen those things that decree offspring and young.¹⁵ [] to the leopard. The piglet has chased the young¹⁶ [of] those who are girded and the eye”

Balaam Deir Alla Inscription.¹⁸

“Balaam, son of Beor.” Balaam must have been a prophet of excellent reputation, in that kings consulted him and asked him to curse enemies prior to war.¹⁹ The ruins of Tel Deir ‘Alla revealed archaeological evidence of Balaam’s existence. Archaeologists believe that originally there was a long narrative on the wall with a minimum of fifty lines of writing. While portions were destroyed by earthquakes, among the 119 remaining plaster fragments with red and black writings the name of a prophet Balaam, son of Beor” is mentioned three times – just as mentioned in the Bible.²⁰ But most important, his prophecy of biblical record (Num. 24:17) was responsible for the eventual visit by the Parthian magi to Jesus, and in part, the anticipation of a Messiah by Jewish people.

18. Translation published by P. Kyle McCarter Jr. “The Balaam Texts from Deir ‘Alla: The First Combination.” *Bulletin of the Schools of Oriental Research*. 239 (1980). 49-60; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deir_Alla_Inscription. Retrieved November 10, 2012.

19. Balaam is also mentioned negatively in 2 Peter 2:14-15 and Revelation 2:14.

20. Fruchtenbaum, *The Jewish Foundation of the Life of Messiah: Instructor’s Manual*. Class 4, page 9.

“The Shaddayin.” Some scholars believe these were deities of the pagan world.²¹



03.01.05.A. PLASTER FRAGMENTS OF THE BALAAM TEL DEIR ‘ALLA INSCRIPTION. Sufficient plaster fragments with inscriptions were discovered in Deir ‘Alla, Western Jordan, to authenticate the existence of a non-Israelite prophet by the name of Balaam. Photo by Google Images.²²

03.01.06 1446 - 1050 B.C. +/- Judges Ruled God’s PeopleAdd AppendiA

During the four centuries after the Israelites entered the Promised Land, God ruled His people with a series of judges. They were twelve independent tribes who formed a loosely knit confederacy, squabbling during times of peace but fighting together against common enemies whenever the need arose. The significance of this period in history is that this was when God

21. <http://jewishchristianlit.com/Texts/ANEprouph/ancBalaam.html>. Oracle of Balaam translated by Gildas Hamel. Retrieved July 18, 2014.

22. https://www.google.com/#hl=en&sugexp=les%3B&gs_nf=3&gs_mss=deir%20alla%20i&tok=M_9W2yMghuzYK2vUSojXkQ&pq=deir%20alla%20inscription%20wiki&cp=15&gs_id=25&xhr=t&q=deir+alla+image&pf=p&tbo=d&scli=ent=psy-ab&oq=deir+alla+image&gs_l=&pbx=1&bav=on.2.or.r_gc.r_pw.r_qf.&fp=74f684b921f60f2b&bpc=38093640&biw=2025&bih=999. Retrieved November 10, 2012.

ruled His people – or tried to rule His people. They were an unruly bunch who grumbled and wanted a king. In fact, during these four centuries they committed some horrible acts of violence against each other and God. This history was written with kind words in the last chapter of Judges that says that in those days Israel had no king and everyone did as he or she wanted to do (Judg. 21:25). Therefore, since they wanted a king like other nations, God gave them what they wanted – and soon the first king was anointed for the position.

Unit 03

Historical Background

Chapter 02

First Temple Period And Exile (1040 – 515 B.C.)



03.02.00A. SAMUEL ANOINTS DAVID by Godfrey Durand. 1896. King David was, without question, the most important person in Jewish history, second only to Moses. First century Jews in Israel believed that the messiah (small “m” because they did not consider him as deity) would be like King David and restore the lost Davidic Empire. That perception made accepting Jesus as their “Anointed One” extremely difficult.

03.02.01 1049-931 B.C. The United Monarchy

The term “United Monarchy” refers to the reigns of Kings Saul (reigned 1049-1009 B.C.), David (reigned 1009-969 B.C.), and Solomon (reigned 969-931 B.C.).²³ A few short years after Solomon’s reign, the empire was divided.²⁴

King Saul

The first king was Saul who united the twelve unfaithful, bickering, individualistic Israelite tribes into a single nation (1 Sam. 11:12-15). At the time, the land was still filled with idol-worshipping Canaanites who practiced child sacrifice and other horrible acts. He and his armies were, in effect, instruments of God to bring justice upon those who destroyed young innocent lives and practiced idolatry. These Canaanite tribes included the Amorites, Amalekites, the nomadic Midianites, and several others. But the most powerful enemies were the Philistines who lived in the modern-day Gaza Strip. Saul strengthened the confederacy and defeated nearly all of them, but failed to drive them out of the land.

However, sometimes too much success breeds failure, and he soon found himself with some moral failures. As a result, God began to raise David as his replacement. When Saul became aware of this, a civil war broke out. As was the custom of the time, kings normally asked their prophets to inquire of God for any directives they should follow. Ironically, while his name *Sa’uli* means *ask insistently*, as if *asking Yahweh (God)*, he soon was asking counsel from the witch at Endor. Saul was a man whose life began with great promise and opportunity, but ended with a marked decline of his own spiritual and moral values, and finally, suicide. In contrast, David very frequently consulted God, but Saul rarely did. Their lives and the results of their leadership clearly reflect this significant difference.

King David

King Saul was followed by David, yet neither one was a pillar of moral strength, but David did have a repentant heart for which God honored him. His name in Hebrew is *Dawid* which means *doubtful*.²⁵ For whatever reason he was given that name, he certainly rose above it to become the champion of military commanders in Israel’s history. At a time when there was little or no change within any culture, he introduced massive radical changes to the benefit of the Israelites. He instilled a sense of nationalism and began the establishment of an international super-power which was completed by his son Solomon. So powerful was Judaea in ancient history that future generations, even in the time of Christ, reflected upon its history. In four military phases, David

23. Historians differ slightly on these dates.

24. Historians disagree slightly on the reigning dates, but each king reigned 40 years.

25. Cullman, “David.” 1:364.

transformed his people from a dozen squabbling tribes to an international superpower and empire.

1. The Israelites gave him loyalty and men for military strength. He combined all the tribes into a national kingdom. He conquered the Jebusite citadel of Jerusalem, made it his personal capital (1004 B.C.), and purchased the threshing floor where he constructed a sacrificial altar to honor God (1 Ch. 21:23). This was the same site where Abraham had offered his son to God centuries earlier.
2. He consolidated neighboring territories. Since his hostile neighbors were the Philistines and Canaanites, he made a treaty with the Phoenicians of Tyre who were the world's leading naval power.
3. He defeated the tribes of Ammon, Moab, and Edom in the Trans-Jordan (western areas of modern Jordan).
4. He established a multi-national empire.

As a result of his incredible victories, King David controlled all of the international trade that crossed his kingdom; a land bridge between the continents of Asia, Africa, and Europe. To the east was the great northern section of the Arabian Desert and to the west was the Mediterranean Sea. The major routes were the north-south route of the King's Highway located east of the Jordan River; the Spice Route that went from Southern Arabia north along the eastern side of the Red Sea to the Mediterranean Sea to David's shipping fleet; and the "Way of the land of the Philistines" (Ex. 13:17; Num. 20:17), an international highway that went from Damascus to Capernaum and southward on to Egypt.²⁶ Since bandits were numerous, caravans paid huge taxes for the protection of their goods, camels, and men.

Military success translated into economic success, not only for himself, but also for his people. David transported copper from Egyptian mines, silver from the Taurus Mountains in Asia Minor, silver and gold from East Africa, spices from Arabia, and purple dyes²⁷ from nearby Phoenicia. He utilized existing trade routes that had been established centuries before. The king simply conquered and took control of this existing wealthy enterprise.²⁸ The kingship of David also

26. By Roman times, the "Way of the land of the Philistines" was known as the *Via Maris*, and it went through the evangelical triangle where Jesus did most of His teaching.

27. According to Josephus, large quantities of purple (or scarlet) fabric were required for the temple curtains which were replaced every few years (*Wars* 6.8.3; 390). Some scholars believe that the purple (or scarlet) robe placed on Jesus (Mt. 27:28) was a soldier's cloak.

28. Keller, W. *The Bible as History*. 4.

resulted in exceptional cultural changes, freedom, and wealth for the Israelites. No longer did they have to pay taxes, or tribute, to any foreign pagan king. Never in ancient history had a group experienced such a dramatic change within the short time frame of a single generation, as did the Israelites. Generally, sudden and dramatic social changes were extremely negative, usually resulting from a military conquest in which the defeated people were either killed or enslaved. Victors of any nation never accomplished what David created in a mere forty years.²⁹



03.02.01.A. THE “KING DAVID FRAGMENT.” This inscription, known by archaeologists as the “Tel Dan Stele,” (a/k/a “Tel Dan Stela”) mentions the House of David on line 9. It consists of three fragments (discovered in 1993 and 1994) that refer to an unnamed king who boasts of his victories over the king of Judaea and his ally, the king of the “House of David.” It is the first artifact to be found in Israel that mentions the name David. Photo by Wikipedia Commons.

Translation of the “King David Fragment” inscription is as follows:

29. Cullman, “David.” 1:364-69.

1. []...[] and cut []
2. [] my father went up [] he fought at [...]
3. And my father lay down; he went to his [fathers]. Now the king of I[s]/rael had penetrated
4. into my father's land before. [But then] Hadad made me king,
5. And Hadad marched before me. So I went forth from [the] seven[...]/s
6. of my rule, and I killed [seve]nty kin[gs] who had harnessed thou[sands of cha]/riots
7. and thousands of cavalry. [And I killed ...]ram son of [...]
8. the king of Israel, and I killed [...]yahu son of [... the ki]/ng of
9. the House of David. And I made [their towns into ruins and turned]
10. their land into [a desolation ...]
11. others and [...Then...became ki]/ng
12. over Is[rael...And I laid]
13. siege against [...]

King David Fragment Inscription³⁰

The name “Hadad” is a pagan deity.³¹ It should be noted that not all boastings by kings reflected truthful events. Amazingly, since the 18th century, critical scholarship has perpetuated the myth that King David never existed; that he is an imaginative figure of creative biblical writers.³² However, they were silenced in 1993 and 1994 when a ninth century B.C. stele was discovered with the king’s name inscribed on it.³³ He was just as the biblical narrative describes. This inscription discredits critics who have stated that King David was a mythical figure who never existed.³⁴

30. The line-by-line translation by Lawrence J. Mykytiuk (published 1994).

31. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tel_Dan_Stele. Retrieved October 27, 2012; See also Bryant G. Wood, “New Inscriptions Mention House of David.” *Bible and Spade*. 119-21; and Avraham Biran and Joseph Naveh, “An Aramaic-Steale Fragment from Tel Dan.” *Israel Exploration Journal*. 43 (1993): 81-98.

32. King David is among fifty biblical names whose existence has been verified by archaeological studies in a published article by Lawrence Mykytiuk titled, “Archaeology Confirms 50 Real People in the Bible.” *Biblical Archaeology Review*. March/April, 2014 (40:2), pages 42-50, 68 (see 03.02.01.A below). This archaeological evidence confirms the historical accuracy of the biblical timeline. For further study see the website for Associates for Biblical Research, as well as Grisanti, “Recent Archaeological Discoveries that Lend Credence to the Historicity of the Scriptures.” 475-98.

33. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Tel_dan_inscription.JPG, Retrieved October 27, 2012. See also Gary A. Byers. “The Tell Dan Stela.” 121.

34. For an interesting article on the fallacies of deconstructionists approach to biblical traditions, see Anson Rainey, “The House of David and the House of Deconstructionists: Davies is an Amateur Who ‘Can Safely Be Ignored.’” *Biblical Archaeology Review*. 20:5 (Nov. Dec. 1994.) 47.

More importantly, in the ancient Middle East dignity was a sacred honor. King David established dignity and honor for God's Chosen People. No longer were they recipients of degrading jokes. The Jewish people of the first century, who were reduced to economic slavery,³⁵ were expecting a Messiah who would to re-establish the David Empire as a wealthy international superpower and restore their dignity.

David was known not only for his administrative skills in forging twelve semi-disassociated tribes into an empire, but also for his many Messianic Psalms. For example, in Psalm 2 and 89 he wrote of a "Messiah" who would be the subject of much discussion. This occurred as predicted. He also described the death of Jesus in Psalm 22:14-18. Note the repeating themes or ideas of poetic Hebrew parallelisms.

**¹⁴ I am poured out like water,
and all my bones are disjointed;
My heart is like wax,
melting within me.
¹⁵ My strength is dried up like baked clay;
and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth;
You put me into the dust of death.**

**¹⁶ For dogs³⁶ have surrounded me;
a gang of evildoers has closed in on me;³⁷
They pierced my hands and my feet.
¹⁷ I can count all my bones;³⁸
people stare and gloat over me.
¹⁸ They divided my garments among themselves,
and they cast lots for my clothing.³⁹**

35 The subject of high taxation that resulted in economic slavery is presented by Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.11.2 (307-308). See also 02.03.03 "Economy" and 03.06.04 "4 B.C. The Death of Herod the Great." God hates slavery, but it was part of the human predicament which is why He permitted slavery for a limited duration of seven years (Ex. 21:2 ff.; Deut. 15:12). In Amos 2:6 He brought judgment upon Israel for the enslavement of its own people. The way the Apostle Paul dealt with Philemon, demonstrates how God changed the slavery-based economy by changing the hearts of men. See also Sanders. "Jesus in Historical Context." 430.

36. The term "dongs" or "Dogs" was a Hebrew nickname for non-Jewish people. This theme is repeated on the next line.

37. The psalm writer recorded the emotions of his life, no doubt totally unaware of the fact that he was recording prophetic words that would later be ascribed to Jesus.

38. The agony of dying on a cross stretched the human body to the point that it felt as if the joints were coming apart.

39. Exact description of what happened to Jesus. See Mt. 27:35.

Psalm 22:14-18

David's literary works portray a man who rose from being a shepherd to a powerful monarch, yet one who experienced some horrific failures which were followed by the discovery of God's love. He may not have realized that some of his words were "messianic." In fact, not all of the messianic psalms were recognized in the first century as "messianic." Some, such as the first line of Psalm 16:10 greatly perplexed the rabbis. Only after the resurrection of Jesus did this passage find fulfillment and understanding.

**For You will not abandon me to Sheol;
You will not allow Your Faithful One see decay.**

Psalm 16:10

The significance of King David to first century Jews and the identity of Jesus cannot be overstated. They were expecting the messianic Son of David to repeat all the great things King David had done. This was especially influential in first century Jewish thinking in light of the Davidic Covenant.⁴⁰ That covenant was similar to the Abrahamic Covenant, with the exception that it contained the additional clause of 2 Samuel 7:13-15, which promised dominion over alien people (2 Sam. 22:44-51; Ps. 2).⁴¹ David was God's anointed one (Ps. 2:2) and, as such, he was both priest and king (cf. Ps. 110); foreshadowing the function Jesus would hold in the future.⁴² In essence, first century Jewish people expected a messiah, who would,

1. Overthrow the oppressive Roman Empire
2. Restore the Davidic Kingdom and make the Jewish nation an international super-power as King David had done.
3. Although King David never performed miracles, in the course of time Jewish people came to believe that the messiah would perform three types of miracles known as "messianic miracles"⁴³ (to be discussed later).⁴⁴

40. Cullman, "David." 1:368-69; Rogers, "The Davidic Covenant in the Gospels." 458-78.

41. Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology*. 629-33; Wiseman, "Abraham." 1:6.

42. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*. 276; Terrien, *The Elusive Presence*. 295-96.

43. Fruchtenbaum, *Messianic Miracles*. 4; Fischer, *The Gospels in Their Jewish Context*. (Lecture on CD/MP3). Week 10, Session 2.

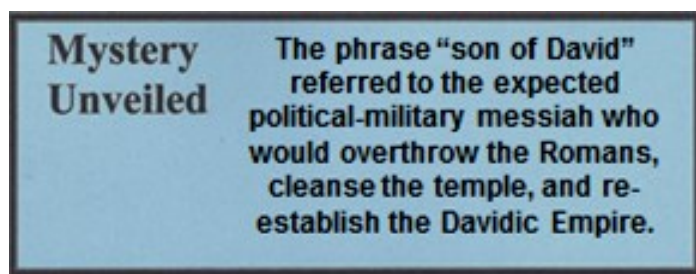
4. Fulfill the Davidic Covenant, although there was considerable debate among various Jewish factions as to how that would materialize. His covenant featured four significant elements:⁴⁵

- a. House
- b. Throne
- c. Kingdom
- d. Descendants

With four divine promises like these, no wonder that the Jews were anxious for their “son of David.” The history of Israel was never as glorious as it was during the reign of its three major monarchs. King Saul forged the birth of a great nation, but David completed the task. David instilled a sense of nationalism and began the establishment of an empire which was completed by Solomon. Yet while the ancient empire covered an enormous land mass, neither David nor Solomon encompassed all the land God promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Ironically, a few years before Jesus was born, Herod’s Kingdom became close in size to the Davidic Empire. This increased the speculation that the son of David would soon come and take control of the kingdom. But it was not to be.

In the first century, the Jews carefully observed Jesus and attempted to reconcile Him with their preconceived ideas of the son of David. But Jesus obviously did not fit those ideas of a military-messiah, and they certainly did not expect a Messiah would come to redeem them from their sins.

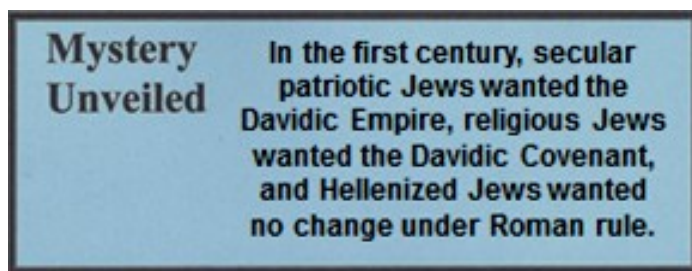


44. Messiah is spelled with a lower case “m” because the Jewish people had not applied deity to the name. Messiah with an upper case “M” is a reference to Jesus as God. For a description of the three messianic miracles, see the video link 06.03.08.V.

45. Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology*. 632; Rogers, “The Davidic Covenant in the Gospels.” 458-78.

Once the military actions ceased and the Davidic Empire was established, God made a covenant with David that established his dynasty as God's choice to rule His people forever (2 Sam. 7:4-17). This covenant, known as the Davidic Covenant, has three features.

1. The dynasty of David would rule over the Promised Land forever (2 Sam. 7:10)
2. David's dynasty would be permanent (2 Sam. 7:11, 16).
3. The kingdom established by the covenant would also be permanent (2 Sam. 7:13, 16).



In summary, there were two incredibly events that occurred at this time that were important to the Jewish people of the first century.

1. The establishment of the Davidic Empire that was one of the most powerful empires of the ancient world and, more importantly,
2. The establishment of the Davidic Covenant. This covenant contains the promise of an eternal king from the Davidic Dynasty. That king is Jesus.

King Solomon

The third king of the united monarchy was David's son, King Solomon, who ruled during the golden age of Israel. His was a time of great prosperity and peace. He is best remembered for building the temple in Jerusalem that carried his name (2 Chron. 3:1). He enjoyed a lavish lifestyle, a huge army, and many building projects, all of which cost more than he earned from international trade and taxes from traveling caravans. He, therefore, imposed high taxes on his people and drove the nation into debt. That national debt became the primary reason his nation split into two independent sovereign states after his death. While the Lord gave him great wisdom, his decisions concerning high debt, and multiple wives and concubines clearly indicate that he failed to use that wisdom.

He expanded international trade that included a partnership with Hiram, the Phoenician king of Tyre. Together they operated a fleet of merchant ships in the Red Sea and along east Africa. Archaeological discoveries indicate that Solomon operated copper mines, which explains his close ties with Hiram. The Phoenicians were the world's best craftsmen at copper smelting and

refining as well as seamanship. Little wonder then, that the writer of First Kings said that the chief metalworker of bronze objects in the temple was a Tyrian by the name of Hiram (not related to the king of Tyre; 1 Kgs. 7:13-45).

The radical and successful transformation of the Israelite nation in such a short time came with a heavy price tag. The massive building project required not only taxation, but slaves as well. Solomon, to protect his new found wealth, enlarged his military which required more taxes and increased his national debt. Any nation that follows this economic cycle soon fails, as did Solomon's Empire. Like Saul, he too fell into a moral and spiritual free-fall; his life ended in apostasy and idolatry (1 Kg. 12:1-20). He was blessed with God-given wisdom, but near the end of his reign he failed to use it. His life ended in tragedy and soon his empire would collapse.

Solomon's influence in the days of Jesus was limited, unlike his popular father. Nonetheless, there are two points in the gospels that are worthy of consideration.

1. The first century rabbis taught their students under temple porches called "Solomon's colonnade." Legend said that these columns stood in the first temple, and the rabbis said that maybe some of Solomon's wisdom might fall upon their students.
2. The rabbis also believed that Solomon's power and wisdom could help them discern and expel demonic spirits.⁴⁶ That is why Jesus once said that "someone greater than Solomon is here" (Mt. 12:27).

03.02.02 931-586 B.C. The Divided Monarchy

Shortly after Solomon's death, civil war broke out that resulted in division of the empire. The ten northern tribes became an independent kingdom and maintained the name of Israel and, as previously mentioned, the tribes of Benjamin and Judah became the southern kingdom, known as Judea. It should be noted, however, that the real reason civil war broke out was that God removed His hand of protection from the House of Solomon because the king married many foreign women in violation of Deuteronomy 7:1-4. They, in turn, cause the ten northern tribes to worship foreign gods – a major reason for the civil war. In the course of time, animosity grew between the southern kingdom because it remained faithful to the laws of Moses, and the northern kingdom that accepted foreign deities. For nearly two centuries, the northern kingdom⁴⁷ enjoyed its independence and prosperity in spite of its paganism. Prophets such as

46. Josephus, *Antiquities* 8.2.5.

47. The Northern Kingdom was known by the following names in the Bible: 1). The House of Israel (1 Kgs. 12:21; Jer. 31:31). 2); the House of Jacob (1 Kgs. 11:28); 3). Samaria (Hosea 7:1, 8:5-6, 13:16); and 4). Ephraim (Hosea 4:17, 5:3, 7:1). Most books on Bible history today refer to the Northern Kingdom as the "House of Israel" or "Israel" and the Southern Kingdom as "Judah" or the "House of Judah." In this eBook, the entire region is referred to as "Israel" since the ancient divisions were not recognized by the occupying Romans.

Isaiah sounded the warning of pending divine judgment if the people did not change their ways. They failed to listen and in 722 B.C., the Assyrians arose from the northeast and conquered them. They relocated most of the Israelites hundreds of miles to the east and they soon became known as the “ten lost tribes.”⁴⁸ But were they really “lost?”

There were those in Israel who saw the proverbial “writing on the wall,” and they recognized the Assyrian threat. They may have even listened to words of warning from the prophet Hosea and observed their declining culture and they moved south into Judah (1 Kg. 12:16-20; 2 Chron. 11:16-17) and thereby, avoided the destruction. Therefore, Judah became the embodiment of all 12 tribes. The New Testament does not assume that the 10 tribes were lost.⁴⁹

03.02.03 8th Century B.C. Isaiah

The ministry of the prophet Isaiah began in the year 740 B.C., when King Uzziah died (Isa. 6:1).⁵⁰ He wrote his book during the Assyrian invasions and the decline of the northern kingdom. At this time the Assyrians were expanding into Syria and Canaan (745-727 B.C.) under the reign of King Tiglath Pileser III. Isaiah’s prophecies were not only for the immediate future, but also for the distant future, concerning the coming of the Messiah and centuries beyond. Those prophecies of the immediate future were quickly and literally fulfilled, which established his credibility as a true prophet. Therefore, it was understood that futuristic prophecies would also be literally fulfilled one day. For example, among the prophecies of interest to the 7th century B.C. people of Judea, was the prediction that stated the wealth of Jerusalem would be carried off to Babylon (Isa. 39:6). At the time of his writing, Babylon was an insignificant military power, and yet his prediction was literally fulfilled a century later. Isaiah also gave predictive words concerning the predecessor of the Messiah (40:3), which were later literally fulfilled, in the

48. One often hears about the ten “lost tribes” as having left Assyria and that they wandered into Eastern and Western Europe, eventually settling in Britain where they became known as Anglo-Saxons. This teaching claims that the British are descendants from the tribe of Ephraim and Americans are from the tribe of Manasseh, and together they inherit the covenant promises God gave to Israel. This false doctrine is known as British-Israelism and has promoted, possibly without intention, anti-Semitism through various cults and churches worldwide.

49. See. Mt. 4:13, 15; Lk. 2:36; Acts 4:36; 26:27; Phil. 3:5; Jas. 1:1. It should be noted that in the past century, thousands of Jews from more than a hundred nations have returned to Palestine, later in 1948 known as Israel. They may have been lost in the eyes of many people, but not in the eyes of God. They have been returning in fulfillment of many prophecies (see Heinrich, William. *The Hand of God: Ancient Prophecies – Modern Miracles in Israel*).

50. Uzziah is among fifty biblical names whose existence has been verified by archaeological studies in a published article by Lawrence Mykytiuk titled, “Archaeology Confirms 50 Real People in the Bible.” *Biblical Archaeology Review*. March/April, 2014 (40:2), pages 42-50, 68. This archaeological evidence confirms the historical accuracy of the biblical timeline. For further study, see the website for Associates for Biblical Research, as well as Grisanti, “Recent Archaeological Discoveries that Lend Credence to the Historicity of the Scriptures.” 475-98.

person of John the Baptist, who is more appropriately known as John the Baptizer (see Mt. 3:3; Lk. 3:4).

**A voice of one calling out:
Prepare the way of the LORD
In the wilderness;
Make a straight highway for our God
In the desert.**

Isaiah 40:3

When Matthew described Jesus as the chosen servant of God (12:18-21), he quoted the prophet Isaiah:

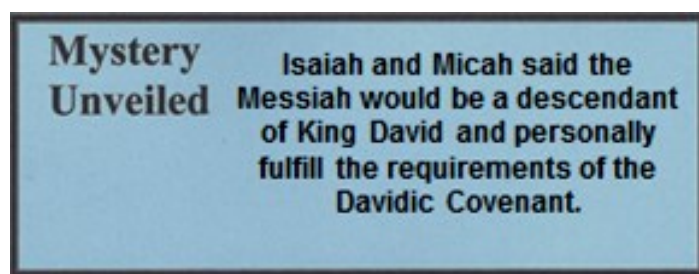
**¹ “This is My Servant; I strengthen Him,
this is My Chosen One; I delight in Him.
I have put My Spirit on Him;
He will bring justice to the nations.
² He will not cry out or shout
or make His voice heard in the streets.
³ He will not break a bruised reed,
and He will not put out a smoldering wick;
He will faithfully bring justice.
⁴ He will not grow weak or be discouraged
until He has established justice on earth.
The islands will wait for His instruction.”**

Isaiah 42:1-4

Concerning the future Messianic Figure, Isaiah described Him as having a supernatural nature (9:5-6), and restoring the relationship between man and God (49:6; 53:12). Chapter 53 is considered a classic description of Jesus. Isaiah described Jesus when He was beaten and bruised (53:2-3) before Pilate, when He carried our infirmities, sins, and punishment (53:4-8), when He was buried (53:9), and when He arose from the grave (53:10). Isaiah’s predictions concerning Jesus the Messiah have earned him the title of being the *Gospel Writer of the Old Testament*.⁵¹ His favorite titles for the Messiah were “the servant of Jehovah” and “the servant of

51. For the historical trail of the Davidic Covenant from David to Jesus, see the blue “Mystery Unveiled” boxes in 03.02.01, 03.02.03, 03.02.06, 03.03.01, 04.02.02, and 13.04.05.

the Lord.” Prophets like Isaiah and Micah declared that the Messiah would be a descendant of King David and would personally fulfill the eternal requirements of the Davidic Covenant (Isa. 11:1-16; Mic. 5:2).



03.02.04 733 B.C. Israel Falls to the Assyrians; Israelites Deported to the East; 723 B.C. Israel Ends⁵²

Because of Israel’s idolatry, God permitted His people to suffer under pagan rulers and religions. The Assyrians (from modern Iraq), led by King Tiglath-Pileser III, became the international superpower and conquered Israel. In 733 B.C. Israel was required not only to pay huge taxes, but in the decade of 732-722 the Assyrians deported many Israelites to the east in an attempt to destroy their culture. By 721 B.C. the ten northern tribes known as the Kingdom of Israel ended. Religious and civic leaders as well as craftsmen and merchants were deported to insure that the remaining poor did not have the wealth or skill to revolt.⁵³

As to the so-called “ten lost northern tribes,” according to the *2 Esdras* 13:40-45, they went to a region beyond the Euphrates River known as Arsareth, or Arzareth. This was in the upper Tigris-Euphrates River Valley.⁵⁴ Josephus said there were countless Jews who would return from there to their homeland in the last days.⁵⁵ Second *Esdras*, a/k/a *4 Ezra*, states the following:

⁴⁰ Those are the ten tribes, which were carried away prisoners out of their own land in the time of Osea the king, whom Salmanasar the king of Assyria led away captive,

52. For centuries scholars have been unable to reconcile the so-called biblical errors concerning the dates of reign of various kings. Many saw this as clear evidence for the unreliability of the Bible and concluded that it was written for a theological point and is historically inaccurate. Then, in the early 1950s, E. R. Thiele discovered that Judah used the Jewish calendar while northern Israel, under the influence of the Assyrians, naturally used the Assyrian calendar. For further study, see E. R. Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983.

53. Malamat, “Caught Between the Great Powers.” 34.

54. Levy, *The Ruin and Restoration of Israel*. 21.

55. Josephus, *Antiquities* 11.5.2.

and he carried them over the waters, and so came they into another land. ⁴¹ But they took this counsel among themselves, that they would leave the multitude of the heathen, and go forth into a further country, where never mankind dwelt, ⁴² That they might there keep their statutes, which they never kept in their own land. ⁴³ And they entered into Euphrates by the narrow places of the river. ⁴⁴ For the most High then showed signs for them, and held still the flood, till they were passed over. ⁴⁵ For through that country there was a great way to go, namely, of a year and a half: and the same region is called Arsareth. ⁴⁶ Then dwelt they there until the latter time.

4 Ezra 13:40-46⁵⁶

Some concluding thoughts are these: the problem is that no one *today* knows where Arsareth, or Arzareth, is located. What is known is that Anna, who saw the infant Jesus, was from the tribe of Asher – one of the so-called lost tribes. Yet when James wrote his letter, he addressed it to the twelve tribes in the dispersion (James 1:1-3). Finally, it appears that after the 722/21 destruction, the prophetic voice of God could be heard only in Judah; no longer in northern Israel.

Ancients believed that cultures could be destroyed by forcibly integrating people groups, which in turn would diminish the possibilities of a revolt.⁵⁷ So many people were deported that Galilee became a Gentile province for the next six centuries (2 Kgs. 15:29; Isa. 8:23), which is why Isaiah called the area the “Galilee of the Gentiles” (Isa. 9:1). Tiglath-Pileser’s son Shalmaneser V conquered Samaria in 723 B.C. (2 Kg. 17:1-6). His successor, Sargon II, reconquered the city in 720 B.C.,⁵⁸ and deported 27,900 Israelites to the upper Tigris-Euphrates Valley and repopulated the Israelite area with Gentiles from that valley.⁵⁹

56. Scholars debate on the classification of *3rd Ezra* (a/k/a *1 Esdras*) and *4th Ezra* (a/k/a *2nd Esdras*). Sometimes these are listed in the Apocrypha (see 02.02.03) and other times they are listed in the Pseudepigrapha (see 02.02.24). The reader is reminded that quotations from non-biblical sources are not to be understood as being of equal authority with the biblical narratives. See 01.02.04.

57. Golub, *In the Days*. 10-12.

58. The Assyrian kings Tiglath-Pileser II, Shalmaneser V, Sargon II, Sennacherib, Adrammelech and Esarhaddon, are among fifty biblical names whose existence has been verified by archaeological studies in a published article by Lawrence Mykytiuk titled, “Archaeology Confirms 50 Real People in the Bible.” *Biblical Archaeology Review*. March/April, 2014 (40:2), pages 42-50, 68. This archaeological evidence confirms the historical accuracy of the biblical timeline. For further study, see the website for Associates for Biblical Research, as well as Grisanti, “Recent Archaeological Discoveries that Lend Credence to the Historicity of the Scriptures.” 475-98.

59. Levy, *The Ruin and Restoration of Israel*. 21.

In Sargon's palace in Khorsabad, stone inscriptions commemorate his victory over Israel. One inscription found near his palace gate reads:

**(Property of Sargon, etc. King of Assyria, etc.)
Conqueror of Samaria (Sa-mir-i-na) and of the entire
country of) Israel (Bit Hu-um-ri-a).**

Sargon Pavement Inscription⁶⁰

A second inscription was found inside his palace, which may have been part of Sargon II's royal library. It reads:

I conquered and sacked the towns Shinuhtu (and) Samaria, and all Israel (Bit Hu-um-ri-ia).

Sargon Room XIV Inscription⁶¹

The Assyrians also imported other captured people from the east into Syria and northern Israel.⁶² These people eventually intermarried with the few remaining Israelites and their descendants became known as the Samaritans. The account is recorded in Second Kings.

²⁴ Then the king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath, and Sepharvaim and settled them in place of the Israelites in the cities of Samaria. The settlers took possession of Samaria and lived in its cities. ²⁵ When they first lived there, they did not fear Yahweh. So the Lord sent lions among them, which killed some of them. ²⁶ The settlers spoke to the king of Assyria, saying, "The nations that you have deported and placed in the cities of Samaria do not know the requirements of the God of the land. Therefore He has sent lions among them that are killing them because the people don't know the requirements of the God of the land."

60. Pritchard, *Ancient Near East Texts*, 284; Lewis, *Historical Backgrounds of Bible History*. 40.

61. Pritchard, *Ancient Near East Texts*, 285; The transliterated name of *Bit Hu-um-ri-ia* literally means "House of Omri," a king of Israel after the monarchy divided. Under his guidance the country became an economic power, and as a result, the other nations referred to Israel as "The Land or The House of Omri," for more than a century after his death; See also Jack Lewis, *Historical Backgrounds of Bible History*. 40; King Omri is among fifty biblical names whose existence has been verified by archaeological studies in a published article by Lawrence Mykytiuk titled, "Archaeology Confirms 50 Real People in the Bible." *Biblical Archaeology Review*. March/April, 2014 (40:2), pages 42-50, 68. This archaeological evidence confirms the historical accuracy of the biblical timeline. For further study, see the website for Associates for Biblical Research, as well as Grisanti, "Recent Archaeological Discoveries that Lend Credence to the Historicity of the Scriptures." 475-98.

62. Kelso, "Samaria, Territory of." 5:242.

²⁷ Then the king of Assyria issued a command: “Send back one of the priests you deported. Have him go and live there so he can teach them the requirements of the God of the land.” ²⁸ So one of the priests they had deported came and lived in Bethel, and he began to teach them how they should fear Yahweh.

²⁹ But the people of each nation were still making their own gods in the cities where they lived and putting them in the shrines of the high places that the people of Samaria had made. ³⁰ The men of Babylon made Succoth-benoth, the men of Cuth made Nergal, the men of Hamath made Ashima, ³¹ the Avvites made Nibhaz and Tartak, and the Sepharvites burned their children in the fire to Adrammelech and Anammelech, the gods of the Sepharvaim. ³² They feared the Lord, but they also appointed from their number priests to serve them in the shrines of the high places. ³³ They feared the Lord, but they also worshiped their own gods according to the custom of the nations where they had been deported from.

2 Kings 17:24-33

The ancients believed that each area of land was controlled by a territorial spirit or god. In this case, since the people of Samaria were dying, the Assyrians said that an Israelite priest of that land ought to return home and tell the new immigrants, who had five gods in their homelands, how to worship the existing God of the land. It is ironic the pagan Assyrians would send an Israelite priest to tell the new residents and remaining poor Israelites how the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob should be worshiped. However, the new residents refused to listen to the priest and continued to worship their own pagan deities (v. 29).⁶³

This historical background of the Samaritans is critical to understanding the cultural environment in which Jesus ministered, especially when in or near Samaria. As was previously mentioned, the Samaritans were an ethnically mixed group; offspring of intermarriage between the ten northern Israelite tribes and the five pagan tribes (each tribe with its own gods)⁶⁴ that were relocated into northern Israel by the Assyrians. When Jesus met the woman at the well (Jn. 4) she symbolized her people. She had a marriage covenant with five husbands just as her people (from five tribes) had at one time been in a spiritual covenant with their gods (2 Kg. 17:30-31).

By the first century there was intense hatred and rivalry between the Samaritans and Jews. The Samaritan faith was, and still is, a form of basic Judaism with several notable similarities and differences.⁶⁵ Differences and anger grew over the centuries, and by the first century each group

63. *New International Version* Study Bible footnote for 2 Kings 17:29.

64. Geikie, *The Life and Words of Christ*. 1:522.

65. See 02.01.17 “Samaritans.”

considered the other sacrilegious, impure, unholy, and detestable. Into this hateful, explosive, and hostile environment Jesus came to bring the Kingdom of God.

Finally, the reputation of the Assyrians, and especially that of Tiglath-Pileser III, as being extremely cruel to his captives was remembered for centuries. He and his successors brought unimaginable suffering, death, and destruction to Phoenicia and Israel – especially to the tribal areas of Zebulun and Naphtali. Yet these horrific actions were not forgotten by God; some seven centuries later Jesus retraced the route of Tiglath-Pileser III⁶⁶ and taught the Kingdom of God, demonstrated His power by the performance of miracles, and brought life and hope to the descendants of those who suffered in the past.⁶⁷

03.02.05 701 B.C. Assyrians Attack Again

Sennacherib (reigned 705-681 B.C.), the second son of Sargon II, in 701 B.C., led the Assyrian army against forty-two towns and villages of Benjamin and Judah, including the major city of Lachish, destroying all of them but did not relocate the people. As they were preparing their attack against Jerusalem in 701 B.C., Hezekiah,⁶⁸ King of Judah and Jerusalem, had a tunnel dug to bring water into the city during the siege. This water flows into the Pool of Siloam, the site of a healing miracle by Jesus. At this point, Sennacherib attacked Jerusalem (Isa. 36:1-37:38). Miraculously, the city was not captured, although it suffered greatly.⁶⁹

The Assyrians were an extremely vicious and destructive enemy who were best known for their torture of captured people and the development of military machines such as the battering ram. They had multiple gods, including *Lakhmv*, their god of war. They were a fearsome enemy of any non-Assyrians in antiquity.

66. See 10.01.23.Q1 “Why did Jesus go to the regions of Tyre and Sidon and later to the Decapolis cities (Mt. 15:22-28; Mk. 7:24-26)?”

67 Franz. “Jesus at Hazor.” <http://www.lifeandland.org/2010/10/jesus-at-hazor/> Retrieved October 5, 2015.

68. Hezekiah is among fifty biblical names whose existence has been verified by archaeological studies in a published article by Lawrence Mykytiuk titled, “Archaeology Confirms 50 Real People in the Bible.” *Biblical Archaeology Review*. March/April, 2014 (40:2), pages 42-50, 68. This archaeological evidence confirms the historical accuracy of the biblical timeline. For further study, see the website for Associates for Biblical Research, as well as Grisanti, “Recent Archaeological Discoveries that Lend Credence to the Historicity of the Scriptures.” 475-98. Part of Hezekiah’s preparation to protect Jerusalem from the coming Assyrians was the construction of a city wall, part of which can be seen in the Old City of Jerusalem today.

69. Deliverance for King Hezekiah and Jerusalem came when an angel of the Lord killed 185,000 Assyrians in a single night. Such a near instant mass execution would not take place again until August 6, 1945, when 100,000 died in Hiroshima, Japan as the result of an atomic explosion. Critics often discredit the huge number of 185,000 killed in ancient warfare, yet they do not question that in 480 B.C. 110,000 Greeks attacked the Persians and killed 260,000 of them. See Packer, Tenney, and White, eds., *The Bible Almanac*. 165.

There are three major points of the Assyrian activities that influenced the cultural events at the time of Jesus:

1. They deported the ten northern Israelite tribes, who in turn told their overlords and neighbors that one day a powerful messiah would come.
2. They brought in five eastern tribes, who eventually intermarried with the few remaining Israelites and their descendants became known as the Samaritans.
3. The horror of being banished from their Promised Land meant – as they understood it at the time – their covenant with God was broken; their fellowship with their Creator was broken, the One who gave them a reason for their existence.⁷⁰ However, the words of the prophets that followed years later, and then the arrival of Jesus, confirmed that their opinions were wrong and that God still had a plan for them (Jer. 29:11).



03.02.05.A. CAPTURED ISRAELITES HONOR KING SENNACHERIB.

Carved in a stone relief in his palace in Nineveh, the Assyrian King Sennacherib is shown seated as he reviews the plunder surrendered by the Jewish people of Lachish. Courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.

God's judgment upon Sennacherib for his actions against the Israelites finally came when he returned home to Nineveh. He was killed by his own sons as he worshiped in the house of his god, Nisroch.

⁷⁰. Link and Tuente, "Slave, Servant, Captive, Prisoner, Freeman." 3:590.

Finally, as the result of the Assyrian destruction and population transfer, Galilee was for the most part, abandoned and became known as the “Galilee of the Gentiles” (who destroyed it).⁷¹ To confirm the *absence* of Gentiles living in this area, it is significant that archaeologists have uncovered numerous villages that had *no* evidence of pig bones – a sure sign of *Jewish* occupation.⁷² In fact, the Jewish population was not restored until after the Maccabean Revolt when thousands migrated from Babylon.⁷³ So many came in the second century that Josephus said that a “countless multitude” came from Galilee and other areas to Jerusalem at Pentecost,⁷⁴ and that they did so by going through Samaria.⁷⁵ This underscores the influence of the Assyrian domination, which ended in 609 B.C. with the rise of the Babylonian Empire. However, it should be noted that a growing number of scholars believe that in spite of the political, military, and economic crises in “Eretz Israel” (the land of Israel), the Jewish people maintained a majority over Gentile and Samaritan populations in the first centuries B.C. and A.D.⁷⁶

71. Isa. 9:1; *1 Macc.* 5:15; Mt. 4:15.

72. Reed, *Archaeology*. 47; Dunn, “Did Jesus Attend the Synagogue?” 208-10.

73. See “Galilee of the Gentiles” in 06.01.08.

74. Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.6.1 and *Wars* 2.12.3.

75. Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.10.2 and *Wars* 2.3.1.

76. Cohen, “The Attitude to the Gentile in the Halakhah and in Reality in the Tannaitic Period.” 35.



03.02.05.B. SENNACHERIB'S RECORD OF HIS SIEGE AGAINST JERUSALEM. The Assyrian king had his siege against King Hezekiah recorded on three clay prisms, known today as the Taylor Prism (shown above) and two Sennacherib Prisms. Other records include writings by Herodotus and Isaiah 36-37; 2 Kings 18 and 2 Chronicles 32. Photo by David Castor/Wikipedia Commons.

03.02.06 626 B.C. Jeremiah Begins His Ministry

By this time the people of Judea and Jerusalem had also fallen into idolatry as had their northern brothers a century earlier. Jeremiah was a young man when he received his commission to be a prophet. He recognized the coming of God's judgment, and hence, most of his prophecies were written with a sorrowful heart.⁷⁷ He scorned the people of Judea for their sins (Jer. 44:23) and idolatry⁷⁸ because their sin included the horrific sacrifice of live infants as burnt offerings to pagan gods (Jer. 7:30-34). He gave a prophecy predicting seventy-year captivity as follows:

77. Introduction to book of Jeremiah, *New International Version* Study Bible. 1115-16.

78. Jer. 16:10-13, 20; 22:9; 32:29; 44:2-3, 8, 17-19, 25.

⁸ “Therefore, this is what the Lord of Hosts says: ‘Because you have not obeyed My words, ⁹ I am going to send for all the families of the north’ — this is the Lord’s declaration — ‘and send for My servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and I will bring them against this land, against its residents, and against all these surrounding nations, and I will completely destroy them and make them a desolation, a derision, and ruins forever. ¹⁰ I will eliminate the sound of joy and gladness from them—the voice of the groom and the bride, the sound of the millstones and the light of the lamp. ¹¹ This whole land will become a desolate ruin, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon for 70 years.

Jeremiah 25:8-11

At the time Jeremiah said these words, Babylon was all but unknown. Certainly it was not a world power, but that was about to change. He also made promises of a great king like David.

⁵ “The days are coming” — this is the Lord’s declaration —
 “when I will raise up a Righteous Branch of David.
 He will reign wisely as king
 and administer justice and righteousness in the land.
⁶ In His days Judah will be saved,
 and Israel will dwell securely.
 This is what He will be named:
 Yahweh Our Righteousness.

Jeremiah 23:5-6

The fulfillment of some prophecies, such as the seventy years of captivity, was critical because Jeremiah also gave prophecies concerning the coming Messiah. Since he had proven himself to be a true prophet whose words were literally fulfilled, there would be no misunderstanding that his words concerning a Messiah would also be literally fulfilled.⁷⁹

03.02.07 612 B.C. Assyrian Nineveh Falls to Babylon and Media

The Assyrian army, which was believed to be invincible, was defeated by King Nabopolassar, founder of the Chaldean Empire, a/k/a Babylon. Thus, the international stage was prepared for Jeremiah’s words to be fulfilled. By the first century, the other prophetic words spoken by him were remembered as the Jews encountered Jesus and His disciples.

79. For the historical trail of the Davidic Covenant from David to Jesus, see the blue “Mystery Unveiled” boxes in 03.02.01, 03.02.03, 03.02.06, 03.03.01, 04.02.02, and 13.04.05.

03.02.08 605 B.C. Judah Falls to the Babylonians; First Deportation of Jews to Babylon

King Nebuchadnezzar II (reigned 605-562 B.C.), the oldest son and successor of King Nabopolassar, destroyed the Egyptian army at the Battle of Carchemish and invaded Syria and Judah.⁸⁰ As news spread that he was coming toward Jerusalem, some of the wealthy aristocratic Jews fled to Egypt and Spain.⁸¹

At this point historians disagree on the dates of the deportation of leading Jews. Some scholars believe that Daniel and others were deported to Babylon in 605 B.C. (cf. Dan. 1:1-7), while others believe he and other prophets, like Ezekiel, were deported later in 597 or 586 B.C.⁸² The bulk of the people were taken in 586 B.C. Cyrus permitted them to return in 536, meaning that the vast majority of people were in captivity for only 50 years, but the leadership was in captivity for 70 years.⁸³

In weeping and deep mourning, the captive Jews were led to the Babylon where they resettled along the banks of the Euphrates River. It was there where they hung their harps on the willow trees and cried – and it is from those trees that the name “weeping willow,” received its name (Ps. 137).⁸⁴ Yet it was in Babylon where they prospered and continued to grow in numbers, clear evidence that God had not forgotten them.

Nebuchadnezzar’s capture of Jerusalem was without difficulty. As the Assyrians had done previously, he directed influential Jewish families of the priesthood and government, including the prophet Daniel, as well as artisans, craftsmen, and skilled farmers, to be deported to the east (Babylon). This was done because he believed that without their leaders, the captive people would not have the ability to revolt and would therefore, remain faithful. They mourned the loss of their holy city and wrote Psalms 137.

The captive Jews took with them the Torah and other prophetic scrolls of the coming messiah whom they expected would deliver them from political bondage and slavery. By the time of

80. The Babylonian kings Merodach-baladan II, Nebuchadnezzar II, Evil-merodach, Belshazzar, as well as an official of Nebuchadnezzar II, Nebo-sarsekim, are among fifty biblical names whose existence has been verified by archaeological studies in a published article by Lawrence Mykytiuk titled, “Archaeology Confirms 50 Real People in the Bible.” *Biblical Archaeology Review*. March/April, 2014 (40:2), pages 42-50, 68. This archaeological evidence confirms the historical accuracy of the biblical timeline. For further study, see the website for Associates for Biblical Research, as well as Grisanti, “Recent Archaeological Discoveries that Lend Credence to the Historicity of the Scriptures.” 475-98.

81. The terms “Jew” and “Jewish people” did not exist prior to the return of the Israelite people from Babylonian captivity to Jerusalem. It is used herein only for clarification.

82. Scott, Jr. *Jewish Backgrounds of the New Testament*. 108.

83. Fischer, *The Gospels in Their Jewish Context*. (Lecture on CD/MP3). Week 3, Session 2.

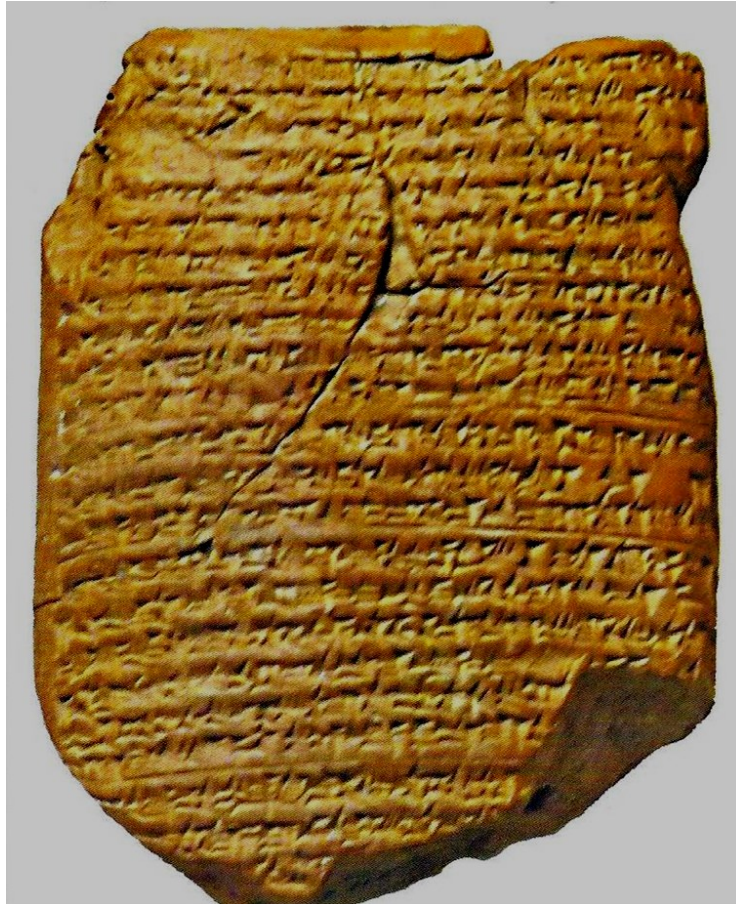
84. Geikie, *The Life and Words of Christ*. 1:203. The same tree found in the Middle East is also found in various sections of the United States.

Jesus, all people groups in the Middle East were anticipating a messiah who would deliver them from oppressive rulers. Some heard it from Assyrian captives, others from Babylonian captives, and others from those who chose to relocate in foreign countries for other reasons. So anticipatory were the eastern ancients, that magi searched the heavens for any possible clue of a coming king. Tradition says that the three eastern magi and their caravan came as the result of the Jews having been dispersed to that region centuries earlier.

03.02.09 597 B.C. Second Deportation of Jews to Babylon with Daniel and Ezekiel

Both Daniel and Ezekiel lived during times of international upheaval and strife. Fortunately, Ezekiel linked his prophecies to a calendar, which archaeologists reckoned to the modern calendar. The discovery of Babylonian annals on cuneiform tablets became the tools allowing archaeologists to place these events into a modern time perspective.

The Israelites in Judah had no desire to remain under the domination of the Babylonians, and in 597 B.C., they rebelled. However, their zeal for political freedom was quickly crushed. Upon his return to Mesopotamia, Nebuchadnezzar again took the remaining priests, government officials, and approximately 10,000 leading men, including the prophet Ezekiel. He and his countrymen were settled along the banks of the Chebar River, a tributary that flows into the Euphrates about three hundred miles above Babylon (1 Kg. 24:10-16; Ezek. 1:1-2; 40:1).



03.02.09.A. THE BABYLONIAN CHRONICLE FOR THE YEARS 605-595

B.C. This clay tablet from the royal Babylonian archives reports the accomplishments of King Nebuchadnezzar, including the capture of Judah (Jerusalem) on March 16, 597 B.C. It matches perfectly with the details of the Bible. Courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.

It was a common opinion that when armies fought each other, the battle was really a contest between their gods and the winning army was said to have the stronger deity. To the Babylonians, their victory and the destruction of the temple symbolized that they had the stronger god. Since the Israelites also believed this, they were greatly discouraged and depressed as they believed their God was defeated and possibly destroyed. Hence, the words of promise by their prophets were profoundly significant and reassuring. They spoke of restoration, a return to the land, and a Messiah, all of which gave the captured people great hope in the midst of despair.

In this setting, Daniel's prophecies had a profound impact as his words were literally fulfilled. Among his predictions was the rise of an evil man who would attempt to destroy the Jewish people. He was not mentioned by name. However, his actions identified him to be none other than Antiochus IV Epiphanes (early 2nd century BC), who rose to power in Damascus and ruled

360 years after Daniel spoke these words (Ch. 11). The fulfillment of Daniel's words gave him credibility as a true prophet indicating that his words concerning the Messiah would also be fulfilled in the same literal manner.

Possibly the most interesting prophecy by Daniel concerning the Messiah is that He would die before the destruction of the temple. Notice that Daniel said this *after* the destruction of Solomon's temple. That prophecy could only have meant that

1. There would be a second temple.
2. During the time of *that* second temple the Messiah would come. The prediction reads as follows,

After those 62 weeks the Messiah will be cut off and will have nothing. The people of the coming prince will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come with a flood, and until the end there will be war; desolations are decreed.

Daniel 9:26

However, Daniel's prophecy of the temple's destruction was problematic for first century Jews.⁸⁵ At the time of Jesus, a number of Jews associated with the School of Hillel realized that one day their temple would be destroyed along with the Holy City. In addition, their temple did not fit the description of Ezekiel's temple. Therefore, when Jesus said that He would rebuild the destroyed temple in three days, His words caused terror in light of Daniel's prophecy.

Another significant prophet was Ezekiel. He gave a series of interesting prophecies that pertain to the first and second comings of the Messiah. The first advent of the Messiah describes Him as a servant and in the second coming He is described as a military leader. These two descriptions were the cause for many heated debates, and have at times been known as the "messianic problem." The first century Essenes, for example, concluded that there would be two different Messiahs because they did not consider the possibility that one Messiah could come twice, or that the Messiah could be deity in human form. Hence, their concept of a Messiah was of an extraordinary person (somewhat angelic), but not someone who was both God and man (i.e. Jesus).

The book of Ezekiel was among the most highly respected prophetic books in the days of Jesus. Many of his words had been fulfilled with precision, thus leaving no doubt that his remaining prophecies would eventually be fulfilled in a similar manner. As previously stated, therein lay

⁸⁵. See Appendix 15.

the problem for first century Judaism. A large section of his works (chapters 40-48) describes a new temple that clearly was *not* the beautiful monument Herod the Great had re-created out of the second temple. Hence, the Sadducees and Pharisees realized that their sacred shrine that they so dearly loved, would eventually have to be destroyed to make way for Ezekiel's temple. The Romans destroyed it in A.D. 70, but the third temple has yet to be built.

Daniel's messianic prophecies were the subject of great debate because he said that the messiah would be "one who looked like a man" (Dan 10:18). That led Jewish scholars to conclude that the messiah would be someone/something to the order of an angelic superman. Therefore, because of the word "like," the idea of a messiah coming in the form of a humble carpenter from Nazareth was thoroughly rejected. The word "messiah" is capitalized only when it is in reference to Jesus as deity, and is not capitalized when the understanding is of a non-deity entity.

03.02.10 587 B.C. Third Deportation; Solomon's Temple and Jerusalem Destroyed

By this time, King Nebuchadnezzar was so disgusted with these Israelites that he sent his army to destroy the temple and city (2 Kg. 25). Since the ancients believe that gods literally lived in temples, the Babylonians attempted to destroy the God of the Jews by burning Solomon's temple. The remaining peasants were poverty stricken and had no leadership or wealth with which to rebuild their nation or begin an insurrection.⁸⁶

This destruction brought a theological crisis and would become known as *Tish B'av*, the Day of Mourning. Issues they contemplated were probably as follows:

1. How could the Great God of the Jewish people permit His temple to be destroyed?
2. Were the Babylonian gods more powerful than the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?
3. Did He really care about His people?
4. As they were marched off to Babylon, would they be inflicted with slavery as they were in Egypt?
5. How could a good God permit such evil to fall upon good people?

Just when the Jews felt forgotten, lost, and abandoned, they heard the prophecies of Daniel and found hope. He prophesied that after 70 years of captivity, they would be released, which is precisely what happened. Furthermore, his prophetic words (Dan. 2, 7) of future dominating

86. Dan. 1:1-4; 2 Kg. 24:1-7; 2 Ch. 36:5-8; See also Lewis, *Historical Backgrounds of Bible History*. 28-30.

powers were fulfilled and set the political and cultural setting of the first century Roman era in which Christ ministered.

03.02.11 587 – 516 B.C. The Exilic Period

The Exilic Period is the seventy year period of captivity when the majority of Jewish people lived in Babylon. King Nebuchadnezzar treated them well. He did not break up families or force them into slavery. He settled them along the Chebar River where the soil was more fertile than back home. Consequently, their farming skills produced more food with less labor. When they were granted freedom, many chose to remain in Babylon because they had established businesses and become prosperous. Within twenty years, many became wealthy and held positions in government.⁸⁷

Babylon was the greatest city in Asia, a cultural crossroad where men and merchandise from all known nations could be found. It was known for the famous “hanging gardens” and other wonders of the ancient world. The Babylonians developed systems of bookkeeping, commercial law, weights and measures which developed into the foundations of modern western civilization.

However, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were discouraged by the pagan religious practices of Babylon. The gods were worshipped with sexual orgies in temples, drinking festivals, and child sacrifice. While some Jews were assimilated into the Babylonian culture, many others opposed the pagan religions. Since they were given religious freedom, it is believed that the synagogue was developed in Babylon. It was also at this time that a theology was established that stated that sins could be forgiven without temple sacrifices (since it had been destroyed).

Paganism forced the Jewish people to reflect upon their faith, and as they did, they developed a new perspective of God.⁸⁸ It was commonly believed that gods were territorial, meaning that each deity was the supreme god of a particular geographical location. If a man left his country to settle in another land, he also left his god and accepted the god of his new home in the same manner that he accepted the governmental authority of the new land. They soon realized that God was One who was with them no matter where they were. He controls the universe and is involved in the affairs of men.

03.02.12 6th Century B.C. Religion of the Zoroaster

During the reign of the Persian King Darius, there was a revival of the ancient Persian religions. A young reformer by the name of Zoroaster claimed to have been taken up into the El-burz

87. Golub, *In the Days*. 5-7.

88. See also 02.03.11 “Religious Institutions.”

Mountains, where he spoke with God and was given laws by which to live. According to the Greek historian Lucius Mestrius Plutarch,⁸⁹ Zoroaster returned to his people and taught that there was one good eternal God by the name Ormuzd/Oromazes and one evil god of darkness named Ahriman/Areimanius. Mithras was the mediator between the two divine powers.⁹⁰ On the futuristic Day of Judgment, the followers of good and evil would be judged and separated forever. Good people would be rewarded and evil ones punished.⁹¹ In essence, he imitated the actions of Moses.

Ormuzd was to be worshiped in the presence of fire because he was the light of the universe. The evil one was so greatly despised that his name was written backwards and upside down. The doctrines of Zoroaster were recorded in several sacred books of the Persians, including the Zend-Avesta.⁹² Darius, the grandson of Cyrus II, eventually became a follower of the religion, which increased its popularity. Today it is most prominent in Bombay, India, where it is known as Parsees.

The displacement of the Jews gives prominence to an overwhelming possibility that the establishment of Zoroastrianism was due to the strong influences from dispersed Jews. While scholars will debate a number of points of the two religions, others are clearly related. For example, in Zoroastrian theology Angra Mainyu/Ahriman is an evil spirit that is hostile, brings death into the world (*Yasna* 30.4), and has evil spirits under his control (30.6). This is clearly a reflection of Satan in the Judeo-Christian tradition. The god of truth and righteousness is Ahura Mazda (30.8) who has a helper by the name of *Druj*. Together they fight against Angra Mainyu Ahriman. According to this doctrine, there will be an end of time when evil spirits will be delivered into the hands of Ahura Mazda⁹³ for a final destruction.⁹⁴ Other doctrines are the unity of God, the doctrine of an evil and good spirit, the doctrine of resurrection for the just and judgment for the wicked, the concept of the end of the earth, and the use of fire or light as in the Shekinah, the emblem of deity.⁹⁵ However, it should be noted that while there are similarities,

89. Plutarch a/k/a Lucius Mestrius Plutarchus, (A.D. 45-120) was a Greek historian, essayist and biographer who is known for two books, *Parallel Lives* which included the *Life of Alexander*, and *Moralia*. His few surviving works appear to have been written in Koine Greek, the common Greek language of the first century. See Warmington, ed. *Plutarch's Lives: Demosthenes and Cicero, Alexander and Caesar*, Vol 7.

90. Plutarch, *Concerning Isis and Osiris*. 46.

91. Finegan, *Myth and Mystery*. 69-71; Geikie, *The Life and Words of Christ*. 1:137-38.

92. Geikie, *The Life and Words of Christ*. 1:137-38

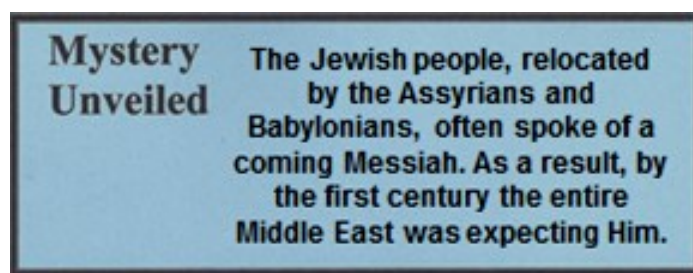
93. See *Yasna* 30.8 and *Yasht* 19.95-96 which are the holy books of Zoroasterism.

94. Finegan, *Myth and Mystery*. 115-17; Geikie, *The Life and Works of Christ*. 1:137-38.

95. Blaikie, *A Manual of Bible History*. 363-66.

the unity of Judaism was in direct opposition to the dualism of the Persian system.⁹⁶ Those who argue that the Jews borrowed from the Persians forget that Judaism was well established and flourishing for more than a millennium before the rise of the Zoroaster.

The Persian Empire became extremely prosperous during Jewish captivity. With its massive wealth and luxury there was also a decline of moral virtues and corruption of the legal system. The Persians, who at one time were known for their purity and simplicity of manners, had become as morally depraved as any pagan culture in the ancient Near East. Later, magi from the king would travel west to Jerusalem looking for the One who was born to be the king of the Jews. They too were looking for a messiah who would restore their land. Some scholars believe that the magi, or wise men, may have been influenced by the newly created religion and by their Jewish neighbors.



03.02.13 580s and 570s B.C. Edomite Invasions into Jerusalem

Meanwhile, back in Jerusalem, those who remained in the Holy City and surrounding villages were poor, defenseless, and had lost hope of ever regaining their God and nation. They did not have access to the words of restoration given by the prophets, so they were greatly discouraged. Many intermarried with the Edomites and Moabites. They also became the victims of Edomite invasions. The smoke from the burning temple had hardly cleared when the Edomites took advantage of the Babylonian destruction. They not only raided and stole what few possessions the poor Jews had left, but they also moved into southern Judah below the city of Hebron. It was because of these murderous invasions that the prophet Obadiah had given his prophetic warning of destruction to his distant cousins.⁹⁷ In the course of time, their name was changed to “Idumeans.” They were hated by the first century Jews as much as the Samaritans for several reasons.

96. Geikie, *The Life and Works of Christ*. 1:139.

97. Not only did Obadiah predict God’s judgment upon the Idumeans but he also said (verse 20) that at a time in the future, Spanish speaking Jews (known as Sephardi Jews) would return and live in the Negev Desert. The history of these Jewish people began with King Nebuchadnezzar, and there has been a slow but steady return of Sephardi Jews to the Negev Desert since the early 1990s.

1. The Jews hated the Idumeans because for centuries the Idumeans had plundered their farms and raped their women.
2. The Jews had no great love for Herod the Great who was an Idumean, one of their hated distant cousins. To add insult to injury, Herod was given the Roman title of “King of the Jews,” even though he was obviously not in the promised lineage to be called a “son of David.”

With most of the people gone, the land returned to wild semi-arid desert. Weeds and thistles grew everywhere, terraced hills were destroyed by winter rains, and wandering Bedouins enjoyed the deserted countryside. Neighboring powers soon dominated the former Jewish communities and the local Jewish residents became assimilated into the pagan cultures of the Moabites and Edomites.

03.02.14 539/538 B.C. Babylon Falls to the Persians (Persian Empire 539-331 B.C.)

The Persian King Cyrus II (reigned 550-530)⁹⁸ united the Persians and Medes to defeat the Babylonians in 539. His processional march on a horse into Babylon was typical for a victorious monarch, and as such, has a striking similarity to the triumphal entry of Jesus at the beginning of His Passion Week. As Cyrus entered the city, the people spread branches on the road before him to announce their loyalty to him. This momentous event was recorded on several clay tablets, which were eventually discovered by archaeologists. One of those tablets reads as follows,

In the month of Arahshamnu, the third day, Cyrus entered Babylon, green twigs were spread before him (and) the state of Peace (sulmu) was imposed upon the city. Cyrus sent greetings to all Babylon.

King Cyrus II Tablet⁹⁹

The rise of Cyrus to power was the fulfillment of a prophecy spoken by Daniel (Dan. 6:28). Cyrus decreed that all people who were captured by the Babylonians were to be given freedom and told to live in peace (mentioned four times). He was God’s instrument in the fulfillment of Daniel’s prophecy. However, only a few thousand Jews chose to return to their Promised Land (Ezra 6:3-5) and rebuild Jerusalem and the temple (2 Ch. 36:22-23; Ezra 1.1-4; 6:3-5). It was

98. The Persian kings Cyrus II (grandson of Cyrus I), Darius I (a/k/a Darius the Great), Artaxerxes I and Darius II are among fifty biblical names whose existence has been verified by archaeological studies in a published article by Lawrence Mykytiuk titled, “Archaeology Confirms 50 Real People in the Bible.” *Biblical Archaeology Review*, March/April, 2014 (40:2), pages 42-50, 68. This archaeological evidence confirms the historical accuracy of the biblical timeline. For further study, see the website for Associates for Biblical Research, as well as Grisanti, “Recent Archaeological Discoveries that Lend Credence to the Historicity of the Scriptures.” 475-98.

99. Prichard, *The Ancient Near East*. 1:204.

this temple that some five centuries later would be enlarged, beautified, and would become known as “Herod’s Temple” in the days of Jesus. As to the decree of Cyrus, it stated:

I returned to the sacred cities, on the other side of the Tigris [River], the sanctuaries which have been in ruins for a long time [and re-established], the images which (used) to live therein, and established for them permanent sanctuaries. I [also] gathered all their [former] inhabitants and returned [them] to their habitations [homelands].

King Cyrus II Decree¹⁰⁰

Some scholars believe that Cyrus was a follower of the Zoroaster, the new Persian religion with some Jewish influences. He spoke respectfully of the Jews and their God, because in the course of time, Jews had risen to governmental positions. This was revealed by the discovery of clay tablets in the royal library that have inscribed Hebrew names.



03.02.14.A. THE CYRUS CYLINDER (538 B.C.). King Cyrus II, a/k/a Cyrus the Great, decreed on this clay cylinder that all captured people were to be released. Known as the Cyrus Cylinder, upon this is recorded the decree giving freedom to the Jewish peoples (as well as others) as prophesied by the prophets. Photograph courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.

100. Prichard, *The Ancient Near East*. 1:208; See also Mould, *Essentials of Bible History*. 349-51.



03.02.14.B. THE TOMB OF CYRUS THE GREAT. The prophet Isaiah wrote his book around 700 B.C. and prophesied that one day a king named Cyrus would deliver the Jews from exile (Isa. 44:28; 45:1). A century and a half later this prophecy and others were fulfilled. Given the legacy of accurate prophecies, the Jewish people of the first century observed Jesus carefully in light of Isaiah's messianic prophecies. Photo by Wikipedia Commons.

Finally, at this time in history there was a prophecy given that has been the subject of many debates. It pertains to the “seventy sevens” mentioned by the prophet Daniel that designate a timeline for the coming of the messiah.¹⁰¹ However, it is not perfectly clear, especially since there are three possible beginning points of the timeline calendar. Many evangelical scholars say it was partially fulfilled at the time of Jesus with the remaining portion to be fulfilled at a future time. There are three decrees concerning the return of the Jews to Jerusalem, one of them apparently is also a beginning point of the messianic prophecy of “seventy sevens.”

1. Daniel received a prophetic revelation of seventy “sevens” (Dan. 9:24-27) in the “first year of Darius” (Dan. 9:1) when the Persians made him king over the Babylonians in 539 B.C.

101. Daniel 9:24-27 is the only Old Testament passage which refers to the Messiah as “Messiah.” Elsewhere He is called “Shiloh” (Gen. 49:10), the “Root of Jesse” (Isa. 11:10), the “Righteous Branch” (Jer. 23:5), the “Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6), etc. But the name by which He is known best, “Messiah,” appears in only in the Daniel 9 passage.

2. Then, according to 2 Chronicles 36:22, the decree by King Cyrus II, a/k/a Cyrus the Great, was issued in his first year. That was his regnal year which commenced in April of 538 B.C.

Many scholars believe that this was the starting point of Daniel's prophecy of "sevens."

3. Two other decrees were issued by King Artaxerxes in 458 and 444 B.C.¹⁰² However, other scholars believe that the most important decree was not issued in 444 B.C. but on March 14, 445 B.C.¹⁰³ Another scholar believes the pivotal date in Daniel is 536 B.C. which was the end of 70 years of captivity of Daniel 9:24 and the beginning of the 69 weeks of Daniel 9:25-26.¹⁰⁴

03.02.15 723 - 539 BC: Summary of Significant Developments of Assyrian and Babylonian Captivities

As previously stated, there were several significant developments that pertained to the identity of the first century Jewish people. Knowing these developments and the political and social pressures that created them, aids the modern student to understand the cultural environment in which Jesus ministered. Many more developments would arise during the Inter-Testamental Period. However, at this time in history the focus is on the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities and influences.

Assyrian Captivity:

1. When the majority of the ten northern Israelite tribes were relocated by the Assyrians in 722/21 B.C., they seemed to have disappeared into the Assyrian culture after several generations. Hence, since their location became unknown, they are often referred to as the "ten lost tribes." Note, however, that the disciple, James, did not consider them lost when he wrote his letter to them (cf. 1:1). Evidently, in the first century the Jews in Jerusalem knew where they were. These Israelites (later called Jews) did not make any significant impact upon Judaism in Israel, which was considerably different from the later

102. Lurie, David H. "A New Interpretation of Daniel's "Sevens" and the Chronology of the Seventy "Sevens." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*. 55:3 (Sept, 1990) 303-10.

103. McClain, *Daniel's Prophecy of the 70 Weeks*. 25. The calculation using that date would bring the fulfillment of the prophecy to April 6, 32 A.D., which was not a year when the 14th day of Nisan fell on a Friday.

104. McFall, Leslie. "Do the Sixty-nine Weeks of Daniel Date the Messianic Mission of Nehemiah or Jesus?" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 52:4 (Dec. 2009) 673-718.

deportation of the Israelites from Judea.¹⁰⁵ When the latter group was relocated to Babylon, their religious beliefs intensified. One of the many nations they escaped *to* was Egypt. While Egypt was a country of slavery in the sixteenth century B.C., since then at times it was a country of refuge for many, including the prophet Jeremiah. That is why a vibrant Jewish community was established there long before the destruction of the first temple in 537 B.C.¹⁰⁶

2. A new ethnic group known as the Samaritans emerged when the remaining northern Israelites intermarried with their new foreign neighbors who were brought in by the Assyrians. Their descendants became known as the “Samaritans.”¹⁰⁷ Centuries later, the first century Jews did not recognize the Samaritans as true brothers of the faith, but rather, they were considered to be “half-breeds” or of “mixed blood.”¹⁰⁸ Each group considered the other to have adopted certain pagan practices into their religious rituals, thus was defiled and impure.

3. An important development is that both the Assyrians and Babylonians were exposed to Jewish thought, religion, and the hope of a coming messiah. The Babylonians were masters of divination, astrology, and other cultic rituals in an endless search for understanding truth and the mysterious knowledge of the gods. It was the ideal setting for the laws of God to spread, since they too recognized the literal fulfillment of the Hebrew prophecies. Some scholars today believe that the Persian government administrators, who also became interested in the messiah, knew the Hebrew predictions. Since the Babylonians specialized in astrology, they were interested in the rising star mentioned in Numbers 24:17. It is understandable that by the first century all the peoples throughout the Ancient Middle East were waiting for the coming messiah.

Babylonian Captivity:

4. As the Babylonians were coming to attack Jerusalem, a number of wealthy Jews left Jerusalem. They went to Egypt, Spain, and other countries that belted the Mediterranean

105. There has often been name confusion between the southern region known as Judah or Judea, and the name of the entire country – Judaea. The name “Judaea” is often used interchangeably with “Israel,” although the latter term seems to have been used less often in the first century. Furthermore, the name “Judah” is generally that of a person, but the descendants of Judah are also known as “the people of Judah” or “the people of Judea.”

106. Golub, *In the Days*. 229.

107. See “Samaritans” 02.01.17.

108. People of “mixed blood” or “half-breeds” are persons of various tribal or ethnic backgrounds. Both terms are offensive.

Sea.¹⁰⁹ Among those who went to Egypt was the prophet Jeremiah. In Egypt, many traveled some 800 miles south along the Nile River and built a community on Elephantine Island along Egypt's southern frontier. There they built a temple.¹¹⁰ Legend says that the Ark of the Covenant was hidden in this temple when King Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the Jerusalem temple. Of course, the obvious question is that if the Ark was there, why wasn't it returned during the Second Temple Period? The mystery remains veiled.

5. It is believed that the synagogue as a local institution of worship and community center was established in Babylon.¹¹¹

6. During the Jewish exile the Aramaic language, a sister language to Hebrew, was accepted by the Jews as well as the Aramaic square script alphabet.¹¹² It was the official language of the Babylonian Empire.

7. The Jews called upon God to bring them a messiah who would deliver them from bondage.

8. When freedom was offered, not all Jews chose to return to their Promised Land. In fact, only a small contingent returned while some remained in Babylon and others migrated to India and China. Many who remained in Babylon maintained strict obedience to the Jewish faith as a means of survival in a pagan culture. Centuries later, their descendants produced the valuable and exhaustive commentary known as the Babylonian Talmud, which is considered by scholars to be more reliable than the Jerusalem Talmud, which was written in Tiberias.

9. Under Ezra, a new class of religious leaders known as *scribes* was established in Jerusalem. These writers studied the Mosaic Law and became known in the first century more as lawyers than writers of contracts. The priests who had been the traditional interpreters of the Law now had that portion of their responsibility transferred to the scribes. By the time of Jesus, these scribes obtained a powerful aristocratic position in

109. Golub, *In the Days*. 228-30. Modern Bible students who examine the travels of the Apostle Paul sometimes question why the Jewish people were in the various countries where Paul preached. The answer is, that often either persecution or economic opportunities drove them there.

110. See 03.04.18.

111. Mould, *Essentials of Bible History*. 359-61, 379, 396.

112. See "Language" 02.03.28.

Judaism and frequently conflicted with Jesus on the interpretation of various religious issues.¹¹³

10. The Oral Law, as it was known in the days of Jesus, was established by Ezra. However, some Jewish scholars claim it originated with Moses, and many orthodox Jews still affirm this. The Jews believed that the destruction of their temple in 587 B.C. and subsequent deportation to Babylon was the direct result of their disobedience to both the Written Law (i.e. namely breaking Sabbath rules) as well as the Oral Law. Upon their return to Jerusalem, the Oral Law was expanded immensely to prevent any possibility of future deportation. However, those who moved to India, China, Egypt, Spain, and elsewhere *did not* develop the restrictive Oral laws. Therefore, they did not have the theological problems the religious leaders in Jerusalem had concerning Jesus as the Messiah.

11. The Israelites, while living in Babylon and elsewhere, changed their understanding of God. They knew the answer to, “Who is God?” They realized He was national as well as personal. He was everywhere, and with them in exile. This may be the only reason why they survived culturally and religiously when other people groups in similar situations throughout history lost their identity.¹¹⁴

12. The Jews in Babylon reflected upon the laws of cleanliness instituted by Moses; laws such as maintaining toilets outside the camp and not eating pork. Some scholars believe that they also observed the cleansing rituals of their pious pagan neighbors, and concluded that if pagans can maintain a high level of cleanliness, shouldn't they do likewise? Examples of adopted rules of cleanliness are,

a. Not to walk over a grave or one will become defiled.¹¹⁵

b. One must become purified if anything unclean has been touched.

c. One must become purified before entering a holy place such as the temple.

d. In particular was the matter of washing hands before and/or after meals. This issue was often debated between the first century schools of Hillel and Shammai. A person also had to wash hands before entering a house if he or she was at a

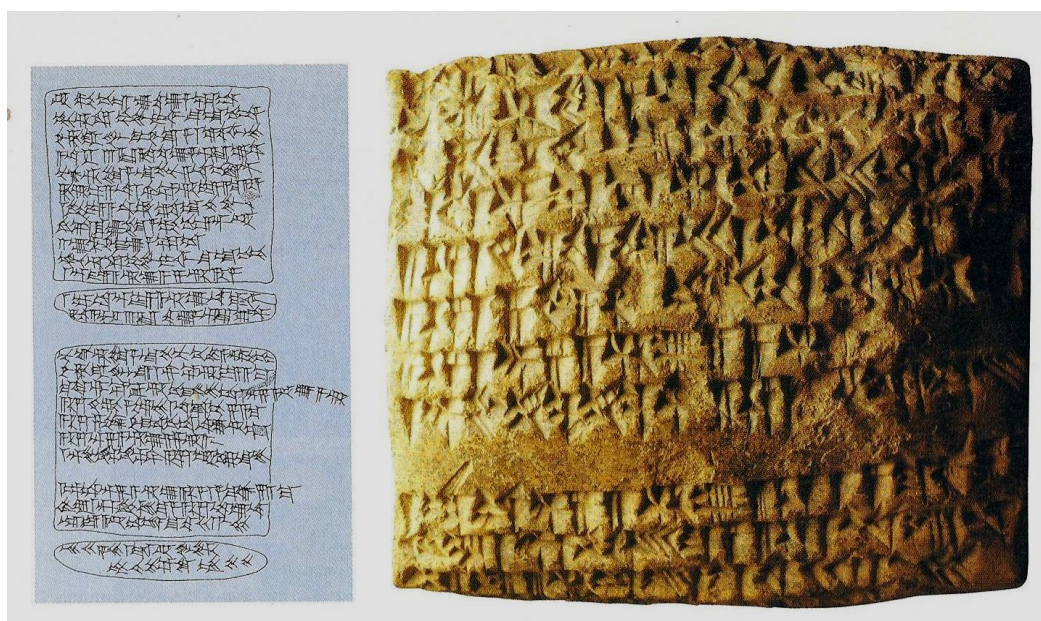
113. Idelsohn, *Jewish Liturgy and Its Development*. 16-17. This book is an excellent study on worship during the second temple period. (New York: Dover, 1995. Originally published by Henry Holt and Co. 1932). While Idelsohn (1882-1932) covers the entire history of Jewish worship, chapter 1 is specifically dedicated to the second temple period.

114. Lemaire, “The Universal God: How the God of Israel Became a God for All.” 58.

115. See “Defile” in Appendix 26.

funeral.¹¹⁶ It is believed that the immersion in the mikvah developed at this time as well. Archaeologists today are quick to identify the ancient ruins of a home or community as Jewish if they uncover a mikvah. Needless to say, some Pharisaic rules that Jesus confronted had nothing to do with the laws of Moses.

13. Finally, the biblical faith in the one true God became known as “Judaism,” and the adherents of all twelve tribes who were known previously as “Israelites” were now called “Jews” (Esther 2:5).¹¹⁷ The identification of the descendants of Abraham is referred to in this work as “Jews” throughout their entire history for purposes of clarification. In a similar manner, the land in which they live is often referred to today as “Palestine” or “ancient Palestine” even though that name was unknown during the days of Jesus. When Hadrian destroyed Jerusalem in A.D. 135, he renamed the land in honor of the ancient Israelite enemy – the Philistines. Today, however, the name *Palestine* is often used for identification purposes when referring to various historical places and events, even those that occurred prior to 135 A.D.



03.02.15.A. A TABLET FROM BABYLON READS “IF I FORGET THEE, O JERUSALEM.” A cuneiform tablet dating to 498 B.C., found in Babylon contains a reference (in the third line after the blank line in photo and drawing above), to “al Yahudu” the town of Judah, meaning Jerusalem. Photograph and drawing courtesy of Andre Lemaire.

116. Golub, *In the Days*. 53-55.

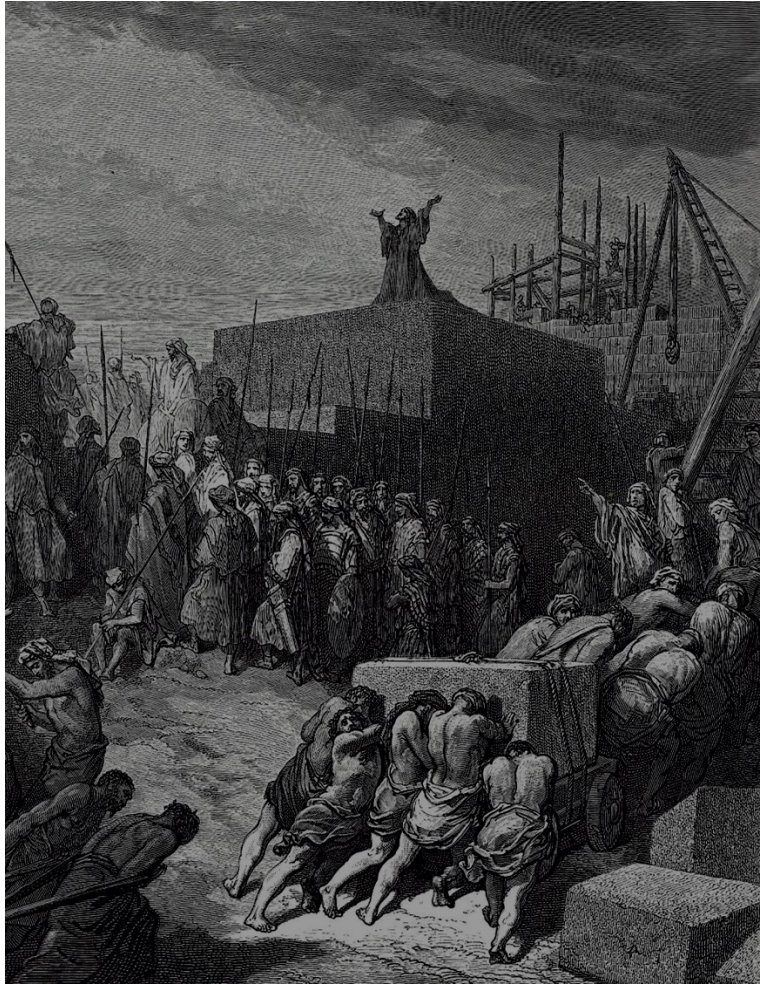
117. Blizzard, “Judaism - Part 1” *Yavo Digest* 1:5, 3.

Unit 03

Historical Background

Chapter 03

Second Temple Period (515 B.C. – A.D. 70)



03.03.00.A. THE REBUILDING OF THE TEMPLE by Gustave Dore', 1866.

The second temple was constructed with limited resources and was, in fact, a very simple structure in comparison to the famous predecessor, Solomon's temple. However, while Solomon's temple was built with slave labor and high taxes, the second temple was built with offerings and sacrifices of the people. Hence, the rabbis said it was more beautiful than the first.

03.03.01 538 - 444 B.C. Exiles Return to Judah; Temple Reconstruction Begins

A new chapter of Jewish history began when the Medo-Persian (a/k/a Persian) Empire defeated the Babylonians. This created one of the most peaceful times in Jewish history. They had self-government and religious liberty as they desired; a joyful period of history that they seldom experienced. It began with the fulfillment of Daniel's unique prophecy. And while they clearly understood it, the prophecy is seen by modern scholars as having two possible interpretations.

1. From the first invasion of Nebuchadnezzar in 605 to the issuing of the edict of Cyrus¹¹⁸ was a period of seventy years.
2. From the destruction of Solomon's temple and Jerusalem to the rebuilding of the second temple was also seventy years.

In essence, the interval from the beginning of the captivity to the beginning of the restoration was the same time as that from the completion of the captivity to the completion of the restoration – seventy years. The significance is that since Daniel's short term prophecies were literally fulfilled, then it can be assumed that his long term prophecies concerning the Messiah would also be literally fulfilled.¹¹⁹

The ten northern tribes appear to have remained lost in unknown areas far to the east. However, the two tribes of Benjamin and Judah in Babylon were granted permission to return in three migrations. In the history of their restoration to their homeland, three distinguished leaders as well as three Persian kings appear. Most significant was Zerubbabel, a descendent of King David who returned to Judah with about fifty thousand followers. They were only a small portion of the exiles that chose to return while others either stayed in Babylon or relocated elsewhere throughout Asia. By relocating in foreign nations, they helped distribute the knowledge of the one true God, the promise of a coming messiah, and thus prepare the way for the gospel that would follow centuries later. The "missionary era" was actually begun by the Jews, but it would be catapulted by Christians who would later travel into distant lands to spread the gospel as they fled from persecution.¹²⁰

Zerubbabel, who was a descendant of King David, was instrumental in the construction of a new temple and served briefly as governor, but not as king. He and the prophets continued to

118. See 03.02.14.A.

119. For the historical trail of the Davidic Covenant from David to Jesus, see the blue "Mystery Unveiled" boxes in 03.02.01, 03.02.03, 03.02.06, 03.03.01, 04.02.02, and 13.04.05.

120. Some scholars believe Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem in 440 B.C.; See Rousseau and Arav, *Jesus and His World*. 345.

anticipate a Messiah who would personally fulfill the eternal requirements of the Davidic Covenant.¹²¹

03.03.02 515 B.C. Second Temple Completed

As the result of the gracious King Cyrus II, Zerubbabel was the principal builder of the second temple at the exact same location of the previous Solomon's temple (Ezra 3:1-13; 5:1-17; 6:14-18). The first segment rebuilt was the altar for sacrificial worship. It was completed on October 5, 537 B.C. This was followed by the construction of the rest of the temple which began on April 23, 536 B.C. and was finished twenty years later (Ezra 6:19-22). On March 12, 515 B.C., the long awaited temple was completed and dedicated, although it was a very humble structure in comparison to the majestic structure of King Solomon.¹²² The new temple was dedicated with great celebration on the Feast of Passover and Unleavened Bread.

It was not a shadow of King Solomon's glory, but God encouraged His people that one day the modest temple would have Someone greater than Solomon. And in the fullness of time, the Prince of Peace came and glorified the temple of God.

**“The final glory of this house will be greater than the first,” says the LORD of Hosts.
“I will provide peace in this place”— this is the declaration of the LORD of Hosts.**

Haggai 2:9

Solomon walked in the first temple, but the Greater than Solomon walked the second temple.

The second temple remained unchanged until 20/19 B.C. when Herod the Great undertook a massive remodeling work that took more than eight decades to complete. The reconstructed temple provided an identity for the people of God. It was the religious center, the place where God lived (Ps. 68:18), the place for sacrifice and forgiveness, and the focal point for Jewish festivals (which had religious significance); not only for Jews, but for Gentiles who converted to the Jewish faith. It was simple, and famed more for its sacredness than for its architecture. Nearly five centuries later Herod the Great would enlarge it.¹²³ Detailed descriptions of Herod's temple can be found in the first century writings of Josephus and in the second century Jewish book of the *Mishnah*.¹²⁴

121. Dan. 9:24-27; Zech. 9:9; 14:3-9; Mal. 2:1; 3:1-3.

122. For further study, see Ritmeyer, “Locating the Original Temple Mount.” 24-45, 64-65; and Ritmeyer, *The Quest: Revealing the Temple Mount in Jerusalem*.

123. It should be noted that some scholars believe that there have been three temples in Jewish history: 1) Solomon's temple; 2) Zerubbabel's temple completed in 515 B.C., and 3) Herod's temple. However, most scholars do not count these as three temples, because Herod's temple was an enlargement of Zerubbabel's temple.

124. Josephus, *Antiquities* 15.11 and *Wars* 5.5; *Mishnah, Middoth*.

The second temple was now completed, but there were some significant differences between it and the earlier one.¹²⁵ This one did not have,

1. The sacred Ark of the Covenant (Ex. 25:10-16)
2. The Holy Fire on the altar (Lev. 1:7)
3. The Glory of God (Shekinah Glory)
4. The tables of stone upon which the finger of God had written the Commandments.
5. The ancient book of the Law
6. The Urim and Thummin no longer shown mysteriously from the breast of the high priest, but by the Second Temple Period, the Scriptures were used to determine the will of God.¹²⁶

Of these six differences, most commentators focus on the highly prized Ark of the Covenant which for centuries was in the Holy of Holies.¹²⁷ It was not there during the time of Jesus,¹²⁸ since according to the Mishnah only a stone was in its place upon which the Ark once stood.¹²⁹ The location of these missing objects has given rise to many legends and fanciful stories. Only God knows where they are and what will become of them, if anything.

03.03.03 459 - 445 B.C. Ezra and Nehemiah

Eighty years after Zerubbabel, during the reign of the Persian King Artaxerxes Longimanus, who was the son of Xerxes, Ezra left Babylon (c. 458) with a small delegation of six thousand. His mission was to restore the institutions of Moses to a people who had been dramatically affected by their stay in Babylon. The Bible depicts him as a priest-scribe-scholar as well as a governor and reformer. For this, the Jews of Judah became deeply indebted to him and often refer to him

125. Geikie, *The Life and Words of Christ*. 1:87.

126. Babylonian Talmud, *Yoma* 21b; and *Moed* 3:94; Fischer, *The Gospels in Their Jewish Context*. (Lecture on CD/MP3). Week 5, Session 2.

127. See also Ritmeyer, "Where the Ark of the Covenant Stood in Solomon's Temple. 46-55, 70-72.

128. As of this writing, the location of the Ark of the Covenant remains a mystery. According to 2 Kings 24:13, King Nebuchadnezzar cut into pieces all of the golden temple articles. The possibility does exist that the Ark escaped his capture. However, it is not mentioned in the future third temple (Ezek. 40-43) and, therefore, it is possible that God's purpose for it has terminated.

129. Mishnah, *Joma*. 5.2.

as the “Second Moses.”¹³⁰ In fact, according to tradition, Ezra would have been considered their most distinguished prophet if Moses had not come a thousand years earlier.¹³¹ His genealogical record was very impressive: His great grandfather, Hilkiah,¹³² had discovered the Book of the Law during the days of King Josiah.¹³³ Hilkiah read it to Josiah and the people and brought about a religious awakening. As captives, Ezra’s ancestors carried the Law to Babylon.¹³⁴ Therefore, when he spoke, the people listened. Ezra read the Covenant of God, and it became the constitution of the people and the nation.¹³⁵ His public reading of the Torah was explained by the scribes as to how it would be relevant to life (cf. Neh. 8).

He was given credit for changing the ancient Hebrew alphabet to the so-called Hebrew (Aramaic) square script. He is also believed to have instituted the scribal class, the synagogues and community centers, and expanded the Oral Tradition (some scholars believe he originated the Oral Tradition). While the Oral Tradition was established originally for a good purpose, unfortunately, by the time of Christ, its authority had superseded that of the Bible; which in turn, was foundational for the conflicts between Jesus and the religious leaders.

Under Ezra’s leadership, two important traditions developed that directly impacted the ministry of Jesus.

1. A new class of religious leaders, known as *scribes* (02.01.20) was established.
2. The Oral Law (02.02.18) was established. Some scholars believe that the Oral Law existed since the days of Moses, but it did not have a powerful influence until Ezra.

Finally, Nehemiah returned as governor, or *pacha*,¹³⁶ of Judah in 445 B.C. to rebuild the walls, gates, and city of Jerusalem (Neh. 6:15) and to institute additional reforms (Neh. 7-8).¹³⁷ One of

130. Scott, Jr. *Jewish Backgrounds of the New Testament*. 166.

131. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. 7.

132. Hilkiah is among fifty biblical names whose existence has been verified by archaeological studies in a published article by Lawrence Mykytiuk titled, “Archaeology Confirms 50 Real People in the Bible.” *Biblical Archaeology Review*. March/April, 2014 (40:2), pages 42-50, 68. This archaeological evidence confirms the historical accuracy of the biblical timeline. For further study, see the website for Associates for Biblical Research, as well as Grisanti, “Recent Archaeological Discoveries that Lend Credence to the Historicity of the Scriptures.” 475-98.

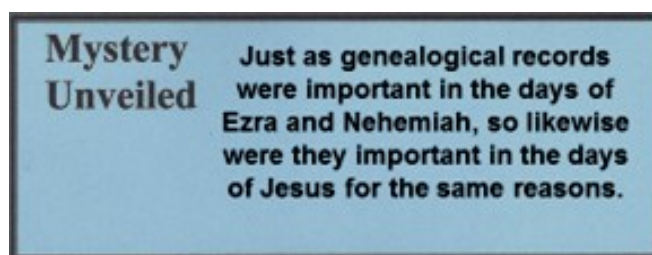
133. Mould, *Essentials of Bible History*. 359-61, 379.

134. Golub, *In the Days*. 31-33.

135. Fischer, *The Gospels in Their Jewish Context*. (Lecture on CD/MP3). Week 5, Session 1.

136. Geikie, *The Life and Works of Christ*. 1:137.

these reforms was to lead the Israelite people (now called “Jewish”) in a prayer of confession of their sins and iniquities as well as the sins of their ancestors (Neh. 9:2). Another was to re-establish temple worship according to the laws of Moses. He insured that all priests and Levites had the genealogical records,¹³⁸ and that no impersonators infiltrated temple ranks. When three families, Hobaiah, Hakkoz and Barzillai, claimed to be of priestly stock, he denied them the privilege as no record was found of them (Ezra 2:61-62). Another group of 652 people, probably pure Babylonians, wanted to go to Jerusalem but could not prove they were descendants of Israel (Ezra 2:59). They too were denied the privilege.¹³⁹ Just as genealogical records were important in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, so likewise they were important in the days of Jesus, Matthew, and Luke.



03.03.03.A. AN EXCAVATED SECTION OF NEHEMIAH’S WALL.

Nehemiah rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem after the return from Babylonian exile.

137. See 03.03.03.A.

138. Dalman, *Jesus Christ in the Talmud*. 31; Jerusalem Talmud, *J’bamoth*. 49b.

139. Golub, *In the Days*. 41.

Archaeologists uncovered the lower section of his wall although it appears like a road. Photograph by the author.

03.03.04 444 B.C. Prophecy concerning Jesus and His Ministry

Previously the prophet Daniel gave a messianic prophecy related to “sixty-nine weeks” of years or 176,295 days until the coming of the Messiah. Many scholars believe the beginning time of the prophecy was with a decree given in 444 B.C. by King Artaxerxes.¹⁴⁰ However, there were several decrees issued by Artaxerxes and the difficulty scholars have is to determine from which decree should they begin to count the years.¹⁴¹

03.03.05 443 B.C. +/- Malachi

Malachi is generally considered to have been the last prophet who wrote in the Old Testament era. He criticized Judah for her many sins and foresaw that a day of judgment would come. He said that a forerunner would announce the coming of the messiah who would usher in a new covenant for the Jewish people and the entire world. That forerunner would be John the Baptist and the Messiah would be Jesus, the Christ (meaning the “Anointed One”).

03.03.06 400 B.C. +/- Hebrew Bible is “Canonized”

A growing number of scholars believe that under Ezra and his contemporaries, the books of the Old Testament were gathered and made into the “official canonized” Hebrew Bible. They selected those books they felt were inspired by God.¹⁴² Other scholars believe that the Council of Jamnia in A.D. 90 was the closing date of the Hebrew Scriptures. Nonetheless, by the first century the Pharisees and other religious leaders had a solid concept of what books comprised their Bible.

The Old Testament closed with the Persian Empire’s rule of Judah and the New Testament opens with the Roman Empire in domination. Between these two periods was the Inter-Testamental Period when the Greeks with their Hellenistic way of life greatly influenced the Jewish people. This caldron of cultural tension was intensified by conflicts between Jews and Samaritans. The world was getting ready to receive the long awaited messiah, but not in the manner of anyone’s preconceived ideas. No one believed He would be the Messiah, the manifestation of God and man.

140. See Appendix 15 concerning Daniel’s prophecy.

141. See last section of 03.02.14.

142. Blizzard, “Judaism: Part 1” *Yavo Digest*. 1:5, 6.

Unit 03

Historical Background

Chapter 04

Inter-Testament Background (c. 400 B.C. – A.D. 30)



03.04.00.A. A GREEK-SELEUCID WAR ELEPHANT IN BATTLE. Artist unknown. At the beginning of the Maccabean Revolt, the Greeks attacked the Jewish farmers with a professional army of 50,000 soldiers and 32 war elephants. During the battle, the Jewish leader “Eleazar ... perceiving that one of the beasts (elephants) ... was higher ... and supposing that the king was upon him ... crept under the elephant ... and slew him: whereupon the elephant fell down upon him,

and he died” (*1 Macc.* 6:43, 46). This was the last time elephants were used in military conflicts in Israel.

03.04.01 Introduction

The Old Testament Period ends with the Persians ruling the Jewish land and the New Testament Period opens with the Romans controlling it. Sandwiched between the two was the Greek Empire as well as a century of Jewish independence. The Inter-Testamental Period was filled with wars, rumors of wars, social and religious conflicts, and tensions. Times of peace and prosperity were rare and brief. In fact, descriptions of what modern evangelicals call today as the “signs of the last days,” also describe this era – an era that culminated with the birth of Jesus. Judaism of this era was a descendant of the Old Testament Hebrew and faith, but was not identical to it. On the other hand, it must be distinguished from Rabbinic Judaism which developed mostly after the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70.

This 400-year period is also called the silent Inter-Testamental Period. The term “silent” is used because there were no prophetic voices. There are almost no extra-biblical writings from the first two centuries of this era; but there is a vast amount of literary works from the second half of this turbulent period. However, this is not to say that God did not intervene in the affairs of His people. In fact, two significant demonstrations of divine intervention were when,

1. Alexander the Great captured Jerusalem, but did not destroy it.
2. The Jewish farmers had an incredible military victory over the professional army of the Syrian-Greek dictator Antiochus IV Epiphanes, known as the Maccabean Revolt.

As will be shown, the Hellenistic influence upon the Jewish people was profound. After the Jews finally won their independence from the Greeks, their new leaders were almost as wicked as those they had defeated. Then came the Romans who installed an Idumean, Herod the Great (71 - 4 B.C.; reigned 37 - 4 B.C.), to be their “King of the Jews.” Herod’s personal life was a continuous disaster and would have made any Hollywood soap opera look like a children’s book. He was a descendant of Esau, had many of his ten wives killed, and only three of his sons survived to become rulers. Into this social, political, and chaotic environment, came Jesus.

03.04.02 350 B.C. Persians Capture Jerusalem

Peace and freedom for the Jewish people was finally over. A new Persian king rose to power, but his days were numbered. Within two decades, both would come under the rulership of the Greek Alexander the Great.

03.04.03 341-270 B.C. Epicurus¹⁴³

Epicurus was the father of a philosophy known as Epicureanism.¹⁴⁴ His ideas were intended to bring stability and security to an uncertain world after the death of Alexander the Great. The Greek Empire was divided among Alexander's four generals, causing social and political instability and regional military confrontations. Epicurus said the primary purpose of man is to discover self-happiness, and the pursuit of pleasure ought to be his primary mission in life. However, pleasure was also defined as the avoidance of pain. His ideas became the cornerstone of first century Hellenistic philosophy and were confronted by the Apostle Paul in Acts 17:16-33. Today this same philosophy is known as humanism.¹⁴⁵

A century and a half later the Hellenistic influences would be so intense upon the Jews, that a small religious splinter group, known as the Essenes, would have a radical philosophy directly related to Epicureanism. The Essenes would teach that all pleasure is evil; each day was to be filled with work and prayer, the direct opposite position of the Greek philosopher.¹⁴⁶

03.04.04 334 B.C. Summary of Developments of Persian Domination that Shaped Jewish Life in the First Century.

In comparison to the days of Moses and Joshua, the culture of the Jewish people was slowly changing. While their basic faith and religious observances did not change, how they practiced their faith did. Furthermore, the Jewish people were not a homogenous group; Jewish people in various areas had somewhat different practices and methodologies. For example, Jews in India and Ethiopia did not have some of the Old Testament books, as these were written after they left the Promised Land and, consequently, some communities were unaware of their existence. In review, there were a number of significant developments in the early days of Persian rule.

1. The temple reconstruction and dedication.
2. The Aramaic language became the language of the Jews as well as the international language of commerce. By the first century A.D., it was commonly used in ordinary public discourse in Judah although Hebrew was spoken in the synagogue. However,

143. For more information, see "Epicureans" 02.01.05.

144. De Lacy, "Epicureanism and the Epicurean School." 3:2-3.

145. Harrington, "Epicureans." 5:618.

146. Guignebert, *The Jewish World in the Time of Jesus*. 181.

while Jews in Alexandria, Egypt and other foreign cities accepted the Greek language, their brothers in Judaea¹⁴⁷ (Galilee, Perea, and Judea)¹⁴⁸ did not.

3. Most Jews chose *not* to return to Judaea, but stayed in Babylon and maintained a very strict religious system. According to Josephus, those who remained behind in the original return of 537 B.C. and the second return in 459-458 B.C. were among the wealthiest and most influential leaders and merchants.¹⁴⁹ The Jewish population evidently exploded as in one uprising alone he reported 50,000 dead.¹⁵⁰ The population throughout the Roman Empire could very well have grown to more than a million.¹⁵¹ As the population grew and people slowly took on distinctions of the culture in which they lived, ancient tribal distinctions became lost. Jews remained in Babylon and Mesopotamia from the days of the captivity until the rise of the new state of Israel some twenty-five centuries later. The final exodus of remaining Jews to the revived state of Israel did not take place until “Operation Ezra and Nehemiah” between the years 1946 and 1952.

4. It must be noted that of the thousands of captives taken to Babylon, a vast majority eventually decided to remain in that land when they had the opportunity to return. They prospered and enjoyed the Persian government where they could exercise their own faith. And it is because they were so far removed from their Promised Land, that they took their religion very seriously and were more faithful to the Torah than were their counterparts in Jerusalem. That is a major reason why today scholars universally agree that the Babylonian Talmud is universally considered to be a better authority than the Jerusalem Talmud.

5. A number of Jewish families decided to leave Judaea/Israel during the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes in the second century B.C. Modern students study the adventures and teachings of the Apostle Paul as he traveled on his missionary journeys, but they never question how those foreign Jewish people got to those European places. Many settled there during the Inter-Testamental Period.

147. There has often been name confusion between the southern region known as Judah and the name of the entirety – Judaea. The name “Judaea” is often used interchangeably with “Israel,” although that term seems to have been used less often in the first century.

148. Some ancient writers use the term “Judea” in the broadest sense. Examples are found in Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 5.15.70; Strabo, *Geographia*, 16.4.21; and Dio Cassius, *Roman History* 37.15.2. In the days of Jesus, Perea was often referred to as the “region of Judea across the Jordan.”

149. Josephus, *Antiquities* 11.5.2; 15.2.2; 18.9.1ff.

150. Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.9.9.

151. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. 6.

6. Finally, a body of seventy judges and one president, known as the “Sanhedrin,” came into full power as the supreme high court and governmental-religious authority in the land of Judah.¹⁵² It grew out of the union of non-priestly heads of families, representatives of the “secular nobility” with the priestly aristocracy. Therefore, “elders,” who were the heads of wealthy families, were not especially religiously motivated, but were an influential group representing their own interests at the time of Jesus.¹⁵³

The cultural and religious way of life known as “Judaism” dates from this post-exilic era. It was the beginning of Judah as a temple-state that was ruled by a council of governors who were political puppets of the Persian monarch. However, by the first century, it was the high priest Caiaphas, manipulated by the Romans who controlled the Sanhedrin.

03.04.05 334 – 63 B.C. Alexander the Great and the Hellenistic Period

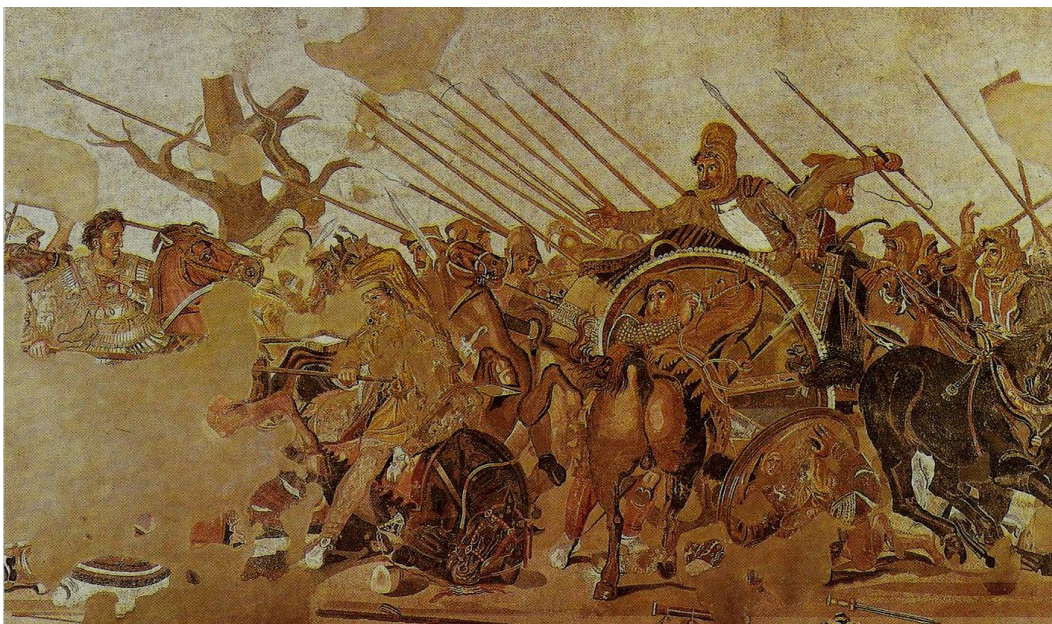
Young Alexander took control of Greece upon his father’s assassination and two years later began a massive military campaign against King Darius of the Persian Empire. He developed a well-trained army with 140 to 160 war elephants that he used in five battles. Consequently, in only ten years, he had control of a vast empire and became the fulfillment of one of Daniel’s prophecies (11:3). He gave the Jews first class citizenship and encouraged them to move to his new city of Alexandria in Egypt. Many did and eventually the city became the largest Jewish metropolitan area of the ancient world. In fact, he encouraged the Jews to move to all of his Greek cities where they enjoyed religious freedom.

Alexander was a student of Aristotle, a scholar of scholars, and had his own ambitious ideas for the world. His goal was to civilize the nations of the world with Greek. He would accomplish this by the introduction of Greek philosophy and select the best qualities of the captured nations to give to all the peoples of his empire. An important contribution was his effort to make Greek the *lingua franca* or the official language of business and government throughout the empire. It was accepted everywhere except in the Jewish enclave of Judaea. With this new philosophy known as Hellenism, came the concept that would challenge the Jews – that man and not God, was central to life.¹⁵⁴

152. Thompson, “Sanhedrin.” 3:1390.

153. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*. 223.

154. Grundy, *A Survey of the New Testament*. 22.



03.04.05.A. A MOSAIC OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT vs. THE INVINCIBLE KING DARIUS III. In one of the most significant battles in the ancient world, the young Alexander (shown on left side) with a lance defeating the seemingly invincible King Darius III in 333 B.C., who is shown terrified in his chariot.

03.04.06 334 B.C. Persia Falls to Alexander The Great

Beginning in 334 B.C., Alexander the Great (reigned 356-323 B.C.) and his Greek soldiers began to conquer the known world. After taking control of Syria, Tyre, and the Holy Land, he set forth to Persia which he conquered at the Battle of Issus.¹⁵⁵

The mighty Persian Empire and the eastern Mediterranean world was his in only ten years.¹⁵⁶ His goal was to spread Hellenism,¹⁵⁷ which by definition is the forceful imposition of Greek culture, religion, and ways of life upon another people. However, Persia would not remain silent. Three centuries later during the reign of Herod the Great, the Parthian Empire would conquer the Persians, and together they would briefly invade the Holy Land.

¹⁵⁵. Mould, *Essentials of Bible History*. 386.

¹⁵⁶. Mantey, "New Testament Backgrounds." 3.

¹⁵⁷. See "Hellenism" in Appendix 26.

03.04.07 332 B.C. First Samaritan Temple Built

With the blessings of Alexander, the first Samaritan temple was built on Mount Gerizim overlooking the ancient village of Shechem. There were many points of cultural and theological differences and arguments between the Jews and Samaritans. Tensions were constant. But when it was completed, the separation of the Jews and Samaritans was fixed in stone. Since that time, the temple site continued to be central to Samaritan worship.¹⁵⁸ The date of its construction is a subject of debate. Nonetheless, there are three important points to consider:

1. Some scholars believe the temple was built at the time of Nehemiah and that the son of the high priest Jehoiada, who married Sanballat's daughter Nicaso (Neh. 13:28), was influential in the construction. However, the term *son* could also mean grandson. Therefore, the date of the marriage is uncertain which complicates the dating of the temple construction. Coins and pottery discovered at the site date the temple to the mid-fifth century B.C., possibly prior to Nehemiah's return to Jerusalem.¹⁵⁹
2. The events recorded by Josephus are generally quite accurate, but his account of the Samaritan temple construction¹⁶⁰ is considered by most historians to be in error and, therefore, is not quoted here.
3. Some Jewish traditions state that the temple was constructed when Nehemiah removed Tobiah from the Jerusalem temple.¹⁶¹

It should be noted, however, that while the Greeks permitted the Samaritans to build their temple, Samaria also became a center of Greek pagan worship of Isis and Serapis.¹⁶² This polytheistic culture of the Samaritans mirrored the Greeks, which is why by the time of Jesus, so many Jews hated the Samaritans. Archaeologists discovered the Zeno Papyri that affirms the widespread encroachment of Hellenism into the Jewish communities.¹⁶³

158. Blizzard, "Judaism - Part 1" *Yavo Digest*. 1:5, 8; <http://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/ancient-cultures/ancient-israel/dating-of-samaritan-temple-on-mt-gerizim/>. August 19, 2013.

159. <http://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/uncategorized/merrills-letter/> August 20, 2013.

160. Josephus, *Antiquities* 11.7-8.

161. Scott, Jr. *Jewish Backgrounds of the New Testament*. 77.

162. The god Isis originated in Egypt, but was accepted by the Greeks. See Zangenberg, "Between Jerusalem and Samaria." 427-28.

163. See "Zeno Papyri" in Appendix 26.

03.04.08 331 B.C. Alexander the Great Conquers Tyre and Judah

Alexander, the world conqueror, brought great destruction to nearly every city he conquered. He devastated the supposedly indestructible Phoenician island city of Tyre by building a half mile long land-bridge to reach it. Of the captured defenders, he nailed 2,000 of them to crosses.¹⁶⁴ The destruction was absolute and in accordance with the prophet Ezekiel (Ch. 27). He then marched south against the ancient Philistine city of Gaza and onward to Jerusalem. At this point Josephus recorded the events in most interesting detail:

Now Alexander, when he had taken Gaza, made haste to go up to Jerusalem; and Judah the high priest, when he heard that, was in agony and under terror as not knowing how he should meet the Macedonians, since the king was displeased at his foregoing disobedience. He therefore ordained that the people should make supplications, and should join him in offering sacrifices to God, whom he besought to protect the nation and deliver them from the perils that were coming upon them. Whereupon God warned him in a dream, which came upon him after he had offered sacrifice, that he should take courage and adorn the city, and open the gates. The rest appear in white garments, but that he and the priests should meet the king in the habits proper to their order, without dread of any ill consequences, which the providence of God would prevent. Upon which, when he arose from his sleep, he greatly rejoiced; and declared to all the warning he had received from God according to which dream he acted entirely, and so waited for the coming of the king.

And when he understood that he was not far from the city, he went out in procession with the priests and the multitude of the citizens. The procession was venerable, and the manner of it different from that of other nations. It reached to a place called Sapha; which name, translated into Greek signifies a *prospect*, for you have thence a prospect both of Jerusalem and the temple. And when the Phoenicians and the Chaldeans that followed him, thought they should have the liberty to plunder the city and torment the high priest to death which the king's displeasure fairly promised, then, the very reverse happened. For Alexander, when he saw the multitude at a distance in white garments, while the priests stood clothed with fine linen and the high priests in purple and scarlet clothing with his miter on his head having the golden plate on which the name of God was engraved, he approached by himself, and adored that name and first saluted the priest.

164. Curtin Rufus 4.4.7, cited by Robinson. "Crucifixion in the Roman World: The Use of Nails at the Time of Christ" 54. n105.

The Jews also did all together, with one voice, salute Alexander, and encompass him about: whereupon the kings of Syria and the rest were surprised at what Alexander had done, and supposed him disordered in his mind. However, Parmenio alone went up to him, and asked him how it came to pass, that when all others adored him, he should adore the high priest of the Jews? To whom he [Alexander] replied, “I did not adore him, but that God who hath honored him with that high priesthood; for I saw this very person in a dream, in this very habit, when I was at Dios, in Macedonia ...”

Josephus, *Antiquities* 11.8.4-5 (325b-331a)

However, once he entered Israel, he went to Akko, that is located on the northern tip of today's Bay of Haifa. This was the terminus of ancient trade routes, and there Alexander established a very active mint that produced the purest silver, gold and bronze coins in the ancient Middle East.¹⁶⁵ Among these coins was the Tyrian shekel that in later years would be the treasured coin of the Sadducees, even if it had the image of the god Melqarth.

Josephus recorded that after this conversation, Alexander offered sacrifices to God in the temple, at which time the scroll of Daniel was presented to him. The priests read the prophecies to him that stated that one of the Greeks would destroy the Persians (see Dan. 7:6; 8:3-8, 20-22; 11:3). This was an absolute delight for the Greek conqueror.

This may be why he was so kind to the Jewish people. He excused them from paying taxes during the Sabbatical year when there was no planting of crops, and even gave offerings in the temple.¹⁶⁶ When the Egyptian city of Alexandria was built (in honor of Alexander), Jews were recognized as citizens equal with the Greeks. Jews who enlisted in the army were permitted to practice their faith with complete freedom. He left Jerusalem in peace, the only city he did so, and destroyed the Persians. The divine protection and intervention of God in the tiny Jewish state was as dramatic as any in the Hebrew Bible.

Many of the architectural marvels of the Mediterranean that are credited to the Romans, were actually initiated by Alexander the Great and the Greeks who continued his ideas. In every country he conquered, he built a city that would serve as a model for other cities to be remodeled or constructed. That included better city planning, the building of a gymnasium for games and contexts modeled on the Greek order, wider streets, open-air theaters for public plays, of fine stately colonnaded buildings that served for civic and religious affairs. Along with these cultural

165. Hendin, *Guide to Biblical Coins*. 131-3.

166. Golub, *In the Days*. 64-65.

changes, there was the Greek style of dress, language, philosophy, and manner of life. As will be seen later, this Hellenistic movement had a profound effect upon the Jewish people.¹⁶⁷

03.04.09 323 B.C. Death of Alexander the Great

Alexander died suddenly at the age of 33 on June 13, 323 B.C. in Babylon, leaving no heirs. His massive empire extended from the Mediterranean Sea to Punjab in India. The author of the first book of *Maccabees* preserved the account of his death.¹⁶⁸ A portion of it reads as follows:

After Alexander son of Philip, the Macedonian, who came from the land of Kittim, had defeated Darius, king of the Persians and the Medes, he succeeded him as king. (He had previously become king of Greece.) He fought many battles, conquered strongholds and put to death the kings of the earth. He advanced to the ends of the earth and plundered many nations. When the earth became quiet before him, he became exalted and his heart was lifted up. He gathered a very strong army and ruled over countries, nations, and princes and they became tributary to him. After this he fell sick and perceived that he was dying, so he brought his most honored officers, who had been brought up with him from youth, and divided his kingdom among them while he was still alive. And after Alexander reigned twelve years, he died.

1 Maccabees 1:1-7¹⁶⁹

The four generals, Antigonus I, Cyclops, Ptolemy, and Seleucus I Nicator, who inherited power, established dynasties that for a while lived in peace. Eventually they fought each other leaving the Jewish land a battle ground for twenty years.¹⁷⁰ Each general hoped to establish a kingdom similar to that of Alexander. Eventually Syria, Galilee, Samaria, and Judah came under a powerful family known as the Seleucid Dynasty. The prophecy of Daniel 11 is a description of these conflicts.¹⁷¹ From this time, the land of the Jews was always considered a part of Syria, even when Rome was the dominant world power in the first century. The author of *Maccabees* made these comments concerning the generals:

167. Mould, *Essentials of Bible History*. 388-91.

168 See 02.02.01.V for more information on this subject and the significance of *1* and *2 Maccabees* is to understanding this period of Inter-Testamental history. Without these two books, scholarship would be at a loss of the details.

169. First and 2nd Maccabees belong to a classification of extra-biblical books known as the Apocrypha. These two literary works are deemed highly reliable historically. See 02.02.03 “Apocrypha” for more information.

170. Golub, *In the Days*. 65-66.

171. *New International Version* Study Bible footnotes for Dan. 11.

Then his officers began to rule, each in his own place. They all put on crowns after his death, and so did their sons after them for many years and they caused many evils on the earth. From them came forth a sinful root, Antiochus Epiphanes, son of Antiochus the king; he had been a hostage in Rome. He began to reign in the one hundred and thirty-seventh year of the kingdom of the Greeks.

1 Maccabees 1:8-10

It should be noted that while the Hellenistic Period is recognized to be in the years between 334 and 63 B.C., the Jews were not in constant domination during this era. As is described in detail below, from 165 - 63 B.C. the Jews were an independent people but the Hellenistic culture continued its influence upon them.

03.04.10 319 B.C. Jewish Families Taken to Egypt; Ptolemy Dynasty of Egypt Rules Judah; The Parthian and Roman Empires Begin to Rise

A time of political upheaval was about to begin. For the next 122 years the Jews of Jerusalem and surrounding Promised Land were governed by their high priests, who were essentially puppet governors controlled by the Greek overlords in Egypt. For the most part, these rulers were mild in light of other sovereigns.¹⁷² The Greek Ptolemy Soter captured Jerusalem without a fight on the Sabbath day because the Jews refused to “work” on that day. He took 120,000 Jews to surrounding villages of Alexandria as slaves.¹⁷³ They became the principle settlers in a city where the Jewish population would grow to over one million and where the Hebrew Bible would be translated into Greek.¹⁷⁴ This was the first translation of the Hebrew text and was needed because the Jews of Egypt had lost their Hebrew tongue.

At the same time, the Seleucids expanded their kingdom and founded the cities of Seleucia and Antioch. Seleucia was located in the eastern section of the kingdom along the banks of the Euphrates (modern Iraq and Iran), while Antioch was in Syria along the Orontes River. Rivalry between the Seleucids and the Ptolemies soon led to military sparring. Finally, a great battle took place at Raphia, near Gaza where Ptolemy conquered the Seleucids. However, within a few years, Ptolemy died and left a five-year-old son to reign. Hearing this, the Seleucids attacked again and conquered Judah. The dark days of the Jewish people were about to begin.

In the meantime, the Romans were growing into a powerful military force in the peninsula of Italy, and were on one conquest after another. By the second century, they fought the Greeks and won, after which they sailed to northern Africa where they laid conquest to Carthage. This

172. Metzger, *New Testament*. 18.

173. Josephus, *Antiquities* 12.1.1 and 12.2.1.

174. See “Septuagint” in 02.02.25.

was about the same time the Seleucids took control of Judah, meaning that there was war everywhere.

Also at this same time, far to the east in the Old Persian Empire, a province known as Parthia grew strong and seized control of the Empire by defeating their Seleucid overlords. The Parthians had developed highly skilled cavalry bowmen for which the Seleucids had no defense. These bowmen, who thundered across the deserts on horseback were the terror of the age; the primary reason the Parthian King Arsaces led his people to victory. Eventually his empire covered a massive territory from the Euphrates to the Indus River. Fearing the Parthians wanted access to the Mediterranean Sea, the Romans recognized them as a formidable threat, and hence, six decades before the birth of Jesus they moved into the land of the Jews to establish a frontier protective buffer.

The Parthians had obtained considerable knowledge of the Jewish faith from the exiles who had been relocated into their land centuries earlier by King Nebuchadnezzar. It would be the Parthians who would send the magi to honor the infant Jesus. Jewish believers from Parthia were also present in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:9). Clearly, the Jewish exiles were responsible for infiltrating the entire Middle East and parts of Central Asia with the anticipation of a coming messiah.¹⁷⁵

03.04.11 311 B.C. Greek Seleucid Era Begins

Seleucus I, who was a cavalry officer under Alexander, took control of Babylon marking the beginning of the Seleucid Era. (A decade later Syria is captured.) Seleucus I (312-280 B.C.) founded the Seleucid dynasty of Syria which ruled Syria, Asia Minor, Babylon, Samaria, and Judah (but Samaria and Judah disputed with the Ptolemies). The Seleucids ruled from 323 to c. 125 B.C., but in the final years, their empire was being lost to competing empires a section at a time.¹⁷⁶

03.04.12 301 B.C. Greek Seleucid Control of the Holy Land is Secured

However, the land of the Jews became the disputed territory between the Seleucid and Ptolemy dynasties. It was the curse of living on the land bridge that connected Africa with Asia and Europe – and being sandwiched between the northern Arabian Desert and Mediterranean Sea – that they were constantly faced with invading armies on the march.¹⁷⁷ They lived in constant tension, never knowing when an invading army would steal their food and other supplies. Finally, in 301 B.C. one of the greatest battles of antiquity took place at the Ipsus in Phrygia,

175. Dresden, "Parthians." 3:661.

176. Blaiklock, "Seleucids." 16:1911-12.

177. For a study of historical maps of this region, see Nebenzahl, Kenneth. *Maps of the Holy Land*. New York: Abbeville Press. 1986.

west-central Anatolia. There an estimated one hundred thirty thousand troops from both the Seleucid and Ptolemaic armies fought each other. Antigonos I was killed in battle and his son Demetrius became the Seleucid king. However, in the century to come there were five major wars between the Egyptian Ptolemies and Syrian Seleucids (274-272, 260-252, 246-241, 221-217, and 201-198). Whenever the Egyptians marched north or the Syrians marched south to Egypt, they crossed the Holy Land stealing food and whatever other supplies were needed.¹⁷⁸ If there was ever a land that needed peace and rest, it was the region of Naphtali and Zebulun – two Hebrew tribal areas on which the international highway lay – the *Via Maris*.

03.04.13 283 B.C. Ptolemy Philadelphus, King of Egypt; Greek Translation of Scripture

Ptolemy Philadelphus became the king of Egypt as the result of the demise of the Greek Empire. According to Josephus, his Jewish subjects suggested that he free Jewish slaves since their God placed him in power. He not only approved their request but he also sent gifts to the temple in Jerusalem and gathered Jewish scholars to translate the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek.¹⁷⁹ Tradition says that 72 scholars were gathered on the island of Pharos near Alexandria and there they produced the Greek translation in 72 days, hence the Latin name *Septuagint* meaning *seventy*.¹⁸⁰ Many believe this to be a fanciful legend even though some Jewish writings even claim to have the names of the original translators. That translation became known as the Septuagint, and is commonly referred to as “LXX.”¹⁸¹ This was a major step in preparing the world to receive the gospel of Jesus Christ nearly three centuries later.

Evidently, the Jews enjoyed the comforts of Egypt and favor of the king as a half-century later they built a synagogue for the royal family. Between the years 246 and 221 B.C. in Schedia, Egypt, the synagogue was constructed, and while it has since been destroyed, its dedication inscription was discovered. It is the earliest reference to a synagogue and reads:

**For King Ptolemy and Queen Berenike, his sister and wife, and for their children
the Jews built the synagogue.**

Schedia Synagogue Inscription¹⁸²

178. Cate, *A History of the New Testament and its Times*. 66.

179. Josephus, *Antiquities* 12.2.4-15.

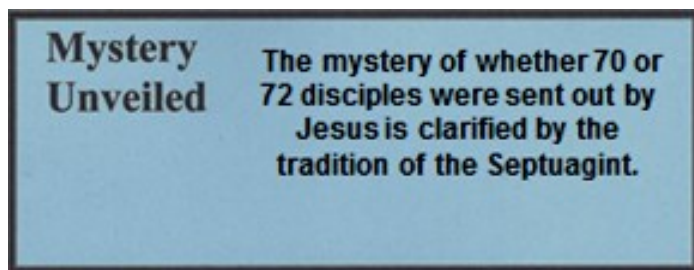
180. <https://www.ccel.org/bible/brenton/intro.html>. Retrieved December 30, 2014.

181. See 02.02.25 and a brief discussion by Dr. Petra Heldt at 02.04.01.V.

182. Horsley, *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity*. 3:121-22.

Clearly, the Jews of Egypt had become rather wealthy and were on friendly terms with their monarch. This may be reason the king encouraged the translation of the Hebrew Scriptures. The *Epistle of Aristeas* (285-247 B.C.) claims to be a reliable account of how the translation was made. The royal librarian, Demetrius of Phalerum, suggested to the reigning Egyptian king, Ptolemy Philadelphus that a copy of the Jewish Torah should be placed in the royal library. The king then sent him to Jerusalem with a caravan of gifts to present to the High Priest Eleazar. The Priest sent seventy-two elders, six from each tribe, to a remote island where they could work in peace. Supposedly, it took only seventy-two sessions and, hence, the name “Septuagint” came about. This *Epistle* might be somewhat fanciful, but it reflects the diligence with which the Jews translated their Torah. The number 72 was rounded off to 70, and symbolized by the Roman numerals LXX. While no one gives the time element of the legend any credibility, the fact that the first translation came from Egypt at this time has been firmly established.

It should be noted that at this point, history clarifies the debate as to whether Jesus sent out 70 or 72 disciples (Lk. 1:1-16 vs. Mt. 11:20-24). In Egypt there were 72 scholars who translated the Hebrew Scriptures but for ease of conversational shorthand, people spoke of “the 70.” In fact, in good Jewish tradition, their names have been preserved as well.¹⁸³ Likewise Jesus sent out 72 disciples as recorded in Matthew, but for ease of conversation, Luke said there were 70.



03.04.14 Third Century B.C. Greek Influences Challenge Jewish Values and Traditions

The real genius of Alexander was how he united conquered lands. He understood the power of culture to mold people and believed that if all shared the same values they would live in harmony.¹⁸⁴ The problem was, as both the Greeks and Romans discovered, that the Jews were not easily molded to conform to Greek values. As the time of the Messiah’s coming was drawing nearer, the influence of dominating pagan cultures intensified. While the pinnacle of this

183. B. S. J. Isserlin of the University of Leeds has an article titled *The Names of the 72 Translators of the Septuagint* based upon the Pseudepigraphic Letter by Aristeas (47-50) to his brother Philocrates written in the 2nd century B.C. It was later repeated by Philo of Alexandria as well as Josephus in *Antiquities* 12.2.7 (57). The article by Isserlin is available at <https://www.jtsa.edu/Documents/pagedocs/JANES/1973%205/Isserlin5.pdf> Retrieved June 29, 2015.

184. Du Toit, *Guide to the New Testament II*, 437.

influence was in the era of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (early 2nd century B.C.), it was, nonetheless, increasingly attractive to Jewish youth.¹⁸⁵

Whereas in most conquests, the dominant power merely desired peace and taxes from the subjugated people, the Greeks desired much more – they desired to change the conquered culture into the Greek culture. Since they were now the world’s manufacturing and seafaring nation, as well as renowned merchants, they settled in various countries to establish businesses. Many moved into Syria and to the cities east of the Jordan River that would later be known as the Decapolis cities. As such, there were a number of influences that radically changed the social, political, and religious landscape of the Promised Land. A summary is listed below, but was previously described in greater detail.¹⁸⁶

1. The gods of the Canaanites and neighboring tribes were given Greek names. But since the Jewish people did not have an idol, the Greeks were bewildered at their religion. The Jews, in turn, looked upon their overlords as idol worshippers. There was always a high level of cultural tension between the two groups, unlike the Jews and Greeks in Egypt who got along very well with each other because each group recognized the value of the other.
2. The Greek religion honored strength and wealth while Judaism honored kindness and charity.
3. The Greeks introduced poets, philosophers, artists, medical doctors and scientists while Judaism honored rabbis.
4. New types of public buildings – theaters, baths, and inns were introduced.
5. The Greeks introduced sports, and a gymnasium was built near the temple.¹⁸⁷ The gymnasium was the Greek center of communal life, education, business, as well as a place of exercise and bathing. There is little question that the Hellenized Jews promoted the gymnasium, much to the dissatisfaction of orthodox Jews.¹⁸⁸ The authors of *1* and *2 Maccabees* commented on the importance of the gymnasium just prior to the Maccabean

185. See also 02.04.01-11; 03.05.12; 1 Cor. 1.

186. See also 02.04.01-11; 03.05.12; Cate, *A History of the New Testament and its Times*. 68-70.

187. The issue of who built the gymnasium and where it was, is a problem for historians and archaeologists. Josephus said Herod the Great built one but other sources indicate that Jason, in the early second century B.C., also built one. Questions persist, such as, Was Herod’s gymnasium a remodeling of the earlier one or was it a completely new structure? The mystery remains. Scott, Jr. *Jewish Backgrounds of the New Testament*. 82.

188. Sanders, “Jesus in Historical Context.” 436-37.

Revolt.¹⁸⁹

6. By the early first century (A.D.), Jewish healers and exorcists used formulas and practices that were nearly identical to those used by their Greek and Roman neighbors.

7. Jewish literature had an increased emphasis on the following points:¹⁹⁰

a. An increased emphasis on Jewish traditions, especially in light of the encroaching Hellenism. With these, there were various related theological issues debated and emphasized.

b. An increase of Apocalyptic literature which emphasized the coming of a political messiah and an end of the age – eschatology.

Young men who competed in sports event did so completely nude.¹⁹¹ The word *gymnasium* is from the Greek word *gymnos*, meaning *naked* (1131),¹⁹² because the Hellenists loved the human body. Therefore, some young men from priestly families chose to have the sign of circumcision surgically removed, with a procedure known as *epispasm*.¹⁹³ This was so they could hide their Hellenistic Jewishness and participate in the games without being identified as being Jewish. It should be noted, however, that some scholars believe that the sporting events and gymnasium were not established in Jerusalem until later during the reign of Herod the Great in the year 27 B.C.¹⁹⁴ What is clearly known is that young Jewish men had the sign of circumcision removed during the reign of Herod the Great and continued to do so until the temple was destroyed after which all Jews were reduced to dire poverty.

It should be noted that while the Greeks established the gymnasium for the creation of a strong mind and physical body,¹⁹⁵ the Romans seldom accepted it and the orthodox Jews hated it. The

189. *1 Macc.* 1:14; *2 Macc.* 4:12; *4 Macc.* 4:9.

190. Fischer, *The Gospels in Their Jewish Context*. (Lecture on CD/MP3). Week 6, Session 1.

191. Niswonger, *New Testament History*. 24.

192. Scott, Jr. *Jewish Backgrounds of the New Testament*. 127; Vine, “Naked, Nakedness.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:425.

193. See also 02.01.10.

194. The sporting events of 27 B.C. included gladiator fights and wild animals fighting and devouring condemned criminals, much to the delight of Gentile spectators. But since there is only one account of a gladiator and wild animal fight in Jerusalem, the conclusion by scholars is that there must have been an incredible Jewish protest against this form of barbaric entertainment. See Goodman. “Under the Influence.” 62, 65.

195. The gymnasium was not only for physical training and sporting activities, but also an educational environment with a school of learning.

Romans believed gymnastics had little military value and it encouraged idleness and immorality. Instead, in the early days of the Roman Republic, young men were trained in the *Campus Martius*, that is, military training of combat, forced marches, camp life, etc. The writer of *I Maccabees* 1:11-64 (see below) indicates that a gymnasium was built in Jerusalem, but its location is unknown. Whether it even functioned as such by the time of Christ is also unknown.

Clearly, the Hellenistic culture of the Greeks was making inroads upon the Jewish people. This offended the pious Jews (called the *Hasidim*, meaning *pious ones*), but wealthier Jews enjoyed the new cultural offerings and soon “Hellenized” Jews became the despised persons of their Hasidim brothers. For the Hellenized Jews, their old orthodox religion was seen as interfering with attaining their pleasures of life.¹⁹⁶ In later years, the Romans replaced the Greeks but the culture war did not change. The Romans did not have their own culture *per se*, but accepted and promoted Greek Hellenism.

03.04.15 200 B.C. Non-Rabbinic Writings Begin: Pseudepigrapha, Apocrypha, and the Dead Sea Scrolls

In response to the Hellenistic influences, concerned Jews as well as some leaders responded with various forms of legalism. It appears that every religious sect had one or more individuals who either wrote of actual events or of expected apocalyptic events,¹⁹⁷ and the latter far exceeded the former.

One of those religious sects was the Essenes (02.01.06), who copied many ancient books for more than two centuries that eventually became known as the Dead Sea Scrolls (02.02.06). Many of these manuscripts were deposited in clay jars that were hidden in caves at the time of the destruction of the second temple (A.D. 70), but were later discovered between 1948 and 1956. These writings provide modern scholars insight into life in the time of Jesus.

In addition to the Essene writings, another genre appeared that would eventually become known as the Apocrypha (02.02.03) and Pseudepigrapha (02.02.24). Some of these books tend to be of an apocalyptic nature: some future judgmental event is described to deliver Israel from her enemies. Other writings reflect the encroachment of Hellenistic thinking into Judaism, and the first “liberal” writers restructure basic elements of the Torah and other Hebrew writings. Not all were accepted by the Jews, but everyone knew of them.

Finally, ancient writers gave various opinions of what the messiah would be like – from defeating foreign dominating powers to exorcisms. Within *The Testaments of the Twelve*

196. Golub, *In the Days*. 68-72.

197. See “Apocalyptic Literature” in Appendix 26.

Patriarchs, are three books that have unique verses to a future king who would defeat Satan and his demons. Therefore, when Jesus came and freed people from demonic control, His performance was what some expected.¹⁹⁸ On the other hand, chapter 17 of the *Psalms of Solomon*, written between 40 and 30 B.C., clearly expresses the idea of overthrowing a foreign dominating power which was obviously Rome. Therefore, when Jesus made no mention of any political aspirations, His performance was not what some expected. Yet *Psalms of Solomon* 17 also presents a comprehensive picture of the ideal messiah who is from the line of David – an image that was well established in the minds of the Jewish people in the time of Jesus only a few decades later.

03.04.16 198 B.C. Syria and Jerusalem Come Firmly Under the Control of the Greek Seleucids

Antiochus III of the Syrian Seleucid dynasty captured control of the Jewish state from the Egyptian Ptolemies who had controlled it since the death of Alexander the Great. This battle was fought at Panias, a village later known as Caesarea Philippi, where Jesus asked Peter his famous question, “Who do people say that I am?” The Greek Seleucids maintained their district capital in Damascus, Syria, and from there they controlled Samaria, Judah, and Jerusalem. The Jewish people welcomed Antiochus III because he granted them the right to practice their faith according to the traditions and laws of their fathers. They were also exempted from taxes for three years.

However, after the death of Antiochus III, Antiochus IV reigned. The freedom of religion the Jews once enjoyed changed radically to deadly persecution. The change not only intensified the culture war between pious Jews and the Greeks, but also between Hellenistic Jews and the Hasidim. The Hellenists had obtained considerable influence among the priests and Levites in the temple. As will be shown, for pious Jews this was a time of hell on earth.

03.04.17 176-164 B.C. Antiochus IV Epiphanes, King of Syria Controls Jerusalem

Since the time of Alexander the Great, the Greek kings had an unofficial policy of tolerance toward the Jews and their religion. All villages and communities throughout the Greek Empire had adopted the Hellenistic lifestyle with the exception of the Jews. When Antiochus IV (215 – 164 B.C.), who changed his name to Antiochus IV Epiphanes (“Epiphanes” meaning, “the illustrious one” as well as “the manifest god”),¹⁹⁹ became king of the Syrian district, he changed the policy and was determined to make the little Jewish enclave conform to the rest of Greek society.

198. See 11.02.09 for more information.

199. See footnote “c” by Whiston in Whiston, ed., *The Works of Josephus*. 350.

The Syrian Seleucid King Antiochus IV Epiphanes took control of Judah without a struggle. Before the Hasmonean rebellion, there was a strong absolute prohibition against war or even carrying weapons on the Sabbath. Therefore, when Antiochus sent his general, Ptolemy Lagus, to capture Jerusalem, he did so on the Sabbath and there was absolutely no resistance. The Jewish prohibition of conflict on the Sabbath was so strong, that Josephus recorded that some priests decided not to fight on that day, and they were slaughtered.²⁰⁰ When the Jews realized that their doctrine would be their annihilation, they decided they had to fight, even if it was on the Sabbath (*1 Macc.* 2:29-40).

Antiochus was undoubtedly the most significant character of the Inter-Testamental Period, as he left a lasting and horrific legacy. Two apostate priests who competed against each other in various endeavors in the temple aided his evil schemes.²⁰¹ The irony of biblical prophecy is that to fully understand the prophecy, it must be fulfilled (cf. 1 Cor. 13:12). He was a brutal and vicious dictator, worse than Herod the Great in that he attempted to convert the Jews to the pagan Greek culture. Those who refused were killed. His lasting influence upon the Jews cannot be overstated, but unfortunately, is seldom studied. There is not so much disagreement on what the Bible says, but rather, on what it does not say.

Antiochus was determined to convert the Jews to paganism and remove any evidence of Jewish culture from the face of the earth. His commander, Nicanor, advertised the sale of Jewish slaves throughout the Greek cities at the cheap rate of ninety “bodies” for only one talent.²⁰²

Jews in later generations were convinced that the Messiah would come after Antiochus, an interpretation they based on the prophecies of Daniel. But their difficulty with that interpretation is how to solve the “sevens” the prophet Daniel mentioned.²⁰³ It was resolved with a figurative interpretation rather than a literal understanding. Then as the years went by after the defeat of Antiochus there was an increased expectation that the Messiah would come. Therefore, the horrific actions of the king and the divine intervention during the Maccabean Revolt that followed are significant in understanding the expectations of the Jews in the time of Christ.

200. Josephus, *Antiquities* 12.6.2 (271-77). Josephus received his information from Agatharchides of Cnidus, who lived in Alexandria in the second century B.C.; Oppenheimer, “Oral Law in the Books of Maccabees.” 34.

201. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. 4.

202. Barrois, “Trade and Commerce.” 4:682.

203. See Appendix 15 concerning Daniel’s prophecy.



03.04.17.A. COIN OF ANTIOCHUS IV EPIPHANES. LEFT: The image of Antiochus IV (ruled 175-164 B.C.) RIGHT: Olympus Zeus is seated, holding Nike. Some coins depicted him as “god manifest” which was offensive to the Jewish people. The fact the he considered himself to be “the God” is evident from his coins. Internet Photograph.²⁰⁴

Antiochus was a man who desired absolute power and wealth. He controlled Judah as it was the land bridge with critical international highways. This provided him with an important source of revenue: taxation of traveling caravans. His greed inspired him to pass over the rightful successor to the throne, Seleucus Philopator, and ushered in an era of immense pain and suffering for the Jewish people in his attempt to destroy the Jewish faith and replace it with Hellenistic philosophy. He brought forth the “abomination of desolation” with nine major points that were recorded in the books of *Maccabees*.²⁰⁵

1. The temple in Jerusalem was dedicated to his god, Zeus Olympus (2 *Macc.* 6:2).
2. He erected an altar over the existing altar and offered a pig sacrifice to Zeus Olympus (1 *Macc.* 1:54, 59; 4:43-47).
3. He instituted a month-long celebration of his birthday (2 *Macc.* 6:7).
4. He instituted the worship of the god Dionysus with a processional march (2 *Macc.* 6:7).

204. <http://www.museumsurplus.com/HolylandCoinsPAGE1.htm>. Retrieved November 6, 2014.

205. Grabbe, *Judaism from Cyrus to Harian*. 258.

5. He forbade the observance of the Sabbath and all Jewish festivals.
6. He forbade sacrifices and reading of any Scriptures.
7. Any Jews who violated his laws were sentenced to death.
8. Jews were not permitted to enter their own temple.
9. The Sanhedrin was terminated.²⁰⁶
10. He sold the position of temple priesthood.
11. He imported temple prostitutes, used the temple facility as a brothel as part of pagan worship.
12. He stole all of the treasures in the temple, including the veils of fine linen, so that the building was left bare.

The Roman senator and author Publius Cornelius Tacitus (A.D. 56 – 117) recorded an account of Antiochus and the chaotic political environment in his book titled, *Histories*.²⁰⁷ Tacitus said that after Antiochus, the Jewish leaders, later known as Sadducees, established their own “princes” who were nearly as brutal as some of their pagan monarchs. They certainly lacked the biblical qualities and values of leadership.

When the Macedonians became supreme, King Antiochus strove to destroy the national superstition, and to introduce Greek civilization, but was prevented by his war with the Parthians from at all improving this vilest of nations; for at this time the revolt of Arsaces had taken place. The Macedonian power was now weak, while the Parthian had not yet reached its full strength, and, as the Romans were still far off, the Jews chose kings for themselves. Expelled by the fickle populace, and regaining their throne by force of arms, these princes, while they ventured on the wholesale banishment of their subjects, on the destruction of cities, on the murder of brothers, wives, and parents, and the other usual atrocities of despots, fostered the national superstition by appropriating the dignity of the priesthood as the support of their political power.

206. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. 67.

207. This book *The Histories*, is not to be confused with another historical work by Tacitus titled *The Annals of Imperial Rome*.

Tacitus, *Histories* 5.8²⁰⁸

When Tacitus referred to the “national superstition” of the Jews, he meant the Jewish religion. Romans, Greeks and all other pagans could not understand how anyone could worship an invisible god. Furthermore, the non-Jews had difficulty with the Jewish people not working one day of the week, as well as their dietary restrictions. To them, this religious lifestyle was clearly superstitious.

Another writer of history, Polybius (200 – 117 B.C.), used a play on words in his description of Antiochus. Since Antiochus gave himself the last name, *Epiphanes*, meaning he was the bodily *manifestation of a god*, Polybius played with that name and referred to him as *Epimanes* meaning *mad*, or *Antiochus the insane*.²⁰⁹

Antiochus Epiphanes, nicknamed from his actions Epimanes, “The Madman,” would sometimes steal from the court, avoiding his attendants and appear roaming wildly about in any chance part of the city with one or two companions.

Polybius, *The Histories of Polybius* 26:1²¹⁰

Among the other evils this dictator invented was the creation of a myth known as “Blood Libel” that would haunt the Jews into the twentieth century. According to Flavius Josephus, Antiochus essentially said in order for the Jews to fulfill their required ritual laws,

That they used to catch a Greek foreigner and fatten him thus up every year and then lead him to a certain wood pile, and kill him, and taste of his entrails, and make an oath upon this sacrificing a Greek, that they would ever be at enmity with the Greeks; and that they threw the remaining parts of the miserable wretch into a pit.

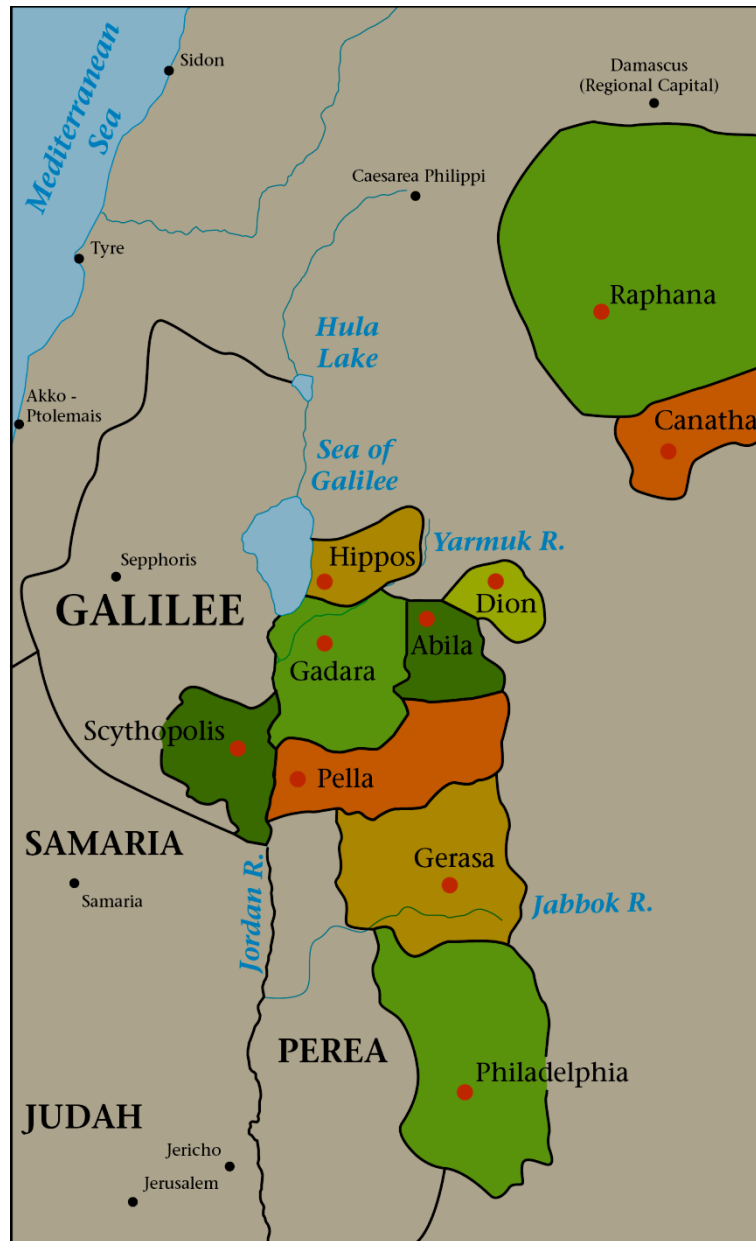
Josephus, *Against Apion* 2.8 (95)

208. <http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/tac/h05000.htm> Retrieved February 17, 2012. While Josephus wrote of the priestly ideals of the Jewish theocracy, Tacitus wrote of the senatorial ideals of the Roman republic. Tacitus wrote of politics and imperial wars, and was not concerned about the social-economic conditions of the lower classes.

209. Grabbe, *Judaism from Cyrus to Harian*. 248; Metzger, *New Testament*. 19.

210. Polybius authored *The Histories of Polybius*, a/k/a *The Histories*, which describes the rise of the Roman Republic to a world power between the years 264-146 B.C.

Variations of this myth caused persecutions and martyrdom for the Jews at the hands of so-called Christians throughout the Church Age. It was a popular slander in Nazi Germany and is taught as historic fact in Islamic countries today.



03.04.17.Z MAP OF THE REGIONS OF THE DECAPOLIS CITIES. The Decapolis Cities, designated with the **red dot**, were administrative capital cities established by the Greeks. Courtesy of International Mapping and Dan Przywara.

Antiochus is credited for grouping various Greek cities into ten districts for administrative and taxing purposes. These became known as the “Decapolis cities” by the time of Jesus as the Greek name *poleis* means *cities*. They were Seleucia, Galaditis (Transjordan) and Beit She’an (Scythopolis) in northern Israel. The towns or cities east of the Jordan River are Damascus, Philadelphia (Amman), Rafna, Garada, Sussita (Hippos), Dion, Pelia (Pella), Jerash (Gerash), and Canatha. The historian Gaius Plinius Secundus (A.D. 23 – 79), better known as Pliny the Elder, in his work titled *Natural History*, listed the ten as: Damascus, Philadelphia, Raphana, Scythopolis, Gadara, Hippos, Dium, Pella, Canatha, and Gerasa.²¹¹ However, another historian Claudius Ptolemy (A.D. 60-168), wrote in his book titled *Geography*, a different list of names.²¹² Clearly, the ancients had different opinions of what they considered to be a district, city or village. While the number of cities is uncertain,²¹³ it is known that there were ten administrative districts for military and tax purposes, which were instituted by Pompey in 63 B.C.²¹⁴

03.04.18 171 B.C. Zadokite Priesthood Ends; Temple Priesthood Sold; The Essenes.

Until this time, the office of high priest was an inherited position, handed down from father to son. From the time of Solomon the Jewish priesthood was always selected from one family, that of Zadok. However, the once-held belief that the name was derived from Zadok, a high priest in Solomon’s court has some serious etymological difficulties.²¹⁵ The Zadokite High Priest Onias III had a brother who was the leader of the Hellenist party. His Jewish name was Joshua, but he preferred to be called by his Greek name, Jason. As was so often the case in human history, one brother caused the death of another for the sake of power and wealth. A tragedy such as this occurred here as well.

At one time, Jason offered Antiochus IV a huge sum of money to be positioned as high priest. The king accepted the bribe, sent Onias on a state trip to Antioch to answer trumped-up charges of treachery. In route, he was assassinated and Jason became the new high priest. This level of religious corruption existed almost continuously until the temple was destroyed in A.D. 70.²¹⁶ As evil as this act was, later, during the days of Jesus, the religious and political corruption was much worse.²¹⁷ As a result, many survivors of the Zadok family isolated themselves and became

211. Gaius Plinius Secundus, Gerasa. *Natural History* 5, 74.

212. Claudius Ptolemy. *Geography* 5, 14, 18.

213. See “Decapolis” in Appendix 26.

214. Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*. (Video “E”).

215. Guignebert, *The Jewish World in the Time of Jesus*. 162; Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. 123-24.

216. Bruce, *New Testament History*. 56-58.

217. Grabbe, *Judaism from Cyrus to Harian*. 249; Blaikie, *A Manual of Bible History*. 393; Golub, *In the Days*. 82-86.

known as the Essenes who are credited today with having written the Dead Sea Scrolls. The former high priest realized that his future in the Holy Land was rather bleak, so he relocated to Egypt. There Ptolemy Philometor gave him permission to build a temple at Leontopolis, about 200 miles south of Alexandria.²¹⁸ It is the only temple other than the one in Jerusalem where sacrifices were offered to God.

In the days of Jesus, the Jewish temple in Leontopolis, in southern Egypt,²¹⁹ added to the social and religious tensions in Judaea. Even though Egyptian Jews felt an allegiance to Jerusalem, the leaders in the Holy City were quite displeased with a competing temple.²²⁰ The rabbis in Jerusalem were already disturbed by the translation of the Bible into Greek, a feat that was accomplished in Egypt in the previous century. The result was Jewish anti-Semitism – antagonism and bitterness between these two Jewish groups.

In the meantime, Antiochus was not unique in his decision to sell the office of high priest. It was common in ancient times that a king would develop an extremely loyal supporter who controlled the temple and the religious affairs of the people. In a similar manner, years later the Herodian family placed, or “sold” the same office to Annas, and later to Caiaphas. This enhanced the controlling powers and improved the wealth of the monarch.

Another example of a priesthood being sold was uncovered by archaeologists in Egypt. In this papyrus document, Pekebki, the son of Marsisouchus, made a generous offer to purchase the position of prophet (high priest). This document, dated A.D. 146, reads in part as follows:

To Tiberius Claudius Justus, administrator of the private account,²²¹ from Pakebki, son of Marsisouchus, exempted priest²²² of the famous temple of Soknebtunis also called Cronus.... I wish to purchase the office of prophet²²³ in the

218. Golub, *In the Days*. 229-32, 238-39.

219. See my comments on this temple in “Babylonian Captivity” in 03.02.15.

220. See “Babylonian Captivity” in 03.02.15.

221. All real estate in Egypt was considered to be the private property of the monarchs (with certain religious leaders exempted), and therefore, any income derived from these lands belonged to the royal treasury.

222. The holder of a religious office did not have to pay taxes to the Egyptian government, which was a puppet agent of the Romans.

223. “The prophet” was most likely the high priest who was also responsible for all financial matters of the temple, as he would be if he owned any other business.

aforesaid temple, which has been for sale for a long time, on the understanding that I shall ... carry the palm-branches and perform the other functions of the office of prophet and receive in accordance with the orders a fifth part²²⁴ of all the revenue which falls to the temple, at a total price of 2,200 drachmae instead of the 640 drachmae offered long ago by Marsisouchus, son of Pakebkis, which sum I will pay, if my appointment is ratified, into the local public bank at the customary dates; and I and my descendants and successors shall have the permanent ownership and possession of this office forever with all the same privileges and rights, on payment [by each one] of 200 drachmae for admission. If, therefore, it seems good to you, my Lord, you will ratify my appointment here in the city upon these terms and to write to the strategies about this matter, in order that the due services to the gods who you love may be performed.... Farewell, the 10th year of the Emperor Caesarea.

Titus Aelius Hadrianus Antonius Augustus Pius, *Tubi* 10.²²⁵

03.04.19 167 B.C., December. Antiochus IV Desecrates Temple

As previously stated, whenever a people group was captured, it was the cultural tradition that they would worship the god or gods of their new overlords. Ancient reasoning was simply: the people with the stronger army had the stronger god. However, the Greeks could not comprehend that not only did the Jews have an invisible god, but they were willing to die for that deity. Antiochus thought this was nonsense and was committed to putting an end to Judaism by whatever means possible.

In 167 B.C., he sent his masons into the temple where they constructed an enlarged altar over the existing Jewish altar. Then on the 25th day of Chislev (December 16), he sacrificed a pig to Zeus Olympus upon his new altar that was the great altar of burnt offerings. It was the supreme insult to both God and the Jews. Immediately all temple sacrifices were terminated.²²⁶ It was the pinnacle of desecration.

His anti-Semitic activities are significant in light of the words of Jesus found in Matthew 25:15, as the Seleucid dictator appears to have fulfilled Daniel's prophecies (9:27; 11:31; 12:11). However, Jesus stated that these prophecies were yet to be fulfilled. Therefore, it is evident that

224. "Fifth part" would be funds donated to the pagan temple as well as funds derived from the crops raised on sacred lands and controlled by the temple.

225. Barrett, *The New Testament Background*. 32-33.

226. Metzger, *New Testament*. 20-21.

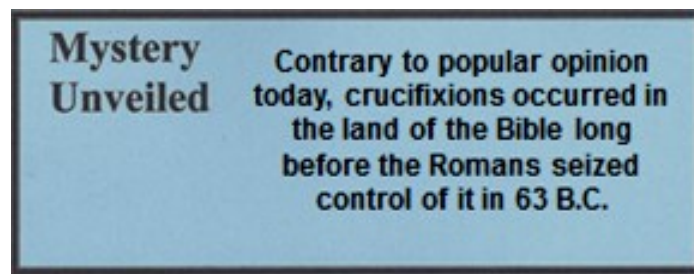
those predicted terrible days still await humanity, and according to some scholars, will occur during the Tribulation Period when the true Antichrist briefly rules the earth. Daniel's words were partially fulfilled but remain to be completely fulfilled in the future. Three historical witnesses preserved the details of Antiochus and this event. The first was written by Josephus, who said,

Now it came to pass after two years in the hundred and forty-fifth year (167 B.C.) on the twenty-fifth day of that month which is by us called Chasleu, and by the Macedonians Apelleus, in the hundred and fifty-third Olympiad, that the king (Antiochus) came up to Jerusalem and, pretending peace, he got possession of the city by treachery, at which time he did not spare even those who admitted him into it on account of the riches that lay in the temple. Led by his covetous inclination (for he saw there was a great deal of gold and many ornaments that had been dedicated to it of very great value), and in order to plunder its wealth, he ventured to break the agreement he made. So he left the temple bare and took away the golden candlesticks, and the golden altar (of incense), and table (of shewbread), and the altar (of burnt offering), and did not abstain from even the veils which were made from fine linen and scarlet. He also emptied it of its secret treasures and left nothing at all remaining, and by this means cast the Jews into great consternation, for he forbade them to offer those daily sacrifices, which they used to offer to God, according to the law. And when he pillaged the whole city, some of the inhabitants he killed and some he carried captive so that the multitude of those captives that were taken alive amounted to about ten thousand. He also burnt down the finest buildings, and when he had overthrown the city walls, he built a citadel in the lower part of the city, for the place was high and overlooked the temple on which account he fortified it with high walls and towers, and put into it a garrison of Macedonians. However, in that citadel dwelt the impious and wicked part of the (Jewish) multitude, from whom it proved that the citizens suffered many heavy calamities. And when the king had built an idol altar upon God's altar, he slew swine upon it and so offered a sacrifice neither according to the law, nor the Jewish religious worship in that country. He also compelled them to forsake the worship, which they paid their own God, and to adore those whom he took to be the gods and made them build temples and raise idol altars in every city and village, and offer swine upon them every day. He also commanded them not to circumcise their sons and threatened to punish any that should be found to have transgressed his injunction.

He also appointed overseers who should compel them to do what he commanded. And indeed there were many Jews who complied with the king's commands either voluntarily or out of fear of the penalty that was announced: but the best men and those of the noblest souls did not regard him, but paid a greater respect to the

customs of their country than concern as to the punishment which he threatened to the disobedient, on which account they every day underwent great miseries and bitter torments *for they were whipped with rods and their bodies were torn to pieces and were crucified while they were still alive and breathed. They also strangled those women and their sons whom they had circumcised, as the king had appointed, hanging their sons about their necks as they were upon the crosses. And if there were any sacred book of the Law found, it was destroyed and those with whom they were found, miserably perished also.*²²⁷

Josephus, *Antiquities* 12.5.4 (248-256)



Antiochus decided to eradicate all traces of the Jewish faith by whatever means possible including torture and death. He deliberately instituted laws that directly violated Mosaic laws. Josephus recorded the following:

He spoiled the temple and put a stop to the constant practice of offering a daily sacrifice of expiation for three years and six months.... Now Antiochus was not satisfied either with his unexpected taking of the city, or with its pillage, or with the great slaughter he had made there, but being overcome with his violent passions. He compelled the Jews to dissolve the laws of their country, and keep their infants uncircumcised, and to sacrifice swine's flesh upon the altar; against which they all opposed themselves, and the most approved among them were put to death.

Josephus, *Wars* 1.1.1-2 (32b-35)

The second witness is by the unknown author of the first book of *Maccabees*, who recorded the event as follows,

227. Italics mine for emphasis.

In those days lawless men came forth from Israel, and misled many saying, “Let us go and make a covenant with Gentiles round about us, for since we separated from them many evils have come upon us.”

The proposal pleased them, and some of the people eagerly went to the king. He authorized them to observe the ordinances of the Gentiles, so they built a gymnasium in Jerusalem, and according to the Gentile custom, and removed the marks of circumcision and abandoned the holy covenant. They joined with the Gentiles and sold themselves to do evil.

When Antiochus saw that his kingdom was established, he determined to become the king of the land of Egypt that he might reign over both kingdoms. So he invaded Egypt with a strong force, with chariots and elephants and cavalry and with a large fleet. He engaged Ptolemy king of Egypt in battle and Ptolemy turned and fled before him and many were wounded and fell. And they captured the fortified cities in the land of Egypt and he plundered the land of Egypt.

After subduing Egypt, Antiochus returned in the one hundred and forty-third year. He went up against Israel and came to Jerusalem with a strong force. He arrogantly entered the sanctuary and took the golden altar, the lampstand for the light and all its utensils. He took also the table for the bread of the Presence, the cups for drink offerings, the bowls, the golden censers, the curtain, the crowns, and the gold decoration on the front of the temple; he stripped it all off. He took the silver and the gold and the costly vessels; he took also the hidden treasures which he found taking them all, he departed to his own land.

He committed deeds of murder,
 and spoke with great arrogance.
 Israel mourned deeply in every community,
 rulers and elders groaned,
 Maidens and young men became faint,
 the beauty of women faded,
 Every bridegroom took up the lament;
 she who sat in the bridal chamber was mourning.
 Even the land shook for its inhabitants,
 and all the house of Jacob was clothed with shame.

Two years later the king sent to the cities of Judah a chief tax collector of tribute, and he came to Jerusalem with a large force. Deceitfully he spoke peaceable words to them, and they believed him; but he suddenly fell upon the city, dealt it a severe blow and destroyed many people of Israel. He plundered the city (and) burned it with fire and tore down its houses and its surrounding walls. And then he took captive the women and children and seized the cattle. Then he fortified the city of David with a great strong wall and strong towers and it became their citadel. And they stationed there a sinful people, lawless men. These strengthened their positions; they stored up arms and food and collecting the spoils of Jerusalem they stored them there and became a great snare.

It became an ambush against the sanctuary,
 an evil adversary of Israel continually.
 On every side of the sanctuary they shed innocent blood;
 they even defiled the sanctuary.
 Because of them the residents of Jerusalem fled;
 she became a dwelling of strangers
 She became strange to her offspring,
 and her children forsook her.
 Her sanctuary became desolate as a desert;
 her feasts were turned into mourning,
 Her Sabbaths into a reproach,
 her honor into contempt.
 Her dishonor now grew as great as her glory;
 her exaltation was turned into mourning.

Then the king wrote to his whole kingdom that all should be one people, and that each should give up his custom. All the Gentiles accepted the command of the king. Many even from Israel gladly adopted his religion; they sacrificed to idols and profaned the Sabbath. And the king sent letters by messengers to Jerusalem and the cities of Judah; he directed them to follow customs strange to the land, to forbid burnt offerings and sacrifices and drink offerings in the sanctuary, to profane Sabbaths and feasts, to defile the sanctuary and the priests, to build altars and sacred precincts and shrines for idols, to sacrifice swine and unclean animals, and to leave their sons uncircumcised. They were to make themselves abominable by everything unclean and profane, so that they should forget the Law and change all ordinances.

“And whoever does not obey the command of the king shall die.” In such words he wrote to his whole kingdom. And he appointed inspectors over all the people and commanded the cities of Judah to offer sacrifice, city by city. Many of the people, everyone who forsook the Law, joined them, and they did evil in the land; they drove Israel into hiding in every place of refuge they had erected a desolating sacrilege upon the altar of burnt offerings. They also built altars in the surrounding cities of Judah, and burned incense at the doors of the houses and in the streets. The books of the Law which they found they tore into pieces and burned with fire. Where the book of the covenant was found in the possession of any one, or if any one adhered to the law, the decree of the king condemned him to death. They kept using violence against Israel, against those found month after month in the cities, and on the twenty-fifth day of the month they offered sacrifice on the altar which was upon the altar of burnt offering. According to the decree, they put to death the women who had their children circumcised and their families and those who circumcised them; and they hung the infants from their mothers’ necks.

But many in Israel stood firm and were resolved in their hearts not to eat unclean food or to profane the holy covenant; and they did die. And very great wrath came upon Israel.

1 Maccabees 1:11-64²²⁸

The third witness was also written by the unknown author and is found in the second book of *Maccabees*. He said that,

About this time, Antiochus made his second invasion of Egypt. And it happened that over all the city, for almost forty days there appeared golden-clad horsemen charging through the air, in companies fully armed with lances and drawn swords - troops of horsemen drawn up, attacks and counterattacks made on this side and on that, brandishing of shields, massing of spears, hurling of missiles, the flash of golden trappings, and armor of all sorts. Therefore, all men prayed that the apparition might prove to have been a good omen.

When a false rumor arose that Antiochus was dead, Jason took no less than a thousand men and suddenly made an assault upon the city. When the troops upon

228. First and 2nd Maccabees belong to a classification of extra-biblical books known as the Apocrypha. These two literary works are deemed highly reliable historically. See 02.02.03 “Apocrypha” for more information.

the wall had been forced back and at last the city had been taken, Menelaus took refuge in the citadel. But Jason kept relentlessly slaughtering his fellow citizens, not realizing that success at the cost of one's kindred is the greatest misfortune, but imagining that he was setting up trophies of victory of enemies and not of fellow countrymen. He did not gain control of the government, however; and in the end got only disgrace from his conspiracy, and fled again into the country of the Ammonites. Finally he met a miserable end. Accused before Aretas the ruler of the Arabs, fleeing from city to city, pursued by all men, hated as a rebel against the laws, and abhorred as the executioner of his country and his fellow citizens, he was cast ashore in Egypt; and he who had driven many from his own country into exile died in exile, having embarked to go to the Lacedaemonians in hope of finding protection because of their kinship. He who had cast out many to lie unburied had no one to mourn for him; he had no funeral of any sort and no place in the tomb of his fathers.

When news of what had happened reached the king, he took it to mean that Judea was in revolt. So, raging inwardly, he left Egypt and took it by storm. And he commanded his soldiers to cut down relentlessly every one they met and to slay those who went into the houses. Then there was killing of young and old, destruction of boys, women, and children, and slaughter of virgins and infants. Within the total of three days eighty thousand were destroyed, forty thousand in hand-to-hand fighting; and as many were sold into slavery as were slain.

Not content with this, Antiochus dared to enter the most holy temple in all the world, guided by Menelaus, who became a traitor both to the laws and to his country. He took the holy vessels with his polluted hands, and swept away with profane the votive offerings, which other kings had made to enhance the glory and honor of the place. Antiochus was elated in spirit, and did not perceive that the Lord was angered for a little while because of the sins of those who dwelt in the city, and that therefore he was disregarding the holy place. But if it had not happened that they were involved in many sins, this man would have been scourged and turned back from his rash act as soon as he came forward, just as Heliodorus was, whom Seleucus the king sent to inspect the treasury. But the Lord did not choose the nation for the sake of the holy place, but the place for the sake of the nation. Therefore, the place itself shared in the misfortunes that befell the nation and afterward participated in its benefits; and what was forsaken in the wrath of the Almighty was restored again in all its glory when the Great Lord became reconciled.

So Antiochus carried off eighteen hundred talents from the temple, and hurried away to Antioch, thinking in his arrogance that he could sail on the land and walk on the sea, because his mind was elated. And he left governors to afflict the people at Jerusalem: Philip by birth a Phrygian and in character more barbarous than the man who appointed him; and at Gerizim - Andronicus, and besides these – Menelaus, who lorded it over his fellow citizens, was worse than the others. In his malice toward the Jewish citizens, Antiochus sent Apollonius, the captain of the Mysians with an army of twenty-two thousand and commanded him to slay all the grown men and to sell the women and boys as slaves. When this man arrived in Jerusalem, he pretended to be peaceably disposed and waited until the holy Sabbath day; then finding the Jews not at work, he ordered his men to parade under arms. He put to sword all those who came out to see him with his armed men and killed great numbers of people.

But Judas Maccabeus with about nine others got away to the wilderness, and kept himself and his companions alive in the mountains as wild animals do; they continued to live on what grew wild, so that they might not share in the defilement.

2 Maccabees 5:1-27

It must be emphasized that previously, when Heliodorus attempted to enter the temple treasury, he was struck with near death.²²⁹ He responded to Antiochus by saying that the anyone who entered the sacred place would be subject to the power of God.²³⁰ He continued to say that God watches over the Jewish temple personally, brings it aid, and strikes those who profane it. Therefore, when Antiochus later raided the treasury of 1,800 talents, the monarch was absolutely delighted.²³¹ However, divine judgement would find him later.

In the meantime, the persecution the Jewish people suffered was one of the worst in their long history of torment, exile, and pogroms. From this era two witnesses recorded the traumatic events Antiochus inflicted upon the Jewish people. Thousands died heroic deaths as they were loyal to their faith during his three and a half year reign of terror. The wealthy citizens of Jerusalem fled to families and friends throughout the land and overseas to escape persecution. But most endured the horrors described in the second book of *Maccabees*:

229. Helleman, "Purity and Nationalism in Second Temple Literature: 1-2 Maccabees and Jubilees." 408.

230. *2 Macc.* 3:38-39.

231. *2 Macc.* 5:17-18.

Not long after this, the king sent an Athenian senator to compel the Jews to forsake the laws of their fathers and cease to live by the laws of God, and also to pollute the temple in Jerusalem and call it the temple of Olympian Zeus, and to call the one in Gerizim the temple of Zeus the Friend of Strangers, as did the people who dwelt in that place.

Harsh and utterly grievous was the onslaught of evil. For the temple was filled with debauchery and reveling by the Gentiles, who dallied with harlots and had intercourse with women within the sacred precincts, and besides brought in things for sacrifice that were unfit. The altar was covered with abominable offerings, which were forbidden by the laws. A man could neither keep the Sabbath, nor observe the feasts of his fathers, nor as much as confess himself to be a Jew.

On the monthly celebration of the king's birthday the Jews were taken, under bitter constraint, to partake of the sacrifices; and when the feast of Dionysus came, they were compelled to walk in the procession in honor of Dionysus, wearing wreaths of ivy. At the suggestion of Ptolemy, a decree was issued to neighboring Greek cities, that they should adopt the same policy toward the Jews and make them partake of the sacrifices, and should slay those who did not choose to change over to Greek customs. One could see, therefore, the misery that had come upon them. For example: two women were brought in for having circumcised their children. These women they publicly paraded about the city, with their babies hung at their breasts, then hurled them down headlong from the wall. Others had assembled in the caves nearby to observe the seventh day secretly were betrayed to Philip and were all burned together, because their piety kept them from defending themselves, in view of their regard for that most holy day.

Now I urge those who read this book not to be depressed by such calamities, but to recognize that these punishments were designed not to destroy but to discipline our people. In fact, not to let the impious alone for long, but to punish them immediately is a sign of great kindness. For in the case of the other nations the Lord waits patiently to punish them until they have reached the full measure of their sins; but he does not deal in this way with us, in order that he may not take vengeance on us afterward when our sins have reached their height. Therefore, he never withdraws his mercy from us. Though he disciplines us with calamities; he does not forsake his own people. Let what we have said serve as a reminder; we must go on briefly with the story.

Eleazar, one of the scribes in high position, a man now advanced in age and of noble presence, was being forced to open his mouth to eat swine's flesh. But he, welcoming death with honor rather than life with pollution, went up to the rack of his own accord, spitting out the flesh, as men ought to go who have the courage to refuse things that it is not right to taste, even for the natural love of life.

Those who were in charge of that unlawful sacrifice took the man aside, because of their long acquaintance with him, privately urged him to bring meat of his own providing, proper for him to use, and pretend that he was eating the flesh of the sacrificial meal which had been commanded by the king, so that by doing this he might be saved from death and be treated kindly on account of his old friendship with them. But making a high resolve, worthy of his years and dignity of his old age and the gray hairs which he had reached with distinction and his excellent life even from childhood, and moreover according to the holy God-given law, he declared himself quickly telling them to send him to Hades.

“Such pretense is not worthy of our time of life,” he said, “lest many of the young should suppose that Eleazar in his ninetieth year has gone over to an alien religion, and through my pretense for the sake of living a brief moment longer, they should be led astray because of me, while I defile and disgrace my old age. For even if for the present I should avoid the punishment of men, yet whether I live or die I shall not escape the hands of the Almighty. Therefore, by manfully giving up my life now, I will show myself worthy of my old age and leave to the young a noble example of how to die a good death willingly and nobly for the revered and holy laws,” when he had said this, he went at once to that rack. And those who a little before had acted toward him with good, now changed to ill will because the words he had uttered were in their opinion sheer madness. When he was about to die under the blows, he groaned aloud and said, “It is clear to the Lord in his holy knowledge that I have been saved from death, I am enduring terrible sufferings in my body under this beating, but in my soul I am glad to suffer these things because I fear him.”

So in this way he died leaving in his death an example of nobility and a memorial to courage, not only to the young but to the great body of his nation.

2 Maccabees 6:1-31

The second witness was recorded by Josephus.

When the Samaritans saw the Jews under these sufferings, they no longer confessed that they were of their kindred, or that the temple on Mount Gerizim belonged to Almighty God. This was according to their nature ... and now they said they were a colony of Medes and Persians: and indeed, they were a colony of theirs. So they sent ambassadors to Antiochus, and an epistle whose contents are these: “To King Antiochus the god, Epiphanes, a memorial from the Sidonians who live at Shechem. Our forefathers, upon certain frequent plagues and as following a certain ancient superstition, had a custom of observing that day which the Jews called the Sabbath. And when they had erected a temple at the mountain called Gerizim though without name, they had offered upon it the proper sacrifices. Now, upon the just treatment of these wicked Jews those that manage their affairs supposing that we were of kin to them, and practiced as they do, make us liable to the same accusation although we are originally Sidonians as is evident from the public records. We therefore beseech you, our benefactor and savior, to give order to Apollonius, the governor of this part of the country, and to Nicanor, the procurator of thy affairs, to give us no disturbance nor to lay to our charge what the Jews are accused for, since we are aliens from their nation and from their customs; but let our temple which at present hath no name at all, be named the temple of Jupiter Hellenius. If this were once done we should be no longer disturbed, but should be more intent on our own occupation with quietness and so bring in a greater revenue to thee.”

When the Samaritans had petitioned for this, the king sent them back the following answer in an epistle:

“King Antiochus to Nicanor. The Sidonians, who live at Shechem, have sent me the memorial enclosed. When, therefore, we were advising with our friends about it, the messengers sent by them represented to us that they were no way concerned with customs, which belong to the Jews, but choose to live after the customs of the Greeks. Accordingly, we declare them free from such accusations, and order that, agreeable to their petition, their temple be named the temple of Jupiter Hellenius.”

He also sent the like epistle to Apollonius, the governor of that part of the country in the forty-sixth year, and the eighteenth day of the month of Hecatombeon.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 12.5.5 (257-264)

The Samaritans suffered little because they laid their faith aside and sided with the Syrian-Greeks.²³² Consequently, the Jews hated them passionately.²³³ Furthermore, the Jews had enough problems with their own brethren who betrayed the faith to escape persecution. Soon there was Jewish anti-Semitism as orthodox Jews argued and fought against their Hellenized brothers. Clearly, the second century B.C. was one of immense social strife and bitterness. This simply underscored the need for the messiah to come quickly and defeat the pagan enemies, establish peace and national freedom, and restore their pride.

03.04.20 167 B.C. The Maccabean Revolt; Hanukkah – 25 Years of Military Battles and Guerrilla Wars Begins

The Maccabean Revolt was a revolt led by orthodox Jews against their Syrian-Greek dictators. However, at this point it is important to clarify the name “Maccabean.” There are two traditions concerning its origin. One states that the leader of the revolt was given the nickname, “Maccabeus” or “Maccabee,” in Hebrew meaning *the Hammer*.²³⁴ However, the more popular origin of the name is that the priestly family raised a military standard with the initials of their motto that was derived from Genesis 15:11. The verse reads, “Who is like unto you among the gods, O Lord?” The Hebrew words are, *Mi Camoka Baelim Jehovah*; from which the letters M C B I were derived, creating the name “Macabi” or “Maccabee.” Whenever the name “Maccabee” was mentioned, the Jews were in essence reciting the passage of Moses. It eventually became the surname of the family.²³⁵ But the terms *Hasmonean* and *Maccabean* are often used interchangeably.

There is little question that the most significant event of the Inter-Testamental Period was the Maccabean Revolt – an incredible victory of Jewish farmers over a professionally trained Greek army with 32 war elephants. Antiochus had taken his cruel method of conversion to Hellenism into distant villages. When his generals arrived at the village of Modi’in, they discovered the people were ready to revolt. Nonetheless, the soldiers demanded the Jews sacrifice a pig to Zeus. When a Jewish priest named Mattathias refused to carry out the order, another Jew offered to perform the pagan act. Mattathias became so outraged that he killed him, as well as the commanding officer. Thereupon he shouted to his fellow men, “Every one of you who is zealous for the Law and strives to maintain the Covenant, follow me” (*I Macc.* 2:27). Those famous words began the Maccabean Revolt and the eventual defeat of Greek domination.

232. Local Syrians who adopted the Greek culture.

233. Josephus, *Antiquities* 12.5.2-4.

234. Metzger, *New Testament*. 20-21; Hachlili, *Jewish Funerary Customs, Practices and Rites in the Second Temple Period*. 206.

235. Blaikie, *A Manual of Bible History*. 395.

A century and a half later when Jesus was in ministry, the descendants of Mattathias, a/k/a the Hasmonean family were also known as the Sadducees, controlled the temple and were puppets of the Roman political system. A very interesting passage that reads as if it was from a newspaper of that time, is found in the first book of *Maccabees*:

In those days Mattathias the son of John, son of Simeon, a priest of the sons of Joarib, moved from Jerusalem and settled in Modi'in. He had five sons, John surnamed Gaddi, Simon called Thassi, Judas called Maccabeus, Eleazar called Avaran, and Jonathan called Apphus. He saw the blasphemies being committed in Judah and Jerusalem, and said,

“Alas, why was I born to see this?

The ruin of my people, the ruin of the holy city,

And to dwell there when it was given over to the enemy,

The sanctuary given over to aliens?

Her temple had become like a man without honor;

Her glorious vessels have been carried into captivity.

Her babes have been killed in the streets,

her youths by the sword of the foe,

What nation has not inherited her palaces

and has not seized her spoils?

All her adornment has been taken away;

no longer free, she has become a slave.

And behold, our holy place, our beauty,

and our glory have been laid waste;

The Gentiles have profaned it.

Why should we live any longer?

And Mattathias and his sons rent their clothes, put on sackcloth and mourned greatly. Then the king's officers who were enforcing the apostasy came to the city of Modi'in to make them offer sacrifice. Many from Israel came to them; and Mattathias and his sons were assembled. Then the king's officers spoke to Mattathias as follows: “You are a leader, honored, and great in this city, and supported by sons and brothers. Now be the first to come and do what the king commands, as all the Gentiles and the men of Judah and those left in Jerusalem

have done. Then you and your sons will be numbered among the friends of the king, and you and your sons will be honored with silver and gold and many gifts.”

But Mattathias answered and said in a loud voice: “Even if all the nations that live under the rule of the king obey him, and have chosen to obey his commandments, departing each one from the religion of his fathers, yet I and my sons and my brothers will live by the covenant of our fathers. Far be it from us to desert the Law and the ordinances. We will not obey the king’s words by turning aside from our religion to the right hand or to the left.”

When he had finished speaking these words, a Jew came forward in the sight of all to offer sacrifice upon the altar in Modi’in, according to the king’s command. When Mattathias saw it he burned with zeal and his heart was stirred. He gave vent to righteous anger; he ran and killed him upon the altar. At the same time he killed the king’s officer who was forcing them to sacrifice and he tore down the altar. Thus, he burned with zeal for the law, as Phinehas did against Zimri the son of Salu.

Then Mattathias cried out in the city with a loud voice, saying: “Let everyone who is zealous for the Law and supports the covenant come out with me!” And he and his sons fled to the hills and left all they had in the city.

*1 Maccabees 2:1-28*²³⁶

When the Jews fled to the hills, the Syrian-Greeks pursued them and attempted to make them surrender, but they refused. However, the Syrian-Greeks knew that the Jews honored the Sabbath and would not work or fight on that day. So they waited and attacked on the Sabbath, and when the massacre was over, thousands lay dead.²³⁷

When Mattathias and his friends heard of this, they mourned greatly and convinced all of the others that it was better to fight on the Sabbath. Shortly thereafter, Mattathias placed his son Judas who continued with the nickname, “the Hammer,” in charge of the army which fought guerilla warfare. The Greeks countered with a professionally trained army. Accompanied by the Samaritans, they were on the march to kill every Jew they could find. The narrative reflects

236. First and 2nd Maccabees belong to a classification of extra-biblical books known as the Apocrypha. These two literary works are deemed highly reliable historically. See 02.02.03 “Apocrypha” for more information.

237. *1 Macc.* 2:29-38.

unequal sides similar to the confrontation between the famous David and Goliath conflict and the astounding victory God gave to the Jews at the Battle of Beth-Horon.²³⁸

But Apollonius gathered together Gentiles and a large force from Samaria to fight against Israel. When Judas learned of it, he went out to meet him and he defeated and killed him. Many were wounded and fell, and the rest fled. Then they seized their spoils; and Judas took the sword of Apollonius and used it in battle the rest of his life.

1 Maccabees 2:10-12

This small, but important, victory gave great encouragement to the small band of rag-tag freedom fighters, some of whom only had plowshares for swords. When Seron, the commander of the Syrian army, heard this, he decided to challenge them with a company of thousands. Upon hearing this, Judas was questioned about accepting the challenge, since his men had no food.

Judas replied, “It is easy for many to be hemmed in by few, for in the sight of heaven there is no difference between saving by many or by few. It is not on the size of the army that victory in battle depends, but strength comes from heaven. They come against us in great pride and lawlessness to destroy us and our wives and our children, and to despoil us. But we fight for our lives and our laws. He himself will crush them before us; as for you, do not be afraid of them.”

1 Maccabees 3:18-22

The battle against Seron, the Syrian, was the first major victory for Judas. His name struck a chord of fear in the hearts of Antiochus and other Greeks. The enemy had a loss of eight hundred men and many more ran to hide in the hills. Upon hearing of the Jewish victories and the many deserters from his army, Antiochus was greatly disturbed. He decided to pay his men a bonus of a year's salary, but discovered that, because of his mismanagement of the government, he had almost no funds.²³⁹

238. Metzger, Goldstein, and Ferguson. *Great Events of Bible Times*. 124.

239. *1 Macc.* 3:22-37.

Again, the Greeks prepared for an attack. This time Antiochus established a huge army of forty thousand men and seven thousand cavalry. When Judas heard of the coming attack, he gathered the men of Israel together to call upon God for deliverance. The author of First *Maccabees* preserved for us the details:

So they assembled and went to Mizpah, opposite of Jerusalem, because Israel formerly had a place of prayer in Mizpah. They fasted all that day, put on sackcloth and sprinkled ashes on their heads, and rent their clothes.²⁴⁰ And they opened the book of the Law to inquire into those matters about which Gentiles were consulting the images of their idols. They also brought the garments of the priesthood and the first fruits and the tithes, and they stirred up the Nazirites who had completed their days; and they cried aloud to heaven, saying:

“What shall we do with these?

Where shall we take them?

**Thy sanctuary is trampled down and profaned,
and thy priests mourn in humiliation.**

**And behold, the Gentiles are assembled against us to destroy us;
thou knowest that they plot against us.**

**How will we be able to withstand them,
if thou dost not help us?”**

Then they sounded the trumpets and gave a loud shout. After this Judas appointed leaders of the people, in charge of thousands and hundreds and fifties and tens. And he said to those who were building houses, or were betrothed, or were planting vineyards, or were fainthearted, that each should return to his home, according to the law. Then the army marched out and encamped to the south of Emmaus.

And Judas said, “Gird yourselves and be valiant. Be ready early in the morning to fight with these Gentiles who have assembled against us to destroy us and our sanctuary. It is better for us to die in battle than to see the misfortunes of our nation and of the sanctuary. But as his will in heaven be, so he will do.”

1 Maccabees 3:46-60

240. Ashes placed on the forehead and torn clothing were cultural signs of deep grief and mourning. Vine, “Ashes.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:39.

As Judas and his homespun soldiers prepared for battle, he spoke words of a future echo of the Lord's Prayer. He prayed, "But as His will in heaven be, so He will do ..." Jesus frequently used terms and phrases that were already in common use by the people, that is, first and always to honor God. As history unfolded, God answered the prayers of Judas.

At daybreak, the Greeks appeared with five thousand infantry, a thousand cavalry,²⁴¹ and thirty-two elephants accustomed to war, all with the finest armor, while Judas only had three thousand foot farmer-soldiers without sufficient armor and swords. They were so pathetically ill equipped that only a profound miracle could give them victory. When the enemy came into view, Judas said to his men:

Do not fear their numbers or be afraid when they charge. Remember how our fathers were saved at the Red Sea when Pharaoh with his forces pursued them. And now let us cry to heaven, to see whether He (God) will favor us and remember His covenant with our fathers and crush this army before us today. Then all the Gentiles will know that there is one who redeems and saves Israel.

When the foreigners looked up and saw them coming against them, they went forth from their camp to battle. Then the men of Judah blew their trumpets and engaged in battle. The Gentiles were crushed and fled into the plain, and all those in the rear fell by the sword.

1 Maccabees 4:6-15



241. Historians seem to disagree in the size of the military units Antiochus had, but regardless, they greatly outnumbered the Jews.

03.04.20.A. A COIN OF KING ANTIOCHUS VI. A rare coin with serrated edge shows the head of Antiochus as Dionysos (right) and a war elephant on the left. Antiochus VI ruled from 145-142 B.C. Internet photograph.²⁴²

Judas had become a key figure in the salvation of Israel, equal to many of the biblical figures. He had unified the nation as there was a deep passion for freedom and national independence. Men and women were willing to lay down their lives at his command because they knew God was with him. In the following year, however, the enemy was on the march again.

By now the Hellenistic Jews and Samaritans were fighting with the Seleucids against the Hasidim. The number of Greeks with their mercenary soldiers from other countries who were involved is staggering. At times the armies numbered in the tens of thousands.²⁴³ Yet miraculously, Lysias was defeated. He returned to Antioch in Syria, where he attempted to enlist foreign mercenaries and build a larger army.

In the meantime, Judas took his little victorious army to the temple upon Mount Zion where they saw the destruction and lamented. After three years of bloodshed, the Maccabees recaptured the temple. They rebuilt the altar, cleansed the temple and instituted a blameless priest who was devoted to the Mosaic Law. Early on the morning of the twenty-fifth day of the month of Chislev, (December 14, 164 B.C.) they again offered sacrifices and celebrated the dedication of the temple for eight days.²⁴⁴

As the story or legend goes, when the Jews re-entered the temple to cleanse it, there was only enough olive oil to light the temple menorah and keep it burning for one day. But a miracle occurred – the menorah kept burning for eight days. That was enough time to crush fresh olives and press them to extract extra virgin olive oil to resupply the lamps. However, there is no mention of this miracle in the Inter-Testamental writings, and Josephus, near the end of the first century (A.D.) said,

Now Judas celebrated the festival of the restoration of the sacrifices of the temple for eight days; and omitted no sort of pleasures thereon: but he feasted them upon very rich and splendid sacrifices and he honored God, and delighted them by hymns and psalms....And from that time to this we celebrate this festival and call it Lights.

242. <http://www.edgarlowen.com/a55/b7729.jpg>. Retrieved July 18, 2012.

243. *1 Maccabees* 6 reports an army of 100,000 infantry and 20,000 calvary, which may have been exaggerated, although larger armies have been verified.

244. *1 Macc.* 4:52-56.

I suppose the reason was, because this liberty beyond our hopes appeared to us; and that thence was the name given to that festival.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 12.7.7 (323, 325)

So obviously Josephus was not aware of any miracle, and suggests the possibility that the name “Light” was given to the festival because God had given them a light of hope when all seemed to be hopeless. This was a time of joyous freedom and the Jews praised God for their incredible victory.²⁴⁵ This celebration has been commemorated as the Feast of Dedication²⁴⁶ and was celebrated by Jesus (Jn. 10:22-23).²⁴⁷ Today it is known as *Hanukkah*, a word derived from the a Hebrew word that means *to dedicate*. The temple had been cleansed and was operational again, but the war was still not over.

Upon hearing that the Jews had rebuilt their altar and dedicated their temple, the Greeks became angry and killed Jews in nearby communities. They strengthened their forces when the Samaritans and Idumeans joined them.²⁴⁸ But when Judas Maccabeus heard of this, he made war on them and dealt them heavy casualties. In the meantime, Antiochus went to Babylon to gather funds to again try to kill the Jews. However, when he had heard that Lysias was defeated, he became very discouraged and depressed. Shortly thereafter, he died, and his son Antiochus II became the new king.²⁴⁹ The entire military episode of the Jewish-Greek conflict was summarized with this statement, which parallels the victories of the Old Testament era.

For it was the day of the Sabbath, and for that reason they did not continue their pursuit. And when they had collected the arms of the enemy and stripped them of their spoils, they kept the Sabbath, giving praise and thanks to the Lord, who had preserved them for that day and allotted it to them as the beginning of mercy.

***1 Maccabees* 8:26-27**

245. *1 Macc.* 4:34-61.

246. Barabas, “Feasts.” 6:690-92. This was not one of the seven Jewish feasts.

247. Franz, “Jesus Celebrates Hanukkah.” 116-19.

248. See 02.01.17 “Idumeans.”

249. *1 Macc.* 5 & 6.

Finally, the lighting of the lamp in the temple on the 24th day of Kislev was seen as a prophetic fulfillment of the words of the prophet Haggai, who in 520 B.C., said this:²⁵⁰

¹⁸“Consider carefully from this day forward; from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, from the day the foundation of the LORD’s temple was laid; consider it carefully.¹⁹ Is there still seed left in the granary? The vine, the fig, the pomegranate, and the olive tree have not yet produced. But from this day on I will bless you.”

Haggai 2:18-19

03.04.21 164 B.C. Greek Persecution Ends, Limited Jewish Independence Begins

Following their incredible victory, localized fighting continued for another twenty years to remove the remaining loyalists. Essentially, the Jews were free. As word of the new freedom spread throughout the world, some chose to return to the land God had promised them. While this gave credence to the prophecies of Ezekiel and Isaiah, many others had become wealthy in foreign lands and chose not to return.

Finally, the Jewish people now had the opportunity to read the prophetic book of Daniel and realize that some of his prophecies were literally fulfilled.²⁵¹ Antiochus IV Epiphanes came and went, just as predicted. So likewise, Daniel’s words of a coming Messiah would be literally fulfilled.

250. The prophecy becomes even more amazing when considering that on that day in 1917, General Edmund Allenby captured Jerusalem from the Turkish Empire without a shot being fired and not even an injury to a single soldier. Orthodox Jews recognize that event of December 9, 1917, as another fulfillment of Haggai’s prophecy.

251. For further study, see McFall, Leslie. “Do the Sixty-nine Weeks of Daniel Date the Messianic Mission of Nehemiah or Jesus?” 673-718.

Unit 03

Historical Background

Chapter 05

Jewish Sovereignty And Roman Conquest (c. 164 B.C. – A.D. 70)



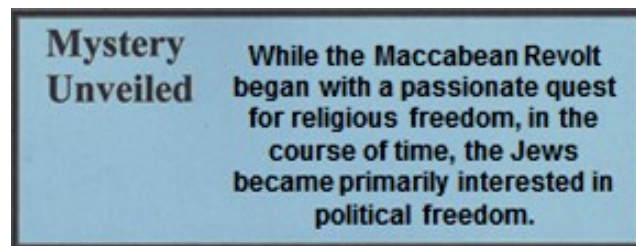
03.05.00.A. SEA-GOING SHIPS OF HASMONEAN DAYS by Jacob S. Golub. 1929. The Jewish kings of the Inter-Testamental Period had sea-going vessels that were used for both military and freight transport. They never dominated the eastern Mediterranean Sea and were soon surpassed by the rise of the Roman Empire.

03.05.01 Introduction

The Maccabean Revolt began with a quest for religious freedom, but in the course of time, the Jews pursued only political freedom. The precise date when Jewish sovereignty began is difficult to determine as it varied from area to area. There was a dramatic improvement that began in 164 B.C. when Jerusalem and the temple came under complete Jewish control. But they were not completely free from foreign control in all areas of Israel for another two decades.²⁵² This was the beginning of the Second Jewish Commonwealth²⁵³ when Israel had complete political and religious freedom.

Although there were pockets of Syrian resistance, generally there was freedom from oppression and the people quickly began to prosper. Taxes were paid by goods that entered into the land by shipping as well as international camel caravans. In fact, the Jewish merchant marine sailed to nearly every port that belted the Mediterranean Sea.²⁵⁴ Little wonder then, that years later, Herod the Great, who was known world-wide for his architectural wonders, built a three-story ship so he and his friends could sail to Rome.²⁵⁵

However, as the common people would soon discover, their leaders were nearly as corrupt as those who had previously been their overlords. Jews crucified Jews.²⁵⁶ Capital punishment in Jewish history was supposed to be quick and without unnecessary agony. But instead, murder, theft, and the abuse by the religious authority are only some of the vices that permeated the leadership. Righteous men and women were horrified to see widespread “unJewish” behavior by their own. They earnestly prayed for their long-awaited messiah to come.



252. Walls, “Maccabees.” 2:925-26.

253. Notley, *In the Master's Steps*. 42.

254. In the maritime commerce of ancient Middle East, Israel is referred to as either a land bridge to be crossed by a military conqueror, or a people group. Various empires dominated the Mediterranean Sea, but the Israelites were never among them. But in the second century B.C., the superior maritime activities of the Jews are found in various extra-biblical sources such as *1 Macc.* 8:23-28; 13:25-29. See also Hachlili, *Jewish Funerary Customs, Practices and Rites in the Second Temple Period*. 148-50 concerning the graffiti of ships found in tombs.

255. Josephus, *Antiquities* 14.14.3.

256. In the first half of the second century B.C., one of the most shocking crucifixions occurred when the wicked priest Alcimus reportedly had his uncle, the righteous Jose ben Joezer, crucified. The people were shocked in disbelief of this horrendous act. See *Genesis Rabbah* 65:22 (Albeck, ed., p. 742); Midrash on Psalms 11:7; cf. *1 Macc.* 7:16.

Yet with the news of Jewish freedom spreading throughout the Diaspora, many foreign Jews, such as those in Babylon, decided to return to their Promised Land. Most settled in Galilee, a region that was severely devastated centuries earlier by the Assyrians. While there were a few Gentile inhabitants, for the most part it was barren and became known as “Galilee of the Gentiles” (who destroyed it).²⁵⁷ In fact, to confirm the *absence* of Gentiles living in this area, it is significant that archaeologists have uncovered numerous villages that had *no* evidence of pig bones – a sure sign of Jewish occupation.²⁵⁸ Pig bones are always found in the ruins of Gentile communities. Now thousands were migrating into the region of rich farmland.²⁵⁹ So many came in the second century that Josephus said that a “countless multitude” came from Galilee and other areas to Jerusalem at Pentecost,²⁶⁰ and that they did so by going through Samaria.²⁶¹ A growing number of scholars believe that in spite of the political, military, and economic crises in “Eretz Israel” (the land of Israel), the Jewish people maintained a majority over Gentile and Samaritan populations in the first centuries B.C. and A.D.²⁶²

Yet while the little Jewish state was trying to re-establish itself, it was sandwiched as the frontier of two opposing super powers: the Romans and Parthians. To the west, the Roman Empire was expanding quickly by belting the Mediterranean Sea and spreading into Europe. To the East, the Parthian Empire was growing to include large portions of India and surrounding areas. The little Jewish enclave was where the two would meet – on the land bridge that connects three continents. As if the influences of the Greek culture had not challenged the Jews enough, now they were the subject of two competing tug-of-war empires.

The significance of this era is that the Maccabean family established itself as the governing dynasty, and would continue to dominate the Jewish people until the Roman conquest in 63 B.C. Shortly after that conquest, Herod the Great was appointed by Rome to be king of the Jews. His success was due, in part, to his marriage with Mariamne, a Hasmonean (Maccabean) princess (see the House of the Maccabees Family Tree below).

257. Isa. 9:1; 1 Macc. 5:15; Mt. 4:15.

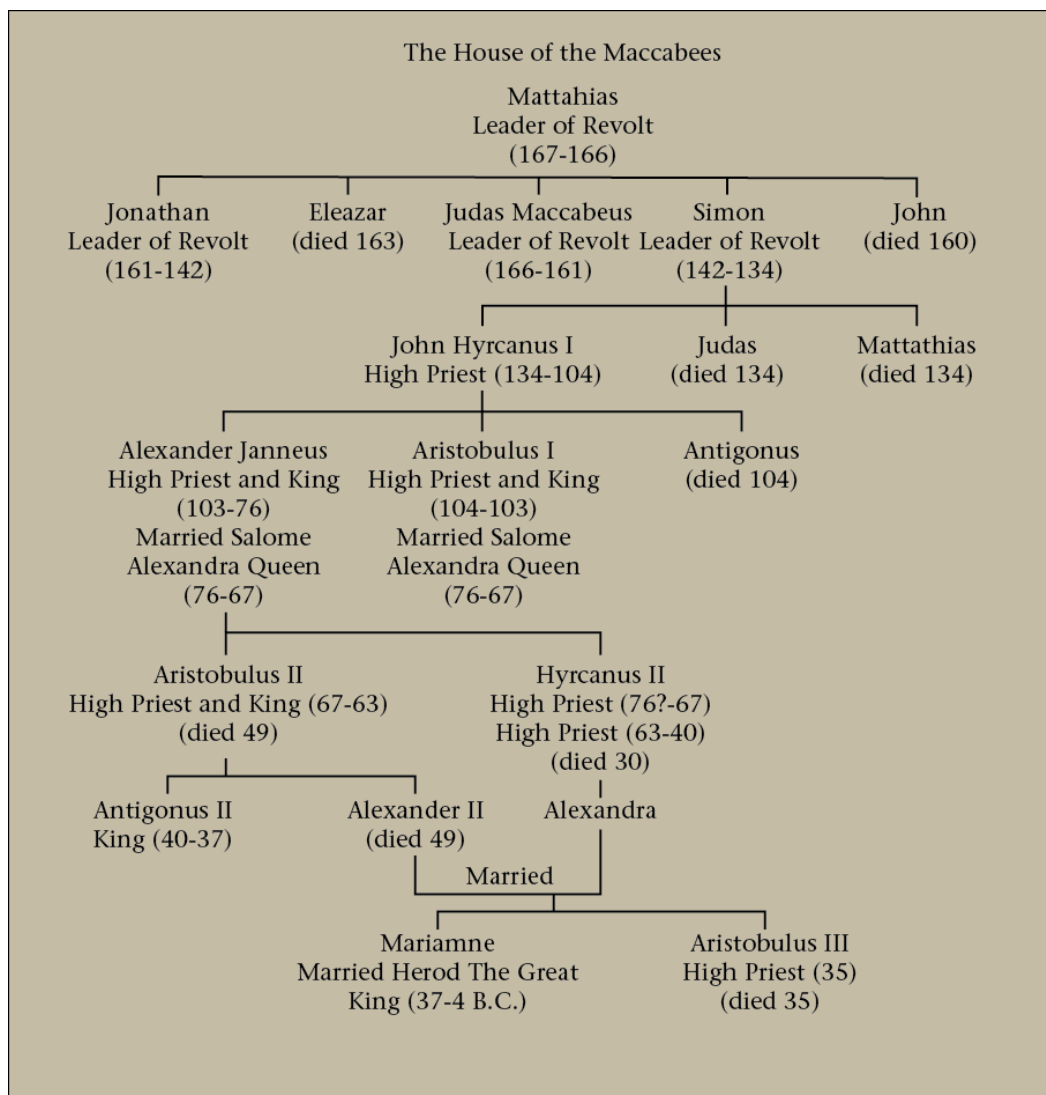
258. Reed, *Archaeology*. 47; Dunn, “Did Jesus Attend the Synagogue?” 208-10.

259. See “Galilee of the Gentiles” in 06.01.08.

260. Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.6.1 and *Wars* 2.12.3.

261. Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.10.2 and *Wars* 2.3.1.

262. Cohen, “The Attitude to the Gentile in the Halakhah and in Reality in the Tannaitic Period.” 35.



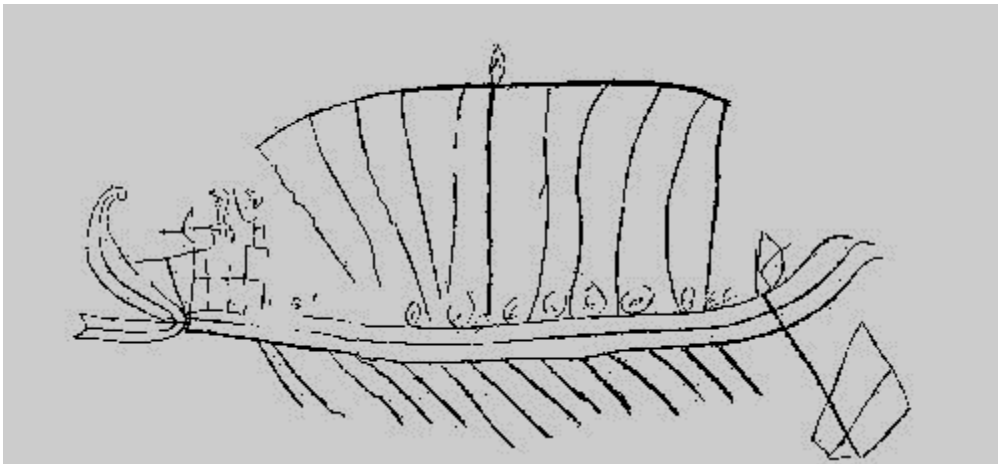
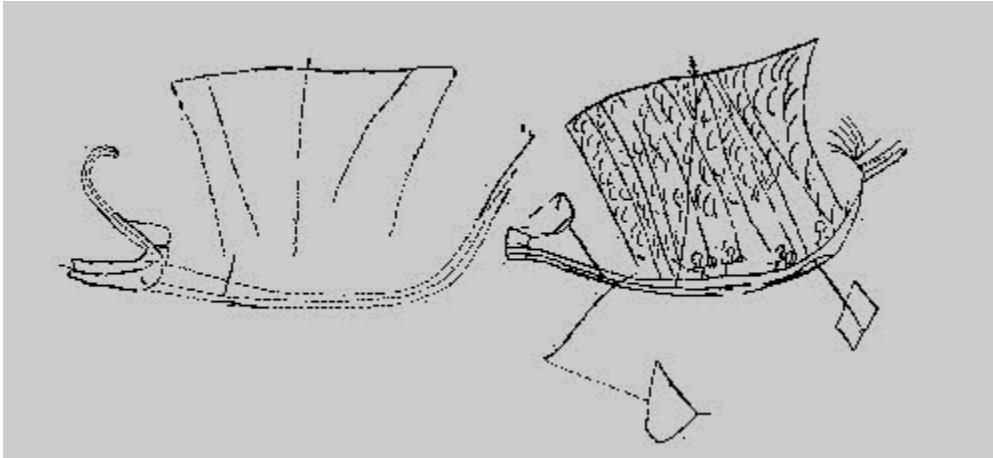
03.05.02.A THE HOUSE OF THE MACCABEES FAMILY TREE. The Maccabean Dynasty, also known as the House of the Maccabees, this family dynasty was instrumental in the successful Maccabean Revolt and their descendants eventually became known as the Sadducees. Courtesy of International Mapping and Dan Przywara.

Graffiti illustrations of sea-going vessels were found in a Jerusalem tomb dated to the Maccabean period of the second century B.C.²⁶³ The tomb, known as Jason's Tomb, belonged to a Jason, that the inscriptions indicate sailed to the coast of Egypt. He may

263.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jason%27s_Tomb#/media/File:Jason,_a_Jewish_archer_on_the_prow_of_a_pirate_ship.jpg. Retrieved July 29, 2015; See also Kloner and Zissu. *The Necropolis of Jerusalem in the Second Temple Period*. 748.

have been a naval commander although some historians believe he was the high priest who was removed from office in 175 B.C. (but that does not explain the ship illustrations). The graffiti emphasizes the merchant marine and naval power of the time.



03.05.02.B. GRAFFITI OF MACCABEAN ERA SHIPS UNDER SIEGE.

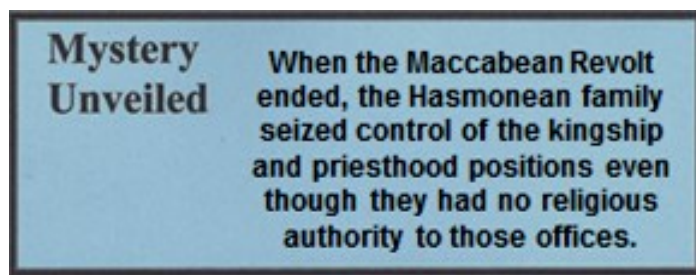
Graffiti of a pirate ship pursuing two other vessels was found in Jason's Tomb in Jerusalem. In the tomb, the pirate ship (bottom) is to the right of the other ships depicting a chase. The illustration is based upon charcoal drawings found in the tomb.

03.05.02 164 B.C. December; Temple Consecrated; Sanhedrin Resumes

On the 25th day of Kislev, 164 B.C. the temple was consecrated and God honored for His divine intervention.²⁶⁴ Israel was never more vividly conscious of the living God in their presence at any other time in the Inter-Testamental Period. Although they had not heard from a prophet in more than two centuries, His presence was unmistakable as another miracle took place.²⁶⁵

The dedication of the temple was a time of great joy and celebration. But it was more than a dedication celebration – it was the Feast of tabernacles that had been delayed for three months due to the political situation.²⁶⁶ That is why it was an eight day event – the Feast was always an eight day celebration of “God with us” or “God living among His people.” In the process of preparing for the sacred service, the priests discovered they only had enough olive oil for the temple lamps to burn for two days. As the eight-day festival continued, they realized that God multiplied the oil to last until additional oil could be pressed and the temple dedicated. This miraculous event became known as the Feast of Dedication and was celebrated by Jesus in John 10:22.

With the dedication, the Sanhedrin functioned with greater freedom and served in both legislative and judicial roles. Therefore, kings did not have complete authority unless they also controlled the high priest who functioned as the Sanhedrin president. In Hebrew, the organization is known as *Hever Hayelhudin*, and the word *Sanhedrin*, is in reality, the Greek translation.²⁶⁷ As was previously stated, the revolt came to an end; the Hasmonean family that started the uprising established itself in both the priesthood and kingship position. These positions were essentially captured without regard to the fact that the family was not of King David’s royal decendency nor was it from the Zadokite family.²⁶⁸



264. http://www.myjewishlearning.com/holidays/Jewish_Holidays/Hanukkah/History.shtml. Retrieved September 20, 2014.

265. Gilbrant, “John.” 295.

266. Fruchtenbaum, *The Jewish Foundation of the Life of Messiah: Instructor’s Manual*. Class 17, page 9.

267. Golub, *In the Days*. 160.

268. *New International Version Archaeological Study Bible*. (notes) 1704.

03.05.03 162 B.C. Hellenized Jews Kill 60 Hasidim Jews

Some scholars today believe the Hasidim were probably the closest religious group to biblical Judaism.²⁶⁹ And the Hellenistic Jews did not care for them in the slightest. Alcimus, the High Priest of the temple had 60 Hasidim Jews crucified for being obedient to the Torah and objecting to him. Among those martyred was Jose ben Joezer, a priestly scribe (*1 Macc.* 7:16). These executions reflect the civil unrest and hatred between Jewish sects throughout the country. The century of Jewish independence (165 – 63 B.C.) was like the book of Judges, or like the wild, wild American west in the 19th century. Some leading Jewish families of the high priesthood adopted Greek names – such as Jason and Menelaus – that horrified orthodox Jews.²⁷⁰ It was not simply that they had Greek names, but that they identified themselves more with the pagan Greek culture than with their own Jewish faith and heritage. The significance of that identity change greatly diminished in later years as the use of Greek and Hebrew names became more commonplace. Yet, the influence of Hellenism created Jewish anti-Semitism as had never been experienced.

03.05.04 153 B.C. Jonathan the High Priest and Governor, Jewish Anti-Semitism Grows

Jonathan, of the freedom-fighting Maccabean family, took the position of high priest. This was with full disregard of the fact that the Maccabean family belonged to the Jehoiarib division of priests and, therefore, was not eligible for the office. While in this position, he also held the offices of governor as well as military dictator. While the Jewish people rejoiced in the victory afforded them, they were saddened at their power hungry leadership. This set the stage for the Maccabean dynasty, a/k/a the Hasmonean dynasty since Jonathan was a son of Mattathias, a son of the priest Hasmon. Scholars strongly believe that the term “wicked priest” found in the Dead Sea Scrolls refers to this Jonathan.²⁷¹

Soon the Hasmonean rulers began persecution against other Jews, namely members of the Zadok dynasty who were the only legitimate Jews who could offer sacrifices in the temple and serve as High Priest. As a result, the remainder of the Zadok clan moved into the desert wilderness near Damascus to join others who had relocated there some three decades earlier. By the 120s B.C., the descendants of the powerful Hasmoneans became known as the Sadducees while the descendants of the Zadok Dynasty became known as the Essenes. These two groups hated each other as much as they later hated the new believers of the Christian movement. Since many Essenes lived near Damascus in the first century (A.D.), it is very possible that Saul (later known as the Apostle Paul) chose to go to the Syrian capital to kill both Essenes and Christians. While

269. Safrai, “The Jewish Cultural Nature of Galilee in the First Century.” 180.

270. Goodman. “Under the Influence.” 62.

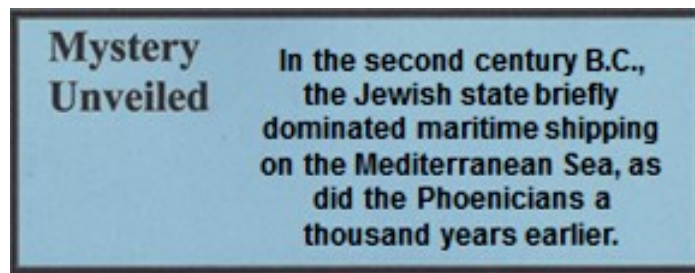
271. The “wicked priest” is mentioned in the Dead Sea Scroll Habakkuk commentary 1QpHab and in the commentary of Psalm 37 4QpPs.

all this theological violence was going on, the Sadducees and Pharisees emerged as rival religious parties in the temple.²⁷²

03.05.05 143-135 B.C. Maccabean Revolt “Ended,” Simon Reigned

Simon Maccabee was the first of a series of Hasmonean rulers who controlled the leadership and he reigned for eight years (143-135 B.C.). The revolt officially ended in May 142 B.C., but true independence was yet to be attained. He cleaned up pockets of resistance and, while the Jews were no longer fighting major military battles and had complete religious freedom, they were required to pay taxes to the Seleucids in Damascus, Syria. The latter part of his monarchy was a time of welcomed peace and prosperity.

All sides became tired and exhausted of the fighting. Syria still controlled some of the Jewish areas, but with Antiochus IV Epiphanes gone life had improved drastically. The last years of Simon’s reign were the most prosperous and peaceful after many years of war and hardships. In recognition of the achievements and Simon and his brothers, the nation declared Simon to be the hereditary high priest and ruler of Judaea. The people gave him the honored title of “Simon the Just” (*1 Macc.* 14:41). Simon was made “prince” as well as high priest until a time that a faithful priest would arise. In essence, he filled the position of high priest merely so it would not be vacant.²⁷³ The future looked bright and promising, but that was about to change.



Then Simon and his family were invited to a banquet in Jericho that was offered by his son-in-law Ptolemy. Ptolemy used the occasion to assassinate the entire family. John Hyrcanus, the third son of Simon, heard of the plot, and barely escaped with his life. It had become evident that life under Jewish monarchy would be little different than under the pagans. The promise of peace was gone.

272. Wilkinson, *Jerusalem as Jesus Knew It*. 68.

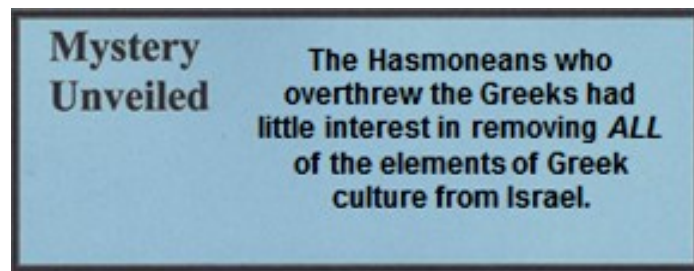
273. Geikie, *The Life and Words*. 1:132, 549; Josephus, *Antiquities* 12.2.5.

The major accomplishment of the Maccabean Revolt was that,

1. It destroyed the yoke of bondage and terror previously institutionalized by Antiochus IV Epiphanes.
2. Gentile anti-Semitism and forced worship of pagan gods ended.

It must be noted that the revolt...

1. Was not against Hellenism in general. Many Jews did not reject Hellenism, but rather, they desired religious freedom as well as the pleasures of the Greeks. This is evidenced by the fact that Hasmonian leaders struck Greek coins, assumed Greek names, and were not even interested in purging the Greek gods and culture from Jewish society.



2. Did not eliminate pagan shrines throughout the land. Pockets of pagan worship continued to thrive, and in fact, increased later during the reign of Herod the Great. Some scholars believe that this included the Shrine of Asclepius, a Greek healing deity that was situated outside the city wall.
3. In terms of history, Nazareth is a rather “new” village. Archaeologists have uncovered evidence of an active but small community dating to the Canaanites in the Middle Bronze age. But apparently the village was abandoned for unknown reasons and remained desolate for more than a thousand years.²⁷⁴ Then, in the second century B. C., came the Maccabean Revolt, at which time Aristobulus the Maccabean conquered Galilee to Judaize it. With newly won victory in hand, the Jewish people believed their homeland was a place of religious freedom without foreign domination. This was the motivation for a migration of Babylonian Jews, some of whom resettled the village of Nazareth.²⁷⁵

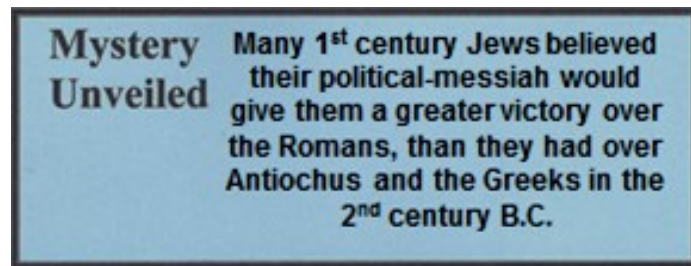
274. Meyers and Strange, *Archaeology, the Rabbis and Early Christianity*. 57.

275. Kopp, *The Holy Places of the Gospels*. 52.

While the numbers of this immigration was rather small, some scholars believe that among them were the ancestors of Joseph and Mary. Some scholars believe that the descendants of the Davidic clan lived first in Kochaba (Batanea) and then relocated to Nazareth.²⁷⁶ After the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem, one of the twenty-four courses²⁷⁷ settled in Nazareth. For these Jewish refugees to have considered relocating there, the village must have had a reputation for being an all-Jewish conservative community. It eventually died out in the fourth century A.D.²⁷⁸

4. The Maccabees captured the imagination of the nation and gave them a vision and hope for a redeemer who would liberate them from cultural and political influences. The word “redeemer” to the first century Jew did not have the spiritual implication that it has today for Christians, but rather, it was one who was sent by God for political and social freedom.

The invasion of Hellenism into the Jewish culture made profound changes in the religious landscape. If the Greeks had not come, religious groups such as the Sadducees, Pharisees, and the Essenes would never have developed. The intense bitter hostilities between these religious rivals continued throughout the days of Jesus.



276. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*. 1.7.14; Pixner, *With Jesus through Galilee*. 125. Some scholars believe that Nazareth did not become a significant community until after the Maccabean Revolt, even though some archaeological evidence (pottery pieces) uncovered there has been dated to the Iron Age. For further study, see the website for Associates for Biblical Research, as well as Grisanti, “Recent Archaeological Discoveries that Lend Credence to the Historicity of the Scriptures.” 475-98.

277. The term “course” refers to a group of priests who served in the temple twice a year for two weeks each time. During the spring Passover and fall Tabernacles festivals all twenty-four courses, or groups, of priests were in service. Deut. 16:16; Ex. 23:14-17; 34:20, 23-24.

278. Meyers and Strange, *Archaeology, the Rabbis and Early Christianity*. 57.



03.05.05.Z MAP OF THE HOLY LAND UNDER HASMONEAN DOMINATION (2ND CENTURY B.C.). This map shows that the Hasmoneans expanded their territory into Gentile areas. It also identifies Modin, located between Jerusalem and Joppa (Jaffa) that was the home of the Maccabean family that initiated the Maccabean Revolt. Courtesy of International Mapping and Dan Przywara.

03.05.06 135-63 B.C. True Independence; Rule of the Hasmoneans

With the Greeks defeated, the Jewish people had complete freedom. The Maccabean family gained control of the temple in 164 B.C. and complete control of the land by 135 B.C. Except for a few short periods when the Pharisees ruled, the Hasmoneans (eventually known as the Sadducees) continued control until the Roman conquest in 63 B.C. Under Roman rule, the Sadducees controlled the temple until its destruction in A.D. 70. While the Maccabees/

Hasmoneans were descendants from the tribe of Levi, they placed various individuals in positions of power regardless of their ancestry — a violation of the Mosaic code. But something wasn't quite right. National sovereignty in ancient history was defined as follows:

1. People did not have to pay tribute (taxes) to any foreign overlord.
2. People had the opportunity to prosper, and in a limited sense were a self-determining people.

But as the Jews discovered, most of their leaders were just as corrupt as were their foreign overlords. It did not take long for the common people, who had been oppressed by foreigners, to be oppressed by their own leaders. In this miserable state, they cried out to God for a messiah who would deliver them from the oppression of their own dictators. Below is a list of their rulers.²⁷⁹

Simon	143-135 B.C.
John Hyrcanus	135-104 B.C. ²⁸⁰
Aristobulus I	104-103 B.C. ²⁸¹
Alexander Jannaeus	103-76 B.C. ²⁸²
Alexandra Salome	76-67 B.C. ²⁸³
Aristobulus II, ²⁸⁴ Hyrcanus ²⁸⁵	67-63 B.C.
Hyrcanus II	63-40 B.C. ²⁸⁶ (Puppet king of Rome)
Antigonus	40-37 B.C. ²⁸⁷ (Puppet king of Rome)

279. For a list of terms of service of the Annas family temple priests and selected first century Roman rulers, see Appendix 1.

280. Josephus, *Antiquities* 13.10.7; See also the writings of an unknown author in *1 Maccabees* 16.

281. Josephus, *Antiquities* 13.11.3; *Wars*. 1.3.

282. Josephus, *Antiquities* 13.11.5; *Wars* 1.4.

283. Josephus, *Antiquities* 13.11.6; *Wars* 1.5.

284. Josephus, *Antiquities* 14.1-4; *Wars* 1.6-7.

285. Josephus, *Antiquities* 13.16.2; 14.1.3 – 3.2.

286. Josephus, *Antiquities* 14.5-13; *Wars* 1.8-13.

287. Josephus, *Antiquities* 14.14-16; *Wars* 1.14-18.

After the last Hasmonean ruler, Antigonus, Herod the Great took control. It is noteworthy to recognize that while the Jews believed they could now resurrect the former glory of King David, that dream never materialized. The leaders of the revolt created their multi-purpose monarch who served as king, priest (or appointed a priest) and military general. Their dynasty would be filled with corruption, murder, and deceit. With the exception of the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the common people were in no better position than with an ordinary pagan ruler.

After a long hard-fought struggle to gain freedom from the Greeks, the Hasmoneans were not about to subject themselves to a foreign power again. So they constructed a series of seven fortresses at strategic locations for protection and signal communication.²⁸⁸ For example, daytime smoke signals and nighttime fire signals at the Machaerus fortress, east of the Dead Sea, were visible from all other fortresses including the fortress beside the temple in Jerusalem.²⁸⁹ In fact, smoke from the temple altar was visible at Machaerus,²⁹⁰ and priests would regularly go to the pinnacle of the temple at sundown on Fridays, and by a fire flare, declare the beginning of Shabbat. That fire signal was relayed and within a few moments every village in the land knew that the day of rest had begun. However, to irritate the Jews, the Samaritans from time to time sent out a false signal.²⁹¹ Little wonder then, that there was no great love between Jews and Samaritans during the days of Jesus.

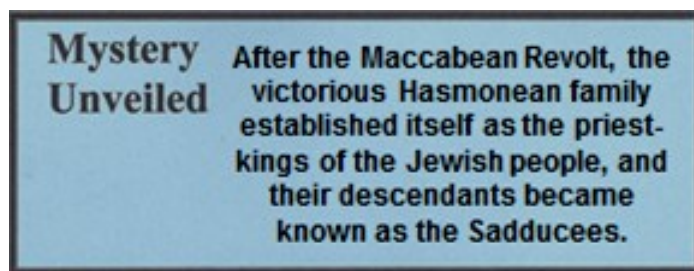
Years later, during the reign of Herod the Great, these fortresses would play a significant role in maintaining peace in a tension-filled country. The Hasmoneans built a massive defense system which Herod expanded, and the foundations of the military hostile environment in which Jesus ministered were established at this time.

288. The seven major fortresses are: (1) the Alexandrium (also known as Alexandreion or Sartaba) in the Jordan Valley to defend the northern region, (2) Masada border palace fortress in the southern region, (3, 4) the Doq and the Cypros (Kypros) border fortresses that overlooked Jericho, (5) the Hyrcania Prison fortress, (6) the Machaerus, on the eastern edge of the Dead Sea, and (7) in Jerusalem, a palace-fortress beside the temple, that was later renamed by Herod the Great as the Antonia Fortress. Some fortresses, such as the Herodian, were his in original construction while he modified other fortresses such as the Antonia, Masada, and Machaerus. For more information on Herod's fortresses, see Samuel Rocca, *The Forts of Judaea 168 BC-AD 70*. New York / London: Osprey Publishing 2008. See location map at 03.05.26.Z.

289. Voros, "Machaerus: Where Salome Danced." 33-34.

290. Mishnah, *Tamid*. 3.8.

291. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 2:113.



03.05.07 135-104 B.C. Rule of John Hyrcanus; Samaritan Temple Destroyed

John Hyrcanus ruled Israel/Judaea (the provinces of Galilee, Judea, Samaria, Perea, and Idumea)²⁹² and desired to “purify” the Jewish state of foreign influences. He no sooner took control when he was threatened by an invasion of a new Syrian ruler who besieged Jerusalem and almost captured it by starving the people to death. A treaty was finally agreed to that included a sum of money that was paid to Damascus. Shortly thereafter, the king was killed and Hyrcanus had no problems with the Syrian Greeks again.

He now could concentrate on making the Holy Land a holy land, or at least as he believed it should be. His goal was to either exterminate or drive out non-Jewish religions and their influences. He pursued and killed remnants of the Seleucid dynasty, unless they converted to Judaism which included circumcision. In 128 B.C. he captured the two principal cities of Samaria and Shechem, and destroyed the Samaritan temple.²⁹³ Whatever was left or rebuilt was destroyed by his two sons, Aristobulus and Antigonus in 108-107 BC, who also sold hundreds, if not thousands, into slavery.²⁹⁴

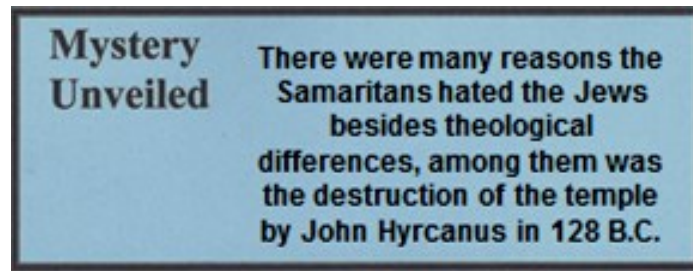
Archaeologists have uncovered the burn-layer of the temple ruins, along with arrowheads, swords, daggers as well as stone and lead balls once used as missiles thrown by shepherd’s slings.²⁹⁵ Since the Samaritans were weak at this time, they could offer no effective opposition.

292. Some ancient writers use the term “Judea” in the broadest sense. Examples are found in Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 5.15.70; Strabo, *Geographia*, 16.4.21; and Dio Cassius, *Roman History*, 37.15.2. In the days of Jesus, Perea was often referred to as the “region of Judea across the Jordan.”

293. Metzger, *New Testament*, 22; Note: Some sources date the destruction to 111/110 B.C.

294. Josephus, *Wars* 1.2.7. See Zangenberg, “Between Jerusalem and Samaria.” 427-28.

295. <http://archaeologynewsreport.blogspot.com/2012/04/samaritans-temple-history-and-new.html>. Retrieved August 20, 2013.



Hyrcanus extended Jewish rule east of the Jordan River and as far south as Edom, which included the ancient city of Petra, and forced conversions and circumcisions of the Idumeans. The Jews, however, never recognized the conversions of these people. These descendants of Esau also lived in the Negev Desert. They chose “conversion” as an alternative to death or moving out of the area. Hyrcanus expanded the Jewish domination but not to the Decapolis cities. While he was primarily a military ruler, he constructed a citadel fortress beside the temple,²⁹⁶ which was later remodeled by Herod the Great who renamed it the “Tower of Antonia,” a/k/a the “Antonio Fortress.”²⁹⁷ Hyrcanus functioned as king (a title he never claimed), priest, and prophet, and near the end of his reign, he left the party of Pharisees and joined the Sadducees.²⁹⁸

During reigns of Hyrcanus, and later his son Alexander Jannaeus, there was a strong migration of Jews from Babylon and Persia to their homeland. News of the victorious Maccabees and the “purification” traveled quickly to the Babylonian and Parthian provinces. Since many were anticipating a messiah, they returned to the land God had promised them.²⁹⁹ Those who relocated to the Galilee area, had a dialect accent distinctively different from those who had a longer heritage in Jerusalem. For that reason, during the trials of Jesus, those standing near Peter said to him, “Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean” (Mk. 14:70), because “your accent gives you away” (Mt. 26:73).

Hyrcanus and his militants again attacked the Samaritans, this time devastating the city of Shechem. He maintained absolute control over all aspects of Jewish life, including the temple. To reduce the possibilities of any challengers arising in the temple, he took the robes of the high priest when not in use, and kept them in storage. They were given to the high priest the week

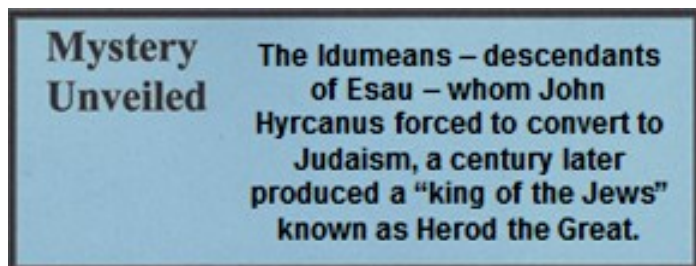
296. Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.4.3.

297. Josephus, *Antiquities* 15.11.5.

298. Flusser, *Jesus*. 259.

299. Pixner, *With Jesus through Galilee*. 17.

prior to the Day of Atonement and returned the day after. This tradition continued throughout the reign of Herod the Great and the Romans. The symbolism concerning the control of the high priestly robes cannot be overstated. In fact, years later, Vitellius, who was the last governor of Syria under Emperor Tiberius, received special permission from the emperor that the high priest could keep his robes permanently.³⁰⁰



Casual reading of John Hyrcanus would leave the impression that he was passionate about eradicating the Greek culture from Israel. But it appears that he simply desired to secure his power. The fact that he struck coins with Hebrew and Greek imagery is indicative that elements of the Greek culture had been accepted by leaders in the highest positions. On the coin below, the script reads from right to left: WHY NN (HUH) = Yehohanan; H= The; KHN = Priest; H = The; GDL = High; W= and; (HUH) BR = Council; H= The; YHDM= Jews.³⁰¹ While the coins identified him a high priest, he also functioned as king.



03.05.07.A. JEWISH COINS WITH GREEK MOTIFS. The First Jewish Coin (left and center) was minted by John Hyrcanus I (Yehohanan) from 130 to 104 B.C. It has the ancient paleo-Hebrew inscription that reads, “Yehohanan the High Priest and the Council of the Jews” surrounded by a wreath. The reverse shows a Greek double cornucopia adorned with ribbons, pomegranate between horns, and

300. Geikie, *The Life and Words*. 1:550. Bruce, *New Testament History*. 30-31.

301. <http://ancientcoinage.org/persian-hasmonian--tyrian-coin-types.html> Retrieved November 6, 2014. For further study, see also http://www.mefacts.com/cached.asp?x_id=10080 Retrieved November 6, 2014.

a border of dots. RIGHT: Years later Herod the Great minted coins with a double cornucopia and caduceus in the center.

This matter is important, because scholars often underestimate the influence, even presence, of Hellenism in Jewish life during the days of Jesus. When Hyrcanus died in 104 B.C., he willed that his wife take the throne, but his son Aristobulus starved his mother to death,³⁰² killed his brother, and took control of the Jewish throne.³⁰³

03.05.08 104 – 102 B.C. Rule of Aristobulus I

The accounts of the various Jewish rulers are difficult for the modern mind to comprehend. Most of them certainly had no desires to follow the ways of the Torah. As to the rule of Aristobulus I, Josephus recorded his shameful life account.

Now when their father Hyrcanus was dead, the eldest son Aristobulus, intending to change the government into a kingdom, for so he resolved to do, first of all put a diadem (crown) on his head, four hundred and eighty-one years and three months after the people had been delivered from the Babylonian slavery, and were returned to their own country again. This Aristobulus loved his next brother Antonius, and treated him as his equal, but the others he held in bonds (prison). He also cast his mother into prison, because she disputed the government with him; for Hyrcanus had left her to be mistress of all.³⁰⁴ He also proceeded to that degree of barbarity, as to kill her in prison with hunger, he was alienated from his brother Antigonus by calumnies, and added him to the rest whom he slew.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 13.11.1 (301-303)

It is difficult to imagine that any Jewish leader was so barbaric. It appears that society had regressed to the horrific times of the judges more than a thousand years earlier. The reign of Aristobulus did not give the Jewish people any peace or comfort, and they struggled under his leadership almost as badly as they did under some pagan rulers.

302. Grabbe, *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian*. 303; Neusner and Green, eds., *Dictionary of Judaism*. 58.

303. Metzger, *New Testament*. 22-23.

304. It has been suggest that apparently Hyrcanus permitted or ordered his wife to be a sexual servant for friends and others in government.

Six centuries had passed since the ten northern tribes were exiled by the Assyrians, and now the Hasmonean King Aristobulus I incorporated Galilee under Jewish rule. The Hasmoneans were the Jews who won victory over the Greeks in the Maccabean Revolt, and eventually became known as the Sadducees. Josephus recorded that Aristobulus, like his father, required Gentiles to convert to Judaism as evidenced by ordering circumcision and observation of all Jewish laws.³⁰⁵ When the news of this decree reached Babylon and Persia, thousands of Jews responded by returning to Galilee.

The long-awaited freedom the Jews desired was quickly became a nightmare, as their leaders proved to be as corrupt as foreign dictators were. Aristobulus I declared himself “King of the Jews” of Jerusalem, and fortunately, his reign was short lived. He left no lasting impression upon Israel other than murder and family jealousies that would haunt future generations. His corruption of government planted the seed of a future civil war and intensified the expectations of a messiah who would be of the character of King David. In later years, during the ministry of Jesus, the Jews were repulsed by the idea of the title, “King of the Jews,” not only because of Aristobulus I, but King Herod as well.

03.05.09 102 – 76 B.C. Rule of Alexander Jannaeus

Alexander Jannaeus continued the policies of his father, Aristobulus I, but with greater intensity. With his army, that included foreign mercenaries, he successfully took control of northern cities and villages, including Mount Tabor.³⁰⁶ He then traveled east and conquered the Decapolis cities, a conquest his father dreamed of.³⁰⁷ Like his father, he had no mercy on the Gentiles living in Galilee as he told them either to accept Judaism or leave. The fact that he now ruled over most of the territory that was once part of David’s Empire, greatly increased the speculation that the anointed “son of David” would soon come to re-establish the great Davidic Empire. Everyone believed that when the “anointed one” would come, he would restore order and justice in the land. (The terms “anointed one” and “he” are not capitalized because the people were not expecting God Himself to come.) By the time Jesus arrived more than a century later, many had become tired of waiting.

He minted coins with his inscription as king and placed himself in the position of a high priest even though he was not of the Davidic line.³⁰⁸ This angered orthodox Jews such as the Essenes,

305. Josephus, *Antiquities* 13.11.3.

306. Golub, *In the Days*. 147; Jung, “Mount Tabor” 4:714; Josephus, *Antiquities* 13.16.2.

307. Golub, *In the Days*. 147; Barclay, “Mark.” 124-25.

308. Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.10.1.

who had previously separated themselves from the temple. They wrote of the corrupted priesthood in what is now known as the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Jannaeus could have brought unity between the Pharisees and Sadducees. But it is evident that he and other leaders were continually spiteful toward those who held a different religious viewpoint. On one occasion during the Feast of Tabernacles, when water was brought up from the Pool of Siloam to the temple, he poured the water on the floor beside the altar instead upon it. Instantly the attending priests, Pharisees, and others around him began to throw citrons (a fruit used in the feast celebrations) at him. In response, Jannaeus called in his soldiers and several thousand worshippers were massacred that day. While this event took place more than a century earlier, the Pharisees did not forget this or any other events of persecution by the Sadducees at the time of Jesus.³⁰⁹ The intense hatred and animosity between Pharisees and Sadducees grew stronger every day.

With various areas under his domain, his international trade expanded and the nation's economy grew. It was truly a time of prosperity seldom seen since the days of King David and Solomon. Now the Greeks of the Decapolis cities were paying taxes (tribute) to the Jews. While there was stability on the international scene, on the home-front there continued intense conflict between the Pharisees and Sadducees. In fact, as a faithful Sadducee, his reign was marked by the bitterest persecution of the Pharisees.

Just as John Hyrcanus I accepted elements of Hellenism, Jannaeus did likewise. In fact, in the years that followed the Maccabean Revolt, the entire Hasmonean/Maccabean dynasty became increasingly accepting of Hellenism and less interested in observing either the biblical or rabbinic Judaism. By the time Jesus was in ministry, the dynasty – then known as the Sadducees – was entirely Hellenistic and gave only lip service to the Torah.

309. Geikie, *The Life and Words*, 2:637-38.



03.05.09.A. A MODEL OF A HASMONEAN MERCHANT SHIP. This model of a Hasmonean merchant ship was constructed from a tomb drawing in Jerusalem. It demonstrates the economic and military power of the Jewish Hasmonean dynasty in the first and second centuries B.C. Photographed by the author in 2000 at the Dagon Grain Museum, Haifa.

The Maccabean leader Alexander Jannaeus (Yehonatan) evidently wanted to modernize his country. He not only minted coins with the Aramaic (as is used today) square script, and also dated them. Previous Jewish coins had the older paleo-Hebrew script – the script used before the Babylonian destruction of Solomon’s temple in 586 B.C.³¹⁰ His coins were minted throughout his reign, 103-76 B.C.³¹¹

310. Brenner, “Spending your Way through Jewish History.” 48.

311. <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/History/MaccabeanHasmoneanCoins.html> Retrieved November 5, 2014.



03.05.09.B. THE FIRST BILINGUAL JEWISH COIN. This coin with Greek and paleo-Hebrew lettering was struck by Alexander Jannaeus (Yehonatan) in the 25th year of his reign, corresponding to 78 B.C. LEFT: A ship's anchor (of King Alexander) in Greek. RIGHT: A star of eight rays (Yehonatan the King) in Hebrew, stylized diadem around.³¹²

03.05.10 90 – 88 B.C. Jewish Civil War; 80 women and 800 Pharisees Crucified

Civil war broke out when the conservative religious Pharisees joined forces with Demetrius III, a descendant of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Together they fought against Alexander Jannaeus. As Jannaeus was about to crush the rebellion, some 6,000 men of Demetrius defected and about 8,000 Pharisees did likewise, leaving many others to be either captured or killed in battle. Of those whom Jannaeus considered to be traitors or potential enemies, 800 were crucified.³¹³ As these Pharisees died in agony, Jannaeus had their wives and children slaughtered in front of them – husbands and fathers watched in horror, helpless, and dying on a cross. Of this barbaric account, Josephus wrote that while,

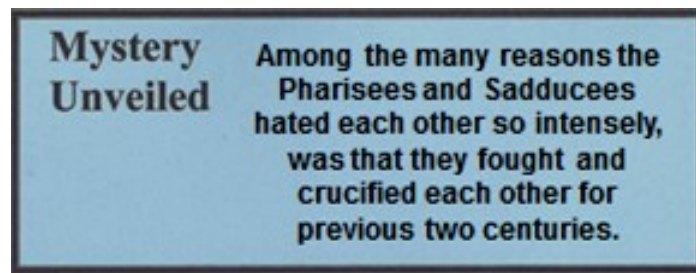
He [Jannaeus] was feasting with his concubines, in the sight of all the city, he ordered about eight hundred of them (Pharisees) to be crucified; and while they were living, he ordered the throats of their children and wives to be cut before their eyes. This was indeed by way of revenge for the injuries they had done him; which punishment yet was of an inhuman nature.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 13.14.2 (380)³¹⁴

312. http://www.mefacts.com/cached.asp?x_id=10080 Retrieved July 10, 2012. See also Brenner, "Spending your Way through Jewish History." 48.

313. Avi-Yonah and Kraeling, *Our Living Bible*. 240-41.

314. See also Josephus, *Wars*, 1.4.1, 6. Furthermore, a parallel account was also found in Dead Sea Scroll fragment 4QpNahum, but it is not as complete as the account recorded by Josephus.



In Ashkelon, Jannaeus crucified eighty women whom he suspected of being witches.³¹⁵ He stripped them naked and, for the sake of modesty, nailed them facing the cross where they died. The Essenes wrote of this horrific event in their Dead Sea Scroll 4QpNah 1:6-8.³¹⁶ As the gospels reveal between these two major Jewish groups there was no great love. The common belief was that since every person who died on a tree was cursed by God, whoever they crucified would therefore, also be cursed by God. Their reasoning was based on the following words of Moses,

For anyone hung on a tree is under God's curse.

Deuteronomy 21:23b

Just when Jannaeus thought he was at the height of his power and success, in 83 B.C., Tigranes of Armenia (modern Turkey) invaded Syria and northern Israel, captured many Jews and took them to be slaves in Armenia.³¹⁷ But Jannaeus was too weak to protect his own people.³¹⁸ The Jews, who protested against the cruelty of their king, took advantage of the situation and a six-year civil war erupted. Jannaeus was killed and his widow, Alexandra Salome, ruled until her death in 67 B.C.

03.05.11 76 – 67 B.C. Queen Alexandra Salome Reigns; Pharisees Control the Temple

After the death of Jannaeus, his widow, Alexandra Salome, became the only queen to solely rule Judah. She was radically different in that she was, without question, the kindest and most

315. The Mishnah, *Sanhedrin* 6.4 states that it was Simeon ben Shetah who ordered them to be crucified.

316. Elgvin, "The Messiah." 36. Young, "The Cross, Jesus and the Jewish People." 27.

317. Neusner and Green, eds., *Dictionary of Judaism*. 60.

318. Neusner and Green, eds., *Dictionary of Judaism*. 635.

righteous monarch the Jewish people had during the Inter-Testamental Period. In light of the fact that she had been married to a corrupt leader, it is amazing that she governed in a godly manner. Her major problem was the corruption of government officials within her staff whom she eventually removed, as well as the Pharisees who at times failed to follow her directives. Because of her, Judaea enjoyed a golden age of peace and prosperity. Amazingly, during a time of chaotic influences, men were honored to have her lead their nation and fight their battles.³¹⁹

Josephus stated that, as a Pharisee, the elderly queen focused on the observance of the Mosaic Law and maintained peace throughout the land, although at times the Sadducees became the persecuted ones. Eventually she placed her son Hyrcanus II in the position of high priest and allowed the Pharisees to control the temple and reins of government. There can be little question that this dynamic change came about due to the influence of a union of non-priestly heads of wealthy families, known as the “elders.”³²⁰ Elders were significant, as well noted in the gospels during the ministry of Jesus, as in Luke 19:47.

As to her other son, Aristobulus II, because he was bold, energetic, and quick tempered, she resigned him to private life. Consequently, there was a great degree of bitterness and tension between them as well as between the two religious sects. Josephus writes,

Now Alexander [Jannaeus] let the kingdom to Alexandra, his wife, and depended upon it that the Jews would now very readily submit to her; because she had been very averse to such cruelty as he had treated them with, and had opposed his violation of their laws, and had thereby got the good will of the people ... for she chiefly studied the ancient customs of her country and cast out those men of the government that offended against their holy laws.

And now the Pharisees joined themselves to her, to assist her in the government. These are a certain sect of Jews that appear more religious than others, and seemed to interpret the laws more accurately. Now, Alexandra hearkened to them to an extraordinary degree, as being herself a woman of great piety towards God. But these Pharisees artfully insinuated themselves into her favor little by little, and became themselves the real administrators of the public affairs. They banished and reduced whom (namely the Sadducees) they pleased; they bound and loosed (men) at their pleasure; and, to say all at once, they had the enjoyment of the royal authority, while the expenses and the difficulties of it belonged to Alexandra. She was a sagacious woman in the management of great affairs.

319. Atkinson, “The Salome No One Knows.” 61-62.

320. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*. 223; See also 02.01.04.

Josephus, *Wars* 1.5.1-2 (107-111)³²¹

The queen also took care of the affairs of the kingdom and got together a great body of mercenary soldiers, and increased her own army to such a degree, that she became terrible to the neighboring tyrants and took hostages from them and the country was entirely at peace.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 13.16.2 (409b)

She was only the second queen of Judah, the first being Athaliah, daughter of the infamous Ahab and Jezebel, who ruled for six years (2 Chron. 22:12).³²² Their great-granddaughter, Mariamne, became the favorite wife of Herod the Great.

03.05.12 Summary Influence of “Hellenistic Reform” (331 – 63 B.C.) that shaped Jewish life in the First Century

The Jewish population throughout the eastern Mediterranean area was so great that they permeated nearly every level of society. While some were accepting of the Greek culture, others were strongly opposed to it. For others, changes toward Hellenism came slowly, and as long as these did not affect the Jewish faith, they did not care. By definition, “Hellenistic reform”³²³ was the expected compliance by everyone to the Greek culture, including the acceptance of Greek religious values. And it was the subject of religious values that split the Jewish community.

The claim that the Maccabean Revolt was a revolt against Greek Hellenization is misleading and without historical evidence.³²⁴ The revolt was against the dictatorial monarch, Antiochus IV Epiphanes. The Hellenistic influence greatly affected the Jewish society and, were it not for the Revolt, there is little question that Hellenism would have had an even greater influence. The revolt did, however, cause people to re-evaluate their faith, which in turn resulted in a spiritual revival. But the revival also caused divisions, and after the revolt ended, three major religious

321. Insert mine.

322. Ahab is among fifty biblical names whose existence has been verified by archaeological studies in a published article by Lawrence Mykytiuk titled, “Archaeology Confirms 50 Real People in the Bible.” *Biblical Archaeology Review*. March/April, 2014 (40:2), pages 42-50, 68. This archaeological evidence confirms the historical accuracy of the biblical timeline. For further study, see the website for Associates for Biblical Research, as well as Grisanti, “Recent Archaeological Discoveries that Lend Credence to the Historicity of the Scriptures.” 475-98.

323. See also “Hellenism” in Appendix 26.

324. Grabbe, *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian*. 308.

parties came into existence: the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes. By the time of Christ, Hellenism caused an even wider theological division among the Jews.

The central core of Greek philosophy was that obtaining wisdom was the ideal goal of life. For this reason it has been suggested that philosophy is a false substitute for religion and it stems from the world of paganism which first gave rise to Plato and Aristotle.³²⁵

Wisdom hath been created before all things, and the understanding of prudence from everlasting.

*Ben Sirach 1:4*³²⁶

The Greek gymnasium, theater, and temples were cultural symbols of Hellenistic reform. Except for the gymnasium that was constructed in Jerusalem by Antiochus IV, these Greek icons were not introduced into the Jewish cities until Herod the Great (reigned 37 – 4 B.C.). Many aspects of Jewish life took on the appearance of the Greek culture and were later promoted by the Romans. For example, the Jews wore garments almost identical to the Greeks in Athens, Alexandria, and the Romans wore them in Rome. Their clothing normally consisted of a tunic, cloak, belt, shoes or sandals, and a head covering for both men and women. The headband was the sign of masculinity and never worn by women.³²⁷ Some Jewish men did, however, maintain the tradition of wearing fringes to keep their identity (Num. 15). The Greek custom of reclining at a dining table was precisely what Jesus and the disciples did during the Last Supper. Cultural norms that did not have moral or religious implications were adopted almost universally.³²⁸

Hellenism had a number of positive and negative influences that are recognized in the New Testament.³²⁹ Galatians 4:4 states that in the fullness of time, Jesus came to earth. God had already been at work for centuries in shaping and preparing it to receive His Son. Some of these influences are as follows:

1. In Greek philosophy man is central to life whereas in Judaism God is the central figure.³³⁰ In essence, the Greeks were philosophical while the Jews were theological.

325. Metzger, ed., *The Apocrypha of the Old Testament*. 129; See Appendix 26.

326. <http://www.ebible.org/kjv/Sirach.htm> Retrieved March 19, 2012

327. Pilch, *The Cultural Dictionary of the Bible*. 17.

328. Keller, *The Bible as History*. 356.

329. See also 02.04.01-11; 1 Cor. 1.

330. See also 02.04.02.

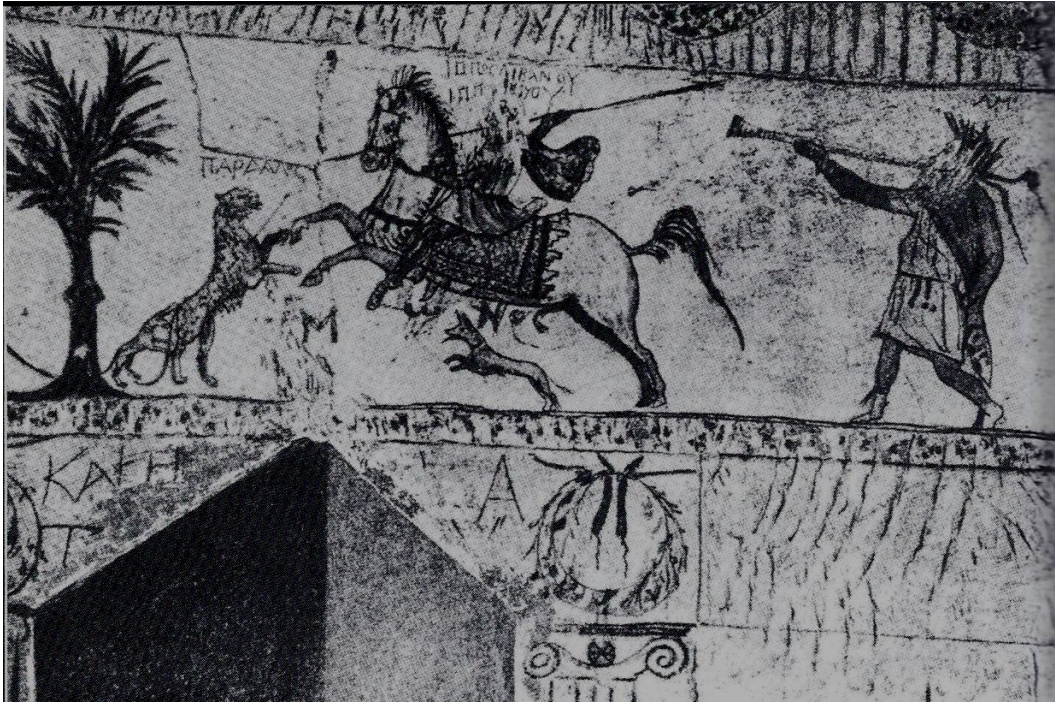
Furthermore, the God of the Jews was an invisible deity, who had no “sinful human vices,” and whom they called their Father. This was beyond the comprehension of the Greeks. Their gods and half-gods were formed into idols and had all the human vices and pleasures of humanity. The inability of each group to accept and tolerate the differences of the other resulted in tensions and conflicts in Israel. Interestingly, in Egypt the differences were tolerated and peace prevailed.

As previously stated, among the Greeks, the idea that a god might appear in human form was accepted in mythology. Little wonder then, that when they heard that Jesus was God, they could accept this fact while the Jews had great difficulty with it. This belief, coupled with the expectation of a messianic figure, explains in part, as to why the Greeks laid their mythologies aside and accepted Jesus. Consequently, Christianity exploded in Gentile nations while it was slow to be accepted, and often opposed, in Jewish communities. The New Testament *had to be* written in Greek for these new believers.

2. The introduction and use of *koine* Greek was an important development in preparing the world for the gospel.³³¹ The Roman Empire consisted of a dozen language groups. Had it not been for the invasion of Hellenism, there would have been dozens of language groups.

3. There was a profound economic unification in the Mediterranean world, especially in international trade. International trade routes were well established centuries earlier in the days of King Solomon, and even more so after Alexander the Great invaded this area. Therefore, by the time Jesus was born, news traveled quickly by ancient standards. This enabled the gospel to spread quickly throughout the Roman world.

331. See 02.03.08 “Language.”



03.05.12.A. HELLENISTIC ART-FRESCO IN A JEWISH TOMB. Evidence of Hellenistic cultural influence in Jerusalem is evident by this Jewish tomb-fresco showing a hunter, herald and lion. In traditional Judaism, the image of a person was banned, but such images became popular with Hellenism.

5. Greek logic and thinking, which is foundational in the Western thought processes, is significantly different from how the ancient Jewish people processed information. They thought pictorially. For example, two phrases to describe God in the Old Testament are “tower of strength,” or a “cleft of a rock.” Such descriptions are replaced in the New Testament with words such as “love,” or even “abba” (meaning *daddy*), that have a greater feeling of personal and intimate relationship.³³²

6. The Greeks with their philosophical logic and reasoning are generally credited with introducing to the world the question “why?” along with critical thinking. However, Jewish parents had taught their children to ask “Why?” since the first Passover. The question was established in Judaism (as part of the Passover Seder) long before it was popular among the Greeks, but the Greeks popularized it throughout the Gentile world.

7. Those Greeks who achieved success in life occupied their leisure time with philosophical thoughts, debates, and the like. However, that was a small portion of the population. The earliest form of Christianity was outside the sphere of Greek philosophy,

332. See 02.03.08 “Language.”

and appealed to those whom philosophy did not reach, which may explain the explosive growth of Christianity among the Gentiles. Philosophers, in the meantime, had very degrading opinions of Christians in terms of philosophy, theology, and socially.

It was common for rabbis, theologians, and philosophers to have debates. In the year A.D. 248, Origen wrote a rebuttal entitled, *Against* (or *Contra*) *Celsus*. In it, Origen quoted this sarcastic attitude by Celsus concerning those who came to faith in Jesus:

Let no educated man enter, no wise man, no prudent man, for such things we deem evil; but whoever is ignorant, whoever is unintelligent, whoever is uneducated, whoever is simple, let him come and be welcomed.

Origen, *Against Celsus* 3.44³³³

The significance of this lies in the fact that Hellenism, with its focus on philosophy or rhetoric, alienated many people who then, became attracted to Christianity.

8. The Greco-Roman culture “set up” as it were, the Gentile people to hear the gospel. They were not only expecting a messiah, but they were also tired of their many gods who had the same human vices as they had. Therefore, some scholars believe that it was Greek philosophy that prepared the Gentile people to receive the concept of Jesus – God in human flesh.³³⁴ The gospel message not only had its own unique merits, but it rode in on the reaction wave against polytheism. This gives added insight to the unique words of Galatians 4:4, that in the “fullness” of time, Jesus came.

9. One of the earliest contributions of Hellenism was the translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek – the *Septuagint*.³³⁵ By the time Jesus began His ministry, scholars and teachers in the entire ancient world understood Greek and could read a Greek Old Testament to confirm the His words.

Finally, Hellenism also had its negative effects. The cultural and religious threats that challenged young Jews were,

333. Cited by Hatch, *The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages*. 124-25.

334. Hatch, *The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages*. 240-41.

335. See 02.02.25.

1. The loss of Jewish interpretation of the Hebraic details of the Old Testament, the gospels, and possibly the book of Hebrews.³³⁶ In essence, the understanding of Jewish literature as written by Jews in a Jewish context was lost. It gave way to the Greek method of interpretation – often one of allegorical interpretation.³³⁷ That is, the application of a symbolic or spiritual meaning(s) rather than the literal meaning. This would eventually have a huge negative effect on Christian interpretation of Scripture, especially as promoted by Augustine.

2. Assimilation into the pagan culture. The youth were always confronted by the pleasures of the Greeks. To them, Judaism was an obstacle that prevented them from finding fulfillment in the so-called “true” pleasures of life. The encroaching influence of Hellenism upon Jewish youth was profound. For example, those Jewish boys who desired to participate in the nude Greek games were embarrassed that they had been circumcised. Everyone obviously recognized their Jewishness. To be accepted by their peers, they underwent a surgical procedure known as *epispasm*, in which the marks of circumcision were removed. This afforded the opportunity to participate in various Greek athletic events without being identified as Jews.³³⁸ The author of Maccabees called this the “abandonment of the holy covenant,” because God said (Gen. 17:14) that an uncircumcised individual was to be cut off from the Jewish people because he was declared to have broken the covenant. Modern scholarship has often overlooked the negative influences of Hellenism had upon Judaism and the cultural environment of Jesus.

3. Due to the tremendous influences of pagan influences, the Jews produced a number of writings that were largely apocalyptic, and often combined with various forms of legalism. These works made frequent references to the great disasters that would fall upon humanity, but that the Jews would be saved by a messiah. Most apocalyptic books were produced starting from the time of Antiochus IV Epiphanes until the second century A.D.³³⁹

4. The worldviews and lifestyles of the Maccabean/Hasmonean rulers, whose descendants became known as the Sadducees, for the most part were as pagan as any

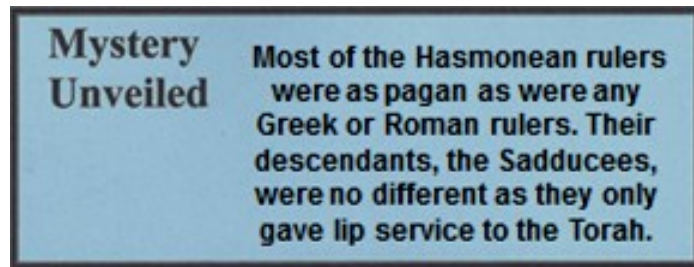
336. As is explained elsewhere, the books of Matthew and Hebrews are believed to have been originally written in Hebrew.

337. Hatch, *The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages*. 59, 66-69, 127-28; See also “Allegory” in Appendix 26.

338. Niswonger, *New Testament History*. 24.

339. Guignebert, *The Jewish World in the Time of Jesus*. 133-35.

Greek or Roman, if not worse. One can debate if their lives reflected the influence of Hellenism or a horribly depraved sin nature (if there is a difference). Nonetheless, most certainly had no interest in faithfully serving their God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

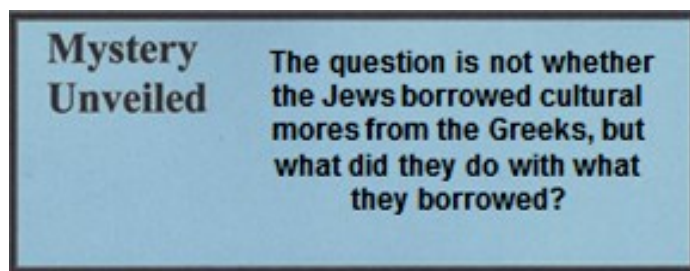


As previously stated, the Maccabean Revolt began as a rebellion against the paganism of the Greek tyrants. The Essenes and orthodox Pharisees desired to rid their land of Greek influences, but their efforts were minimized by Jewish Hellenists as well as the number of foreigners in the land.³⁴⁰ It is important to recognize that there were degrees and varieties of reactions against Hellenism, just as there were among those who embraced it. In the meantime, the Sadducees embraced Hellenism as much as they could without causing a popular revolt to have them removed. The Pharisees became entrenched in their Jewish ideologies while the Essenes distanced themselves from both the Sadducees and Pharisees. In fact, all of the Jewish factions became polarized in their doctrines and practices.



³⁴⁰. Josephus, at times makes a passing comment on foreigners living in the land, such as their presence in Galilee. See *Wars* 3.3.2 (41).

03.05.12.B. AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE HOME OF A SADDUCEE. An artist's rendering of the home of a wealthy priest in Jerusalem. The Sadducees, who are descendants of the Hasmoneans (Maccabees), including Caiaphas and his family, enjoyed a luxurious life equal to kings and emperors. Their lifestyle was beyond the imagination of the common peasants.



03.05.13 67 – 63 B.C. Civil War between Aristobulus II and John Hyrcanus II; Roman Invasion

While the reign of Alexandra Salome was one of great political wisdom and religious obedience, she failed to train her sons in her ways. Upon her death, she confirmed the position of high priest to John Hyrcanus II and placed Aristobulus II in the position of king. The two brothers would probably have functioned well together, and the Jewish kingdom would have enjoyed peace and prosperity if a descendant of Esau by the name of Antipater had never come. But he did.

Antipater, the father of Herod the Great, saw a golden opportunity to cause chaos and thereby, attain for himself power and wealth. Antipater was the son of a powerful governor of Idumea (of what is southern Israel today) who had amassed great power and wealth after the Maccabean Revolt. During the time of prosperity and peace, the governor and his son taxed caravans that passed through their territory, especially along the famed spice route that was between the Dead Sea and the modern Israeli city of Eilat. Antipater instructed his son Herod how to manipulate the political affairs of both the Romans and Parthians.³⁴¹ Unfortunately, he taught him very well.

Concerning the Hasmonean brothers, Antipater circulated rumors about Aristobulus and Hyrcanus causing strife within the royal family. Soon Aristobulus revolted against his older brother and announced that he was both high priest and king of Judah. Civil war broke but neither felt strong enough to win a victory. So Aristobulus, with the support of the Sanhedrin, went east and attempted to secure military strength from the expanding Parthian Empire,³⁴²

341. Geikie, *The Life and Words*. 1:548.

342. See also Gafni, "The Jewish Community in Babylonia." 58-68.

while Hyrcanus went west and secured the same from the Romans.³⁴³ Soon Israel would become the frontier land between two competing world empires, the Romans and Parthians. Josephus recorded the events:

And when Alexander had been both king and high priest twenty-seven years, he departed this life and permitted his wife Alexandra to appoint him that should be high priest; so she gave the high priesthood to Hyrcanus, but retained the kingdom herself nine years and then departed this life. The life duration [and no longer] did her son Hyrcanus enjoy the high priesthood; for after her death his brother Aristobulus fought against him, and beat him, and deprived him of this principality and he did himself both reign and perform the office of high priest to God. But when he had reigned three years and as many months, Pompey came upon him, and not only took the city of Jerusalem by force, but put him and his children in bonds and sent them to Rome. He also restored the high priesthood to Hyrcanus and made him governor of the nation, but forbade him to wear a diadem.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.10.1 (242-244)³⁴⁴

The significance of Israel being at the frontier between two rival empires cannot be overstated. While the Jewish people were subjects of Rome, they were also on the eastern frontier facing the Parthians. This strategic location was the cause of considerable political tension and anxiety.

In the meantime, the Jews were inundated with Hellenism not only by the Greeks, but also by their leaders. For example, their high priest John Hyrcanus II minted coins with a double cornucopia (horn of plenty), a symbol taken from Greek mythology. In Greek mythology, the cornucopia was said to involve the birth and nurturance of the infant god Zeus. According to the myth, Zeus was protected by a goat that functioned as a nurturing goddess, but accidentally broke off one of her horns while feeding the infant milk. Hence, the horn has become known today as the “horn of plenty.”

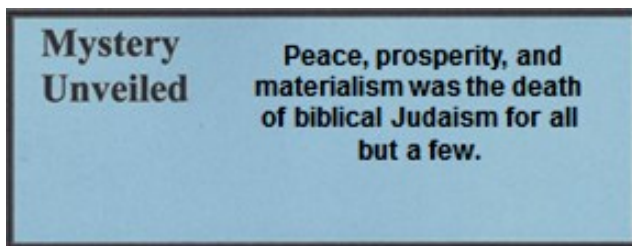
343. Golub, *In the Days*. 191-92; Grabbe, *Judaism From Cyrus to Hadrian*. 306-11; Neusner and Green, eds., *Dictionary of Judaism*. 58-59; Mantey, “New Testament Backgrounds.” 5-6.

344. Insert by Whiston, ed.



03.05.13.A. COIN OF JOHN HYCRANUS II. This coin of John Hyrcanus II, the high priest (63-40 BC) has the name Jehohanan on one side (left) and a double cornucopia (right) taken from Greek mythology on the reverse side.

As was mentioned previously, after the Maccabean Revolt, international trade increased significantly. Products arrived from foreign ports by ships and caravans. The Greek merchants who did business in the capitol city of Jerusalem appreciated Hyrcanus (priest 76-67 B.C.) so much, that Josephus said that they set up a bronze statue of him in the temple of Demus in Athens.³⁴⁵ Obviously Hellenism was a powerful influence in the Jewish nation. The only way the religious leaders could combat the cultural tidal wave and preserve their faith, was to expand hundreds of legalistic regulations. Unfortunately, these regulations of Oral Laws resulted in the death of biblical Judaism and the creation of rabbinic Judaism. Decades later when Jesus came, he confronted those legalistic attitudes and regulations.



³⁴⁵. Josephus, *Antiquities* 14.8.5 (153); Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*. 35.

If Hollywood wanted to produce a movie with action, drama, scandalous sex, loyalty, treason, assassinations, and war, they would have no further to look than at the Inter-Testamental Period between the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes and the death of Herod the Great. Plots and events change so frequently that at times the historical timeline is difficult to follow. Were it not for a few historians like Josephus, this part of history would have been lost. For Jesus to come and preach His Sermon on the Mount and various messages on peace and a kingdom of God was a feat that astonished both the listeners and the Romans. But His birth was still six decades into the future.

03.05.14 63 B.C. Honi, the Jewish Miracle Worker killed

During the civil war a popular miracle worker by the name of Onias ha-M'agel, a/k/a "Honi, the Circle-Drawer," was stoned to death.³⁴⁶ He was believed to have the divine power to cause the clouds to rain. During one severe drought, he drew a circle in the dust, sat in that circle and prayed until it rained. It did, and for this, he became a legendary folk hero to the point that religious leaders in the temple could not agree as to what to do with him. The writers of the *Mishnah* wrote these reflective thoughts about him:

Once they said to Onias [a/k/a Honi] the Circle-maker, "Pray that rain may fall." He answered, "Go out and bring in the Passover ovens that they may not be softened."³⁴⁷

He prayed but the rain did not fall. What did he do? He drew a circle and stood within it and said before God, "O Lord of the world, your children have turned their faces to me, for I am like a son of the house before you. I swear by your great name that I will not stir hence until you have pity on your children." Rain began to fall drop by drop. He said, "Not for such rain have I prayed, but for rain that will fill cisterns, pits, and caverns. "It began to rain with violence. He said, Not for such rain have I prayed, but for rain of goodwill, blessings, and graciousness." Then it rained in moderation [and continued] until the Israelites went up from Jerusalem to the Temple Mount because of the rain.

Mishnah, *Taanit* 3:8³⁴⁸

346. Josephus, *Antiquies* 14.2.1 (see below); Moseley, *Yeshua: A Guide to the Real Jesus and the Original Church*. 121.

347. Ovens were made of clay and, if outside, would soften and collapse by the rain.

348. See also commentary on Honi as depicted in the Babylonian Talmud *Ta'anit* 23a in Safrai, "Jesus and His Disciples: The Beginnings of Their Organization" 105. Parenthesis clarification mine.

But the aristocratic Sadducees and leading Pharisees were outraged at Honi, because in their thinking, it was unimaginable that God would work through a common individual rather than through one of them since they were the experts on the law. Therefore, it is easy to understand why they would not accept Jesus – a Nazarite who also had no formal theological training. Yet while they criticized Honi, they were at a loss as to what to do,

Simeon B. Shetah sent to him [Onias/Honi, saying], “Had you not been Onias, I would have pronounced a ban against you! But what shall I do to you? You importunest God and he performs your will; and of you the Scripture says, ‘Let your father and your mother be glad, and let her that bare you rejoice.’ ”

Mishnah, *Taanit* 3:8³⁴⁹

The religious leaders could not excommunicate him because he became a folk hero. The problems they had with Honi would pale in light of the coming Jesus of Nazareth, who would minister only a century later. There is no mention of a possible excommunication of Jesus; it is not mentioned once in the Bible although some scholars have suggested that it may have occurred in one or more local synagogues.³⁵⁰ Yet if the synagogue leaders felt it was necessary to discipline, excommunication would have been the method of choice. However, this act would have been disastrous for the leadership since both Honi and Jesus had become extremely popular with the people. The question is of course, how does one remove an individual from the synagogue who is loved by hordes of people and has thousands of them listening to his teachings? Hence, they eventually entertained the unthinkable: to kill him quickly and as secretly as possible.³⁵¹

Josephus also recorded the account of Honi, leaving modern scholarship with evidence that righteous men did in fact perform miracles in the Inter-Testamental Period. Honi was never considered to be a prophet, only a godly man who performed miracles, and as many other godly men, paid the ultimate price. Note the words of Josephus:

Now there was one, whose name was Onias (or Honi), a righteous man he was, and beloved of God to put an end to the intense heat, and whose prayers God had heard and had sent them rain. This man hid himself because he saw that this sedition

349. Proverbs 23:25. Clarification mine.

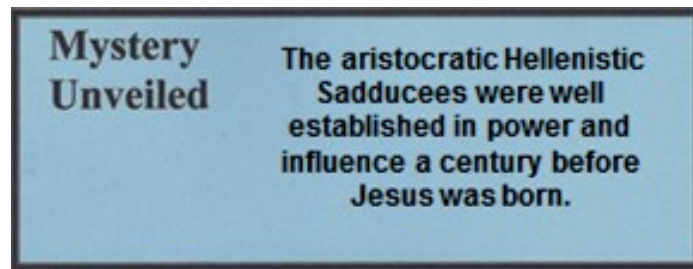
350. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*. 308.

351. Neusner and Green, eds., *Dictionary of Judaism*. 300.

would last awhile. However, they brought him to the Jewish camp and desired, that as by his prayers he had once put an end to the drought so he in like manner make imprecations on Astrobulus and those of his faction. And when, upon his refusal, and the excuse that he made, he was still by the multitude compelled to speak, he stood up in the midst of them and said, “O God, the king of the whole world! Since those that stand now with me are your people, and those that are besieged are also your priests, I entreat you that thou wilt neither harken to the prayers of those against these nor to bring to effect what these pray against.” Where upon such wicked Jews as stood before him, as soon as he made this prayer, stoned him to death.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 14.2.1 (22-24)³⁵²

Clearly, Honi left a dynamic impression that was later remembered by Josephus and recorded in the Mishnah. Critics tend to lay aside any significance of Honi because of legendary stories that arose, such as his 70-year sleep. But these historical accounts do state that the Sadducees were very willing to kill a godly man who threatened their aristocratic position. This is precisely what they would do later to Jesus.



03.05.15 63 B.C. Romans Order Attempts To Kill Infant Boys Because Of Prophecy Of A New-Born King

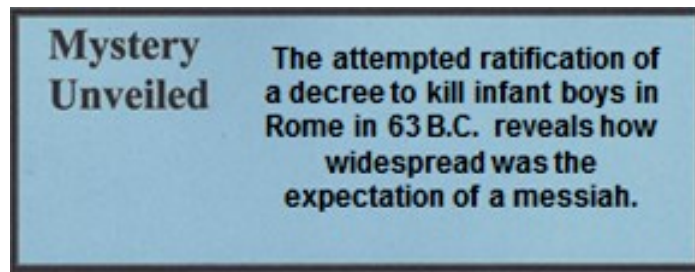
The expectation of a “super” king or messiah was not limited to the Jewish people.³⁵³ Nearly all the people groups in the ancient Middle East were expecting an incredible personality who would bring peace and prosperity. The Romans and Parthians were both expecting the birth of a world ruler, and less than three decades later the Roman poet Virgil would write of it in one of his literary works.³⁵⁴

352. Insert mine.

353. A lower case “m” is used for the word “messiah” because upper case “M” denotes deity, and no one expected God to come to earth in the form of a person.

354. Virgil, *Eclogues*, *Eclogue IV: The Golden Age* see 03.05.24.

Another Roman historian, Suetonius, in his *Life of Augustus*, quoted Julius Marathus from his *Life of the Emperor*, saying there would be a world ruler coming soon. This is considered a reliable source since Marathus was a personal confidant of Augustus Caesar and, therefore, the account has a high degree of merit. Apparently, shortly before Marathus' birth, there was a prophecy in Rome that a king would soon be born who would rule over the Roman people; a "king of the Romans."³⁵⁵ To obviate this danger to the Republic, in the year 63 B.C. the Roman Senate ordered all boy babies to be killed who were born in that year because some people claimed to have had prophetic dreams and seen astrological signs. In Roman society, unwanted infants were normally abandoned or exposed to the weather to die. However, several senators, whose wives were pregnant, took political action to prevent the ratification of the statute because each of them hoped that the prophecy might be in reference to their own child.³⁵⁶ Ironically, in the same year, a child was born on September 23, who later became the first emperor of the Romans – Emperor Augustus.³⁵⁷



03.05.16 63 B.C. Rome Conquers Judah; Hyrcanus II Installed as Ruler of Israel

The civil war between Aristobulus II and John Hyrcanus II did not go unnoticed by the Romans, who were also watching the growing Parthian threat far to the east. They did not want the Parthians to take advantage of the political chaos among the Jews and establish access to the Mediterranean Sea. So when John Hyrcanus went to the Romans to gather troops to fight his brother, they were absolutely delighted. However, he did not anticipate that the civil conflict would cost the Jewish state its sovereignty. But the request was a dream come true for the Romans and soon Israel became the puppet state on the frontier land facing the Parthian Empire.

The Roman General Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus (106-48 B.C.), a/k/a Pompeii or Pompeii (Pompey) the Great, was a successful statesman and military general. He captured Damascus from King Pontus and traveled south to capture all of Judah in only three months – the time it took to walk from one end of the country to the other and back. With mechanical engines,

355. Lindsay, *The Origins of Astrology*. 6.

356. Farrar, *The Life of Christ*. 21.

357. <http://www.askelm.com/star/star001.htm> Retrieved September 29, 2012. See also Appendix 1.

namely stone-throwing catapults, and battering rams shipped in from Tyre, the Romans battered Jerusalem until victory was secured.³⁵⁸ The Roman historian Dio Cassius said that he captured Jerusalem on a Sabbath because the Jews refused to fight on the Day of Atonement, as they considered that to be “work.”³⁵⁹ Consequently, Pompey’s army entered Jerusalem in a battle that cost the Jews 12,000 lives of men, women, and children. It was the one day of the year Jews thought God would forgive them of their sins, and instead they became servants to a pagan master.

When Pompey marched into Jerusalem, he insisted on entering the Holy of Holies with his officers. According to Josephus, he then took a large number of Jews as slaves and sold them throughout the empire and he acquired the support of the Hasmonean family. Thus, Jewish sovereignty was finally betrayed.³⁶⁰ But God’s curse was upon him when he landed in Egypt in 48 B.C. There he was stabbed in the back by an Egyptian centurion as he disembarked from a ship. He was stripped of his clothing, beheaded, and his naked body was left on the sandy shore. In this context, the word “naked” means that his body laid on the ground fully exposed – traditional undergarments removed. Rather than having his body buried, it was burned on the beach. No greater dishonor could possibly have been given to anyone. Many have said it was Divine punishment for his previous entry into the Holy of Holies.

In the previous century, the Hasmoneans had expanded Jewish domain to nearly the size of King David’s Empire. Many Jews believed that once their land area would become as large as the former Davidic Empire, then the expected son of David, would come and reign over his “father’s” kingdom. Therefore, anticipation of the coming of this political messiah was at fever pitch. However, Pompey doused water on that dream when he divided the Hasmonean Empire, and Israel was once again a tiny state that consisted of Galilee, Judea, and Perea (Jewish area east of the Jordan River).³⁶¹ This division was to reduce the possibility of a future uprising. Whereas the Assyrians and Babylonians relocated large populations to prevent subservient people from gaining their independence, the Romans divided their regions to achieve the same purpose. But, as they would discover, the Jewish people were difficult to control.

03.05.17 63 B.C. – A.D. 312 Roman Period

From this point on the Romans controlled Israel for more than four centuries with the exception of a brief Parthian conquest of Jerusalem in 40-39 B.C. During most of this time, the Roman

358. Josephus, *Antiquities* 14.4.2.

359. Dio Cassius, *Roman History* 37.15.2-17.3.

360. Josephus, *Antiquities* 14.6.1.

361. Golub, *In the Days*. 196-98.

prefects who ruled the provinces of Galilee, Perea, and Judah were loosely supervised by governors in Damascus, Syria. It was Roman policy to give captured people religious freedom and limited self-regulation so as to prevent uprisings and war. This policy was effective throughout the empire, with the three Jewish provinces being the only constant exception in that there was always tension of a possible revolt.

The Jews interpreted the fourth empire described in Daniel 2 and 7 as the Roman occupation of their land. It was their understanding that the Messiah would come in the days of the last empire. They looked upon the prophetic words of Daniel and Ezekiel and realized that Jerusalem was rebuilt, many Jews had returned from captivity and Antiochus had desecrated the temple with an idol and the sacrifice of a pig. Therefore, it was obvious to them that the Messiah was about to come. Furthermore, they looked upon the “sevens” of Daniel’s prophecies as meaning “perfection” rather than a literal interpretation, so the ideal time for the Messiah to come had arrived.³⁶² Never were they so wrong, and never were they so right. They were correct in reference to his *first* coming, but the prophecies that supported their interpretation are in reference to His *second* coming. They failed to distinguish between the two prophecies.

However, the Romans were generally kinder to them than was their own Alexander Jannaeus. Pompey installed the Hasmonean king Hyrcanus II as a puppet king who was under the control and domination of the regional governor in Damascus. This is a significant point, as the leadership of Judah was in question during the time of the census prior to the birth of Jesus. Pompey had only two demands of the Jews:

1. Pay taxes to Caesar, and
2. Place a statue of Caesar as god in the temple.

Little did they realize what kind of people their Jewish subjects were. When they made a huge outcry against the demand of a statue in the temple, Pompey rescinded it, but it cost them an additional taxation rate. To insure a stabilized government, he installed Hyrcanus, the second ruler by that name, as high priest-ruler of Samaria and the three Jewish provinces. He also appointed Antipater to be the vizier or senior officer for Hyrcanus. Antipater had a son, Herod the Great, who would eventually become a central figure at the birth of Jesus. The Romans who endorsed Greek culture expanded it further than Alexander the Great ever dreamed possible.³⁶³

362. See Appendix 15 concerning Daniel’s prophecy.

363. Blaiklock, “Herod.” 7:815.

Pompey secured a military frontier zone with the strong Roman Tenth Legion in Damascus. He also made Hyrcanus II high priest in the temple. Equally significant was that Pompey liberated the Samaritans from the Jewish – Hasmonean rulership. He then marched east and liberated the Greek cities from Jewish rule, and placed them into a league known as the Decapolis.³⁶⁴ They were then under the same jurisdiction of the governor of Damascus. This improved trade and commerce.³⁶⁵

Since the Parthians had conquered a massive territory from the Euphrates to the Indus Rivers, the Romans feared that if they acquired access to the Mediterranean Sea, then Rome and the Empire would be severely threatened. Therefore, the Romans built more roads throughout Israel than in any other part of the empire for the sole purpose of moving troops quickly in the event of a major military conflict on the eastern front.³⁶⁶ Throughout the life of Christ, there was a constant threat between these two superpowers.

The Roman Empire belted the Mediterranean Sea and extended into Europe. Israel was a land bridge between the three continents of Africa, Asia, and Europe. To the east was the Arabian Desert and to the west was the Mediterranean Sea.³⁶⁷ For the Romans, the nearby strategic cities were Alexandria in Egypt for grain, Antioch in Syria for international commerce, and Athens in Greece for cultural values. The empire eventually included twelve language groups and became so huge that Rome could hardly administer it.

Finally, historians generally have given the title of *Pax Romana*, meaning the *peace of Rome and quiet in the provinces*,³⁶⁸ to the period of 27 B.C. to about A.D. 180.³⁶⁹ The Roman peace was possible only because of the mighty Roman sword, and yet, in the three Jewish provinces that made up Judaea/Israel (Judea, Perea, and Galilee) there were some 13 serious revolts between 63

364. Neusner and Green, eds., *Dictionary of Judaism*. 646; Barclay, “Mark.” 125-26.

365. Pellett, “Decapolis.” 1:810-12.

366. Crossan and Reed, *Excavating Jesus*. 87-88.

367. For a study of historical maps of this region, see Nebenzahl, Kenneth. *Maps of the Holy Land*. New York: Abbeville Press. 1986.

368. Lee, *The Galilean Jewishness of Jesus*. 72-73; Mellowes and Cran, Executive Producers. *From Jesus to Christ: The First Christians*. (DVD). Part 1; See “Pax Romana” in Appendix 26.

369. Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 423.

B.C. and A.D. 70,³⁷⁰ and many more riots.³⁷¹ *Pax Romana* was not present and that constantly infuriated the Romans. Aside from that issue, the imperial government introduced safer highways – free from bandits, established a stable coinage, and removed trade barriers. Soon manufacturing and international trade blossomed.³⁷²

In the meantime, a nationalistic Jewish guerrilla movement known as the “Zealots” was getting established in the northern Galilee area to fight the Romans. These young freedom fighters expected the same Divine results as their forefathers enjoyed fighting the Syrian-Greeks. Little wonder then that the Romans were constantly worried about a “messiah” who would attempt an uprising.

03.05.18 53 B.C. Parthians Attack and Kill the Roman General Crassus

Even though Jerusalem was under Roman domination, Roman General Crassus invaded the Holy City and sacked it – his men stealing whatever they wanted. From there he traveled north-eastward to Parthia with the intent to expand the Roman Empire. However, at Carrhae (modern Harran, Turkey) the Parthians killed him along with 30,000 troops.³⁷³ With the use of cataphracts,³⁷⁴ the Parthians defeated with superior Roman forces and what was left of them went home defeated and deeply humiliated. It was the beginning of three centuries of conflicts between the two empires, and Israel was on the frontier of both of them. In retaliation, the Parthians later invaded Jerusalem, a city they held until Antipater, the father of Herod the Great, drove them out.³⁷⁵

The Roman armies were killing machines that relied on heavy infantry and were skilled in siege warfare. The Parthians, however, had two types of cavalry: the heavy-armed and armored cataphracts and the light brigades of archers who were skilled horsemen, but they had not yet developed techniques of siege warfare. Nearly all Parthian soldiers, who rode on horseback, were

370. The so-called “First Revolt” of A.D. 66 – 73 resulted in the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70, was not the first revolt *per se*, but the first significant revolt that eventually resulted in the destruction of national Israel and the separation of Judaism and Christianity. The Second Revolt that further separated Christianity from Judaism was in A.D. 132-35.

371. See Appendix 25 for a listing of false prophets who had messianic expectations and for a partial listing of revolts and social disturbances from 63 B.C. to A.D. 70.

372. Packer and Tenney, eds., *Illustrated Manners and Customs*. 181.

373. Jayne, “Magi.” 4:31-34; Some historical sources place the battle at 55 B.C..

374. The use of Cataphracts was a new technology that won the battle for the Parthians. See “Cataphracts” in Appendix 26.

375. Jayne, “Magi.” 4:34.

also highly skilled in archery, a military skill that had not been developed by the Romans.³⁷⁶ Hence, the two empires were closely matched in military strength, but each always feared the other would attack first.

The Parthian Empire did not have a lasting direct influence upon the Jews or the biblical lands, which may be why it was not mentioned in Daniel's prophecies. As noted below, the Parthians controlled Jerusalem for a brief period and were interested in obtaining access to the Mediterranean Sea, but it was never attained. While the capitols of the two empires were thousands of miles apart from each other, they had grown to the point of meeting each other just east of the land of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

03.05.18.Q1 What happened to those who violated the second Jewish temple (see also 16.01.06.Q1)?

There were three powerful men who violated the second Jewish temple and consequently experienced death in a manner that was a clear testimony to observers who said that Divine judgment had fallen upon them.³⁷⁷

Antiochus IV Epiphanes

He persecuted the Jews in an attempt to either convert them to Hellenism or exterminate them. He also placed an idol to Zeus in the temple and sacrificed a pig to this pagan deity. Antiochus died a miserable and shameful death in Persia (2 Macc. 9).

Pompey

After he conquered the Jewish lands in 63 B.C., he entered the Holy of Holies, but later he was murdered in the shores of Egypt. His naked body was left on the beach to feed wild birds and animals.

Crassus

In 53 B.C., he plundered the temple treasury, but a short time later he and his Roman army perished in the hot thirsty desert sands fighting the Parthians.

376. McKay, "Parthians." 3:1156.

377. See also 16.01.06.Q1 "What happened to those who opposed Jesus?"

03.05.19 50 B.C. Rabbi Nehumias Accurately Predicted the Messiah's Coming

Rabbi Nehumias studied the book of Daniel and prophetic weeks, and amazingly, concluded that the Messiah would come within fifty years.³⁷⁸ While his words were not honored by the Jews, they were, however, recorded by the historian Grotius.³⁷⁹ The predictive date of Rabbi Nehumias may have been a coincidence, but his expectations were certainly in agreement with many other orthodox rabbis for reasons well established by former prophets.

The Jewish rabbis studied the prophecies intently, looking for a sign for a coming messiah. The prophet Micah (750-686 B.C.) gave the prophecy (5:3) that Israel would be abandoned by God until the “latter days,” a phrase which he described as the labor related to childbirth. Isaiah had said that the Jewish nation would be born in a single day (66:8) and another prophet, Ezekiel (38:8), at the beginning of the fifth century (B.C.), spoke of a Jewish return to their promised land. There was a messianic expectation³⁸⁰ throughout all the cultures of the ancient Middle East wherever the Jews had lived. That leads us to an interesting question –

03.05.19.Q1 What messianic prophecies were the rabbis studying at this time and why were they expecting the Messiah?

There were many Jewish sects, just as today there are many Christian denominations. And just as various denominations have many viewpoints of the return of Jesus, in the first century various Jewish sects had many viewpoints on the coming of their messiah. Following are several examples of expectations held by many Jewish people.

1. They read Genesis 49:10 and Numbers 24:17 and believed that God promised a unique ruler to govern His people who would come soon. This was underscored by the fact that Herod the Great's domain was nearly the same size of King David's.

378. See Appendix 15 concerning Daniel's prophecy.

379. Ankerberg and Waldan, 39; LaHaye, 196.

380. See 12.03.01.Q1 “What ‘Messianic problems’ did the Jewish leaders have with Jesus?” and 12.03.01.A “Chart of Key Points of the Messianic Problems.” See also 02.03.09 “Messianic Expectations”; 05.04.02.Q1 “What were the Jewish expectations of the Messiah?” and Appendix 25: “False Prophets, Rebels, Significant Events, and Rebellions that Impacted the First Century Jewish World.”

2. They had faith that God would fulfil His Davidic Covenant (2 Sam. 7:12-17, Ps. 89, esp. 30-33). The Davidic Covenant meant that their expected “son of David” would destroy the Roman occupiers and re-establish Israel as an international superpower.
3. They had faith that the many “branch” prophecies would be fulfilled.³⁸¹
4. They expected the messianic psalms to be fulfilled (esp. Ps. 2)
5. The prophecies of Daniel 2 and 4 outlined the succession of four world empires. They had experience the challenges of the third empire and knew that the messiah would they were in the 4th empire. Furthermore, they believed that Daniel 9:24-27 established a time table for the coming Messiah.

The pattern of reasoning that made so many Jews believed in the nearness of the Messiah is as follows:

1. They believed in the literal interpretation of the prophetic words of their Hebrew Bible.
2. They looked at their history and their social-political environment. The northern ten tribes were relocated with the Assyrians in 722/21 B.C., followed by Judah and Benjamin and the Babylonians about 135 years later. In the sixth century B.C., when the Jews were permitted to return, only a small portion chose to do so. There was however, after the Maccabean Revolt (160s B.C.) a free and politically independent nation, which led to a greater return of Jews. In fact, Galilee had been unpopulated by the Assyrians (Isa. 9:1; 8th Cent. B.C.), but regained a large Jewish population in the second century B.C. Hence, when Jesus ministered in Galilee it was primarily to the descendants of the Babylonian Jews. So to the rabbis it looked like all the prophecies had been fulfilled, although the prophecy of a nation being born in a single day (Isa. 66:8) was problematic because it obviously was not fulfilled. Therefore, the rabbis then assumed it to be a figure of speech.³⁸²

381. 2 Sam. 23:1-7; Isa. 11:1-10; Jer. 23:5, 6; Zech. 3:8; 6:9-15. See also Mt. 2:23.

382. In A.D. 135, the Jews were dispersed again and remained scattered throughout the world until the late 19th century when they began to return to their promised land. The return has not ceased to this day and the nation of Israel was born on May 14, 1948 -- in a single day. From the time of the Assyrians until this date, the Jews had independence for merely a century (c. 164 - 63 B.C.). Furthermore, during twenty-seven centuries the land was occupied by some fourteen different people /governments. The prophecies led the Jews to look for the messiah at His first coming, while in fact, these point to His second coming (return).

3. They connected the biblical prophecies with current events and concluded that their messiah was about to come.

4. Their expectations were heightened by the fact that many other people groups were also expecting a messiah.³⁸³

The difficulty the Jews had was attempting to reconcile the messiah as a king and as a suffering servant. This continued to plague them until Jesus was resurrected, and even then many refused to believe.

03.05.20 47 B.C. Antipater Procurator of Judaea

Antipater replaced Hyrcanus II as ruler, but received the title of “procurator.” Antipater then placed his son Herod (later called “the Great”) in military command of Judaea/Israel. The term “instability” could hardly begin to describe the political tensions as the region was in political chaos with constant fears of a Parthian invasion from the east. The Jewish region was filled with active bands of robbers to attacked travelers, and Galilee, especially, was filled with freedom fighters. Herod was determined to prove himself worthy of the assignment to bring law and order to the region.

03.05.21 47 B.C. Herod Becomes Military Commander; Executes Hezekias, Massacres Selected Members Of The Sanhedrin

Josephus says that Herod was only 25 years old when he was placed in command of a military regiment in the province of Syria, which included the District of Galilee.³⁸⁴ For decades, there were highwaymen who attacked travelers and caravans, robbing and at times killing innocent victims.³⁸⁵ For this reason, pilgrims going to and from Jerusalem for religious observances traveled in *festival caravans*.³⁸⁶ One of these notorious men was Hezekias of Gamala. Herod pursued, and after a fierce battle, captured him and his band. Josephus recorded that with the

383. The term “messiah” is lower case because no one was expecting a messiah as God, but a divine figure “like a man” (Dan. 8:15-17) who would bring peace upon the earth.

384. Josephus, *Antiquities* 14.9.2. Some scholars believe Herod was 15 years old at this time. See Lee, *The Galilean Jewishness of Jesus*, 73.

385. Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.6.1(118); *Wars* 2.15.6 (232).

386. Tosephta, *Megillah* 4.15; Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*. 59, 249; Geikie, *The Life and Works of Christ*. 2:278; Farrar, *The Life of Christ*. 364.

death of Hezekias there was a great number of other robbers who were killed with him.³⁸⁷ The descendants of Hezekias established the Zealot movement (A.D. 6) and cause numerous revolts that would eventually lead to the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem. But in the meantime, Herod established peace and safety in the Jewish provinces and Syria for travel, commerce, and later for the spread of the gospel. In essence, Herod forced *Pax Romana*³⁸⁸ upon the Jews, an achievement for which he was greatly appreciated by the Syrians and Romans.³⁸⁹

To the Jews in Jerusalem, however, he displayed cruelty and was ordered to appear before the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem and give an account of his actions. He did not forget the rebuke, so later in 37 B.C., after he was appointed to the position of king by Rome, he massacred nearly the entire high court.³⁹⁰ Historians are unsure how many were killed, but it certainly was everyone who opposed him earlier. Josephus in *Antiquities* 14.9.4 (175) says that Herod executed “all” the members, but in *Antiquities* 15.1.2 (6) the historian said that only 45 of Antigonus’ supporters who were of the Sanhedrin were executed. Among the few who, in some manner escaped death, were Rabbi Hillel, Rabbi Shammai, Rabbi Bava Ben Buta and two the sons of Betria. The sixty plus others died in Herod’s massacres – he was not one to forget or forgive.³⁹¹

03.05.22 44 B.C. Julius Caesar Assassinated; Augustus Reigns

For more than two centuries on the peninsula of Italy, what was once a small Roman Republic, was now growing into a formidable force that would one day dominate the Jewish world. Its leader, Julius Caesar, was assassinated on the ides of March (March 15) which resulted in the following:

1. A period of political instability within the government. With his death the Roman Republic ended and the Roman Empire began under Augustus.
2. The Parthian Empire, far to the east, took advantage of the instability to invade Jerusalem.

387. Josephus, *Antiquities* 14.9.2.

388. Lee, *The Galilean Jewishness of Jesus*. 72-73; Mellowes and Cran, Executive Producers. *From Jesus to Christ: The First Christians*. (DVD). Part 1; See “Pax Romana” in Appendix 26.

389. Josephus, *Antiquities* 14.9.2.

390. Wilkinson, *Jerusalem as Jesus Knew It*. 87.

391. Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 2:38.

3. The assassination was a blow to the Jewish community throughout the empire, as Jews in the Diaspora lived in peace and prosperity until the assassination.

Caesar's grandnephew, Octavianus, who was his adopted heir, later known as Octavian as well as Caesar Augustus, succeeded him as absolute ruler/emperor of the newly formed Roman Empire. Augustus had an immediate power struggle with Mark Anthony, who challenged him.³⁹² After several conflicts and assassination attempts, Augustus was the winner. Under his leadership, the Roman Empire became a superior force and kept the eastern empire of the Parthians from gaining access to the Mediterranean Sea. The tension between these two competing empires would be constant in the land of the Jews throughout the ministry of Jesus Christ.

Since Julius Caesar had given the Jews throughout the empire religious freedom and prosperity, they gathered for many days to mourn his passing. While this period was exceptionally good for those living throughout the empire, it was brutal for those living in their Jewish homeland under Herod. The Roman historian Suetonius preserved interesting insights concerning the appreciation of the Diaspora Jews (See map 02.01.03.Z) toward Julius Caesar at the time of his unexpected death.

In exceeding sorrow and public mourning, a number there were besides from foreign countries, who every one after their country's manner, lamented round one after another, by companies in their turns; but above all the Jews, who also for many nights together frequented the place of his sepulture and where his body was burnt.

Suetonius, *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars* 84³⁹³

The group of men who committed the assassination were captured and their leaders, Brutus and Cassius committed suicide. The Roman senate responded voting to give Caesar divine honors.³⁹⁴ It was the first time in Roman history that a mortal was deified.

Augustus reorganized the Roman government, laws, and tax structures, and even downsized the military, while transforming it into a highly efficient killing machine. Slowly, but effectively, he

392. Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*. 279.

393. Suetonius, *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*. "Julius Caesar" 62.

394. Suetonius, *Deified Julius* 88.

increased his governmental authority until he achieved dictatorial powers as well as *pontifex maximus*, or *religious head of the state*.³⁹⁵ He built towns and cities without the usual fortification walls. His policies not only shaped the manner in which Israel would be governed but also kept Rome strong for centuries to come.³⁹⁶

03.05.23 43 B.C. Antipater Murdered; Another Parthian³⁹⁷ Threat

The Romans placed John Hyrcanus II in the vassal leadership position as ethnarch (similar to a governorship) of Judaea and Herod Antipater as governor of Jerusalem. Hyrcanus was of Jewish heritage while Herod's ancestry was from Idumea.³⁹⁸ Jewish hatred ran deep for the Idumeans and in 43 B.C. Herod Antipater was poisoned, leaving his two sons Herod (later called Herod the Great) and Phasael to govern Judea. Regional military conflicts, political chaos, and rumors of wars were widespread which encouraged the Parthians to make another attack. In the meantime, even the Romans were expecting a messiah of some kind.

03.05.24 42 - 38 B.C. Messiah Predicted by Roman Poet Virgil

The Roman poet Publius Vergilius Maro (70 – 19 B.C.), usually referred to as Virgil, was known for several Latin works of literature. In his fourth *Eclogues*, published between the years 42 and 38 B.C., he made reference to a messianic-type of individual who could come down from the heavens.³⁹⁹ The fact that he repeated a Cumaean prophecy,⁴⁰⁰ underscores the point that many, if not all Middle Eastern people groups at this time were expecting a messiah of some kind. Obviously, Virgil portrayed his expectation within the Greco-Roman religious system.

**Now the last age of the Cumaean prophecy begins and
The great roll-call of the centuries is born anew;
Now Virgin Justice returns, and Saturn's reign:**

Now a new race descends from the heavens above.

395. Tenney, *New Testament Times*. 132.

396. Tenney, *New Testament Times*. 129-32.

397. Since the Parthians were swift on horseback, incredibly brutal, killing and destroying wherever they went; they may have been the image that John saw in his vision of the Apocalypse, as a symbol of the plagues of the final judgment in which a third of humanity is destroyed (Rev. 9:17-19).

398. See "Idumean" in Appendix 26.

399. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. 121.

400. Some scholars believe Virgil may have obtained his information from the popular Jewish *Sibylline* poems, or possibly from a copy of the scroll of Isaiah. See Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. 1:324.

**Only favor the child who's born, under whom
The first race of iron shall end, and a golden race
Will rise up throughout the world ... and
Any traces of our evils that remain will be cancelled,**

**He will take on divine life, and he will see gods
Mingled with heroes, and be seen by them,
And rule a peaceful world with his father's powers.**

Virgil, Eclogue IV: The Golden Age

The term “**race**” means *age* and “**golden race**” means *golden age* – a time when a divine child will end the civil wars within the empire and usher in the golden age of peace and prosperity.⁴⁰¹ This is followed by a heavenly utopia on earth. Note the following segment:

**And for you, boy, the uncultivated earth will pour out
Her first little gifts, straggling ivy and cyclamen everywhere
And the bean flower with the smiling acanthus.
The goats will come home themselves, their udders swollen
With milk, and the cattle will have no fear of fierce lions:
Your cradle itself will pour out delightful flowers:
And the snakes will die, and deceitful poisonous herbs
Will wither: Assyrian spice plants will spring up everywhere.**

Virgil, Eclogue IV: The Golden Age

How Virgil received the Cumaean prophecy of the expected golden age is unknown. It was sculptured within the Greco-Roman religious system, as is evident when reading the entire chapter. However, the idea of a favored child coming from the heavens to bring peace on earth, and to end conflicts of iron (war), and establish a peaceful utopia like the millennial reign of Jesus, is absolutely incredible. Clearly, throughout the Roman world, there was an exciting expectation of a messiah.⁴⁰²

401. Franz, <http://www.lifeandland.org/2009/02/the-angelic-proclamation-to-the-shepherds-luke-28-15/> Retrieved April 10, 2011.

402. See also 03.05.15. However, some historians believe Virgil was not thinking of a Jewish Messiah, but Caesar Augustus who claimed to be a son of god. In the year 4 B.C. Augustus minted coins on which he described himself as the “son of god.”

03.05.25 40 - 39 B.C. Brief Parthian Invasion of Jerusalem; Herod (the Great) given Roman Military to Fight Parthians, Jewish Freedom Fighters, and Bandits.

News of the deaths of Julius Caesar in 44 B.C. and of Herod Antipater in 43 B.C. was too good for the Parthians to resist. It was a golden opportunity to expand westward. So under the leadership of General Pacorus I, five hundred Parthian horsemen soon appeared in Jerusalem and set up Antigonus as the Jewish Hasmonean king and priest. In doing so, he deposed his uncle Hyrcanus who was the Roman nominee.⁴⁰³ Antigonus was supported by the Parthian King Barzaphranes who desired access to the Mediterranean Sea and, like the Romans, considered Israel as strategic because it was the obvious land bridge to Egypt and Europe. His constant battle with Hyrcanus and Phasael and their forces placed the entire land in civil war with daily skirmishes.⁴⁰⁴

In the meantime, John Hyrcanus II was deposed by his nephew Antigonus, the son of Aristobulus II, with the help of the Parthian army who came under the pretense to discuss peace with Hyrcanus and Phasael.⁴⁰⁵ When the Parthians arrived, the two men were captured. Hyrcanus II was carried off to Parthia, and Phasael was placed in captivity where he committed suicide.

Phasael's brother Herod, in the meantime, eluded the Parthians by escaping to Egypt, and then went on to Rome where he promised the emperor revenge on the Parthians, Samaritans, and Jews. Since Rome was having its own difficulties in Europe and Carthage (in North Africa), they were more than delighted to have him bring the area under Roman domination. The Roman Senate gave him whatever military support he requested to remove the Parthians and crush the Jewish freedom fighters.

Roman peace at this time was being established throughout the empire although the Jewish enclave was obviously a continuous challenge. The Romans had no desire to have their strength compromised by a Parthian threat,⁴⁰⁶ and Josephus again carefully recorded the events.

Hyrcanus ruled, besides his first nine years (with his mother as queen), twenty-four years more, when Barzaphranes and Pacorus, the generals of the Parthians passed

403. Gafni, "The Jewish Community in Babylonia." 59.

404. Josephus, *Antiquities*. 14.13.3 and *Wars*. 1.13.2; Sandmel "Herod." 2:588.

405. Flusser, *Jesus*. 259.

406. Rousseau and Arav, *Jesus and His World*. 40.

over the Euphrates and fought with Hyrcanus, and took him alive and made (his brother) Antigonus the son of Aristobulus king.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.10.1 (245)

Into this political and social mess the Romans sent Herod (71-4 B.C.) who would later be given the title “the Great” for his architectural accomplishments. He was only 25 at the time of his appointment and the perfect candidate for the position. His brutality against various Jewish factions, as well as his family, would be remembered for generations. His rule originated with a decision by the Roman Senate in 40 B.C., who sent him back to the Holy Land with 30,000 infantry and 6,000 cavalry. It took him three and a half years of military struggles to acquire control of his kingdom. During this time (40-37 B.C.), he fought the Parthians as well as the freedom fighters. He used some of the most gruesome tactics known to the ancient world as he personally led his army into battle on ten different occasions.⁴⁰⁷ He even acquired the assistance of the Samaritans which greatly increased Jewish-Samaritan tensions.

The Jews had no desire to be dominated by someone who was a descendant of Esau and an agent of Rome. After many conflicts, his final battle was the siege of Jerusalem. Josephus recorded the account.

Now the Jews that were enclosed within the walls of the city fought against Herod with great alacrity and zeal (for the whole nation was gathered together); they also gave out many prophecies about the temple, and many things agreeable to the people, as if God would deliver them out of the dangers they were in....

The first that scaled the walls were twenty chosen men (of Herod’s army); next were Sossius’ (Herod’s general) centurions; for the first wall was taken in forty days, the second in fifteen more, when some of the cloisters that were about the temple were burnt, which Herod gave out to have been burnt by Antigonus, in order to expose him to the hatred of the Jews. And when the outer court of the temple, and the lower city, were taken, the Jews fled into the inner court of the temple and into the upper city; but now fearing lest the Romans should hinder them from offering their daily sacrifices to God, they sent an ambassador, and desired that they would permit them to bring in beasts for sacrifices, which Herod granted, hoping they were going to yield; but when he saw that they did nothing of what he supposed, but bitterly opposed him, in order to preserve the Kingdom of Antigonus, he made an

407. Bailey, *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes*. 57; Bruce, “Herod.” 1:642.

assault upon the city, and took it by; and now all the parts were full of those that were slain, by the rage of the Romans at the long duration of the siege, and by the zeal of the Jews that were on Herod's side, who were not willing to leave one of their adversaries alive. So they murdered continually in the narrow streets and in the houses by crowds, and as they were flying to the temple for shelter, and there was no pity taken of either infants or the aged, nor did they spare so much as the weaker sex ... but as if in the company of madmen, they fell upon persons of all ages, without distinction.

This destruction befell upon the city of Jerusalem when Marcus Agrippa and Caninius Callus were consuls at Rome, on the hundred and eighty-fifth Olympiad, on the third month, on the solemnity of the fast, as if a periodical revolution of calamities had returned since that which befell the Jews under Pompey; for the Jews were taken by him on the same day, and this was after twenty-seven years' time.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 14.16.2, 4 (470, 476-480, 487-488a)

Herod's brutality was demonstrated when he fought both bandits and freedom fighters in the caves of Mount Arbel. For years bandits attacked caravans along the famed *Via Maris*, the international highway that went from Egypt, through Capernaum, and on to Damascus.⁴⁰⁸ They hid in mountain caves, especially in the caves of Mount Arbel from where they could see distant caravans coming toward them.

408. Also known as "the way of the land of the Philistines" (Ex. 13:17; Num. 20:17).



03.05.25.A. THE CAVES OF MOUNT ARBEL. Mount Arbel is along the western side of the Sea of Galilee and has cliffs that are more than a thousand feet in height. The cliff caves had been homes of freedom fighters and bandits for centuries, as armies could never capture the occupants until Herod the Great came to power. Arbel is also along the road where Jesus walked whenever He traveled from Nazareth to Capernaum. In this area, He performed many miracles and taught the principles of the Kingdom of God. Photograph by the author.

Many freedom fighters and bandits hid in caves. To kill them, Herod built fires at the cave entrances depriving the occupants of oxygen and, consequently, they died. However, when it was impossible to use that technique on the side of a cliff, he lowered soldiers in iron baskets from the top of the mountain. As the baskets descended past the caves, the soldiers used long spears with hooks to impale their victims, pull them out of the shallow cave, and let them fall to the valley below. To avoid this agonizing death, many simply jumped to their deaths rather than let the Romans enjoy a sense of victory. The brutal nature of Herod was just what the Romans desired and he finally began to reign as a puppet king in 37 B.C.

Finally, it took three years for persistent military actions to defeat the Parthians, local bandits, and Jews. Therefore, one of the great lingering mysteries is why, in light of Parthian invasion and their constant threats, was Herod so incredibly complacent when the magi arrived to see Jesus. Yet He ruled for 33 years with absolute loyalty to Rome.

03.05.26 37 – 4 B.C. Conquest and Rule by Herod the Great

By the time Herod took control of his country, it lay in ruins. In the towns of Lydda, Thamna, Gophna, and Emmaus nearly all the residents had been captured and deported as slaves.⁴⁰⁹ The village of Marissa was burned to the ground by the Parthians.⁴¹⁰ Everyone lived in constant fear and had great distrust of any leader over them – pagan or Jewish. While life was better than it was under Antiochus IV Epiphanes, economically, little had changed – one tyrant was replaced by another.⁴¹¹ The prosperity that came after the Maccabean Revolt had suddenly ended. No wonder then, that, decades later, the Sermon on the Mount would be a stunning word of promise and encouragement!

There were a number of reasons why the Jewish people hated Herod the Great. His father Antipater, was an Idumean⁴¹² and his mother Kypros, came from the family of an Arab sheik.⁴¹³ Herod's genealogy begins with Esau (Gen. 36) whose descendant was Amalek the father of the Amalekites (Gen. 36:16; Ex. 17:8-16), who was the father of Agag, also a king of the Amalekites (1 Sam. 15), whose descendant was Haman of Queen Esther's day (Est. 3). Scripture record that Haman was an Agagite (Esther 3:1) but Josephus said he was part of a clan within the larger tribe of Amalekites,⁴¹⁴ a small tribe within the larger tribe of Idumeans (descendants of Esau). Haman was a forefather of Herod the Great. More specific details as to why the Jewish people hated Herod the Great are as follows:

1. Some fifteen centuries earlier, the Edomites refused to permit their Israelite cousins to pass through their land on their way from Egypt to the land of Canaan. The ancients did not forget or forgive.
2. David conquered the Edomites and Solomon reigned over them (1 Sam. 14:47).
3. In the ninth century B.C., the prophets Joel and Amos denounced the Edomites as the bitterest enemies of God (Joel 3:19; Amos 1:11-12).

409. Josephus, *Antiquities* 14.11.2; *Wars* 1.1.9.

410. Josephus, *Antiquities* 14.15.12; *Wars* 1.15.4.

411. Geikie, *The Life and Works of Christ*. 1:43.

412. Josephus, *Antiquities* 14.1.3 (8); *Wars* 1.6.2 (123). .

413. Josephus, *Wars* 1.8.9 (181); *Antiquities* 14.7.3 (121). Scholars are unclear concerning the genealogy of Kypros (or Cypros) as there appear to be conflicts in the writings of Josephus on this matter.

414. Josephus, *Antiquities* 11:6.2-3.

4. The prophets Ezekiel and Jeremiah also denounced the Edomites (Ezek. 35:13; Jer. 19:7-22).
5. The Edomites, by this time known as the Idumeans, joined the Chaldeans in the final conquest of Judea when Nebuchadnezzar came to destroy Solomon's temple.
6. After Nebuchadnezzar deported the majority of the Jews, the Idumeans raided the impoverished surviving Jewish people who were left behind.⁴¹⁵ They survived the three Babylonian invasions⁴¹⁶ but then were confronted repeatedly by the Idumeans.
7. Many Idumeans stood with the Greeks against the Jews during the Inter-Testamental period.
8. About 130 years before Jesus, John Hyrcanus forced circumcision on non-Jewish men in an attempt to convert them to Judaism.
9. However, the most important issue for the Jews was that Herod simply did not have the biblical requirements to be their king.

The Romans were aware of these cultural and religious issues and believed the Jews would not follow him into a revolt.⁴¹⁷ They were right. Under Herod's command, Roman soldiers defeated the Parthians in Jerusalem and slaughtered whatever Jewish freedom fighters they could find. Much to his surprise, Herod was also able to obtain soldiers and financial assistance from both the Samaritans and Hellenized Jews. Consequently, the hostility between orthodox Jews, Hellenized Jews, and Samaritans at the time of Christ was explosive. Jesus could not have come at a time filled with more tension.

This was also a time of turmoil in Rome. Caesar had been assassinated and Gaius Sossius joined Mark Anthony, by whom in 38 B.C., he (Sossius) was appointed governor of Syria. Israel at this time was a province under Damascus, Syria. As governor, Sossius supported Herod against Antigonus (the Hasmonean) when the latter controlled Jerusalem. In 37 B.C. Herod captured Jerusalem and Sossius placed Herod upon the throne. Later the Roman Senate confirmed the

415. Read the short book of Obadiah.

416. In the years 605, 597 and 587/86 B.C.

417. Most sources record that the appointment and title were given to Herod by the Caesar Augustus and confirmed by the senate (i.e. Mackowski, *Jerusalem: City of Jesus*. 175); however, other scholars indicate that it was by Anthony and confirmed by the senate (i.e. Flusser, *Jesus*. 259).

decision by Sossius and gave Herod the official title of *rex socius et amicus populi Romani*, meaning *Allied King and Friend of the Roman People*.

But Herod never enjoyed peace and tranquility because he was in constant fear thinking that a Jew would kill him and steal his throne. He even ordered his two favorite sons killed while they were in service for him in a fortress in Samaria.⁴¹⁸ His army consisted of foreign mercenaries, Idumeans, and Samaritan soldiers, but his personal bodyguards were selected foreign mercenaries because he even feared his own soldiers.⁴¹⁹

After the fighting ended, the Senate re-titled him as *King of all of the Jews*. The title further offended the Jews. He was the most loyal of all puppet monarchs in the *Mare Nostrum*, or Mediterranean provincial districts. Significant in this political mess is that He married Mariamne, the great-granddaughter of Alexander Jannaeus of the Hasmonean dynasty. He was wise enough to marry into the family he had overthrown, in the hope of gaining some degree of legitimacy for his reign. Even though she was his favorite wife out of ten, that would not stop him from eventually killing her and several other family members and potential rivals.⁴²⁰

One of his first decisions was to eliminate all possible challengers to his throne. Since the Sanhedrin had previously reprimanded him and supported Antigonus and the Parthians, he massacred nearly every member of the high court except a few as a celebration of his accession to the throne.⁴²¹ As was stated previously, Josephus says in *Antiquities* 14.9.4 (175) that Herod execute “all” the members, but in *Antiquities* 15.1.2 (6) the historian said that 45 supporters of Antigonus who were members of the Sanhedrin were executed. Among those who escaped death were the famous Hillel and Shammai, the two most prominent Jewish leaders of the second temple period. A new Sanhedrin was formed which was obviously much more responsive to Herod’s desires and control. Nonetheless, he made two significant changes.

1. The Sanhedrin, which previously was both a legislative and judicial body, was stripped of its legislative role.

418. An excellent resource on the life of Herod the Great, besides Flavius Josephus (*Antiquities*) is Steward Perowne, *The Life and Times of Herod the Great*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1957.

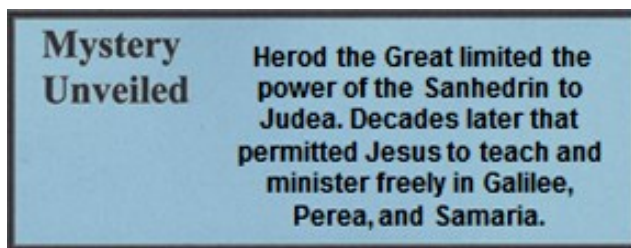
419. Pilch, *The Cultural Dictionary of the Bible*. 106; Saperstein, *Essential Papers on Messianic Movements and Personalities in Jewish History*. 94.

420. See the Maccabean family tree at 03.05.02.A.

421. Wilkinson, *Jerusalem as Jesus Knew It*. 87; Josephus, *Antiquities*. 14.9.4; Mantey, “New Testament Backgrounds.” 6.

2. The Sanhedrin's judicial authority was limited to Jerusalem and Judea and, therefore, had no jurisdiction in Galilee or other Jewish enclaves.⁴²² For this reason, Jesus could minister freely in the Galilee area without worries of Caiaphas or the Sanhedrin challenging Him, although they did send out spies to observe Him.

Whereas previous political leaders often functioned also as the high priest, Herod refused this position. Rather, he sold the position to those he deemed trustworthy – namely the House of Boethus, a wealthy and influential Sadducean family. One of Herod's good friends was Mark Anthony, after whom the Antonio Fortress (located beside the Jewish temple) was renamed. Anthony may best be remembered in secular history as the great Italian lover of Queen Cleopatra VII who ruled Egypt. The queen was very covetous and wanted to insure her position, so she had her brother poisoned. She manipulated Anthony to give her Jericho, which Herod had to lease back from her at high annual rent. Knowing of her passion for power and wealth, Herod lived in constant fear of an Egyptian military attack and, therefore, constructed several fortresses along his southern and eastern frontier.⁴²³ But the most important fortress was the Antonia beside the temple.



422. Golub, *In the Days*. 195.

423. The seven major fortresses are: (1) the Alexandrium (also known as Alexandreion or Sartaba) in the Jordan Valley to defend the northern region, (2) Masada border palace fortress in the southern region, (3, 4) the Doq and the Cypros (Kypros) border fortresses that overlooked Jericho, (5) the Hyrcania Prison fortress, (6) the Machaerus, on the eastern edge of the Dead Sea, and (7) in Jerusalem, a palace-fortress beside the temple, that was later renamed by Herod the Great as the Antonia Fortress. Some fortresses, such as the Herodian, were his in original construction while he modified other fortresses such as the Antonia, Masada, and Machaerus. For more information on Herod's fortresses, see Samuel Rocca, *The Forts of Judaea 168 BC-AD 70*. New York / London: Osprey Publishing 2008. See location map at 03.05.26.Z below.



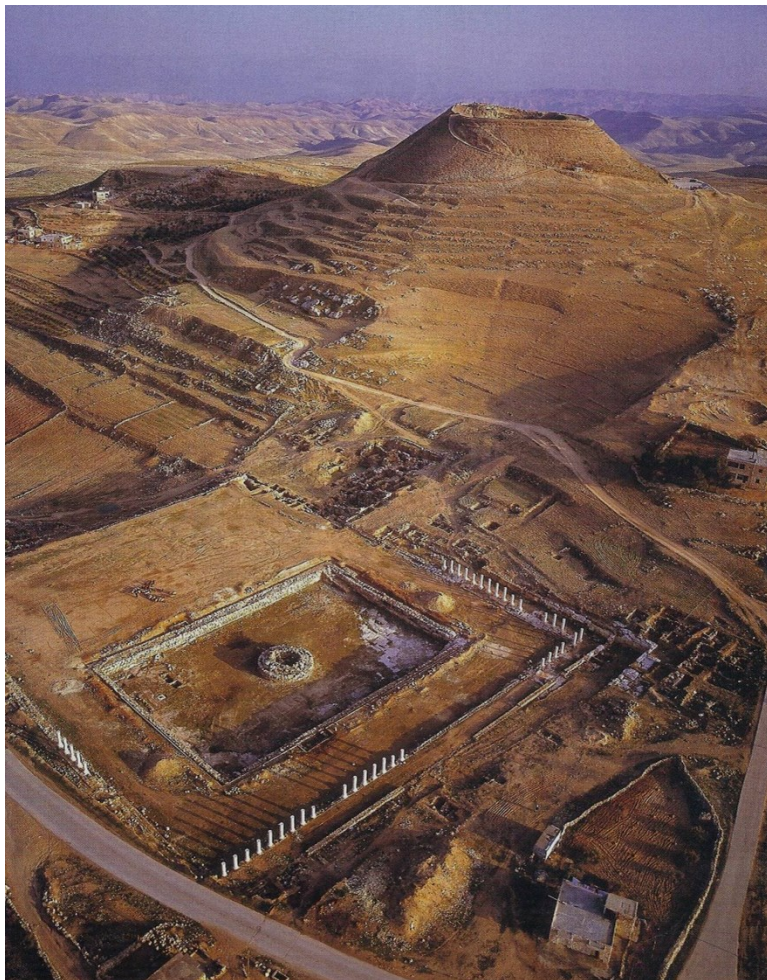
03.05.26.Z Map Of Fortresses By The Hasmoneans And Herod The Great.

Herod the Great enlarged Hasmonean fortresses to defend against potential, or imagined threats from the Egyptians and the Parthians. Courtesy of International Mapping and Dan Przywara.

But the Parthians were not the only worries of Herod. He was not too delighted with Queen Cleopatra VII of Egypt. Her passion for Mark Anthony was well known, and there was always a degree of tension between her and Herod. To add insult to injury, Herod was humiliated that Mark had given her Jericho, which he (Herod) had to lease back from her. He could not enjoy his

winter fortress palace there without paying her rent. It was there that he built his last fortress, one that he named after his mother – Kypros because he feared a possible Egyptian attack.

The desert city of Jericho was one of the very few areas where balsam trees grew which were highly esteemed for medicinal and cosmetic value. The town was a resting point for all travelers, especially caravans. Therefore, an auxiliary military unit was stationed there to aid the tax collector, Zachaeus, get his revenue. So to add humiliation to Herod, Queen Cleopatra frequently found great cause to visit Herod to insure that she was receiving all her lease royalties. At such meetings, each carefully considered how one could kill the other.⁴²⁴



03.05.26.A. RUINS OF THE HERODIAN PALACE-FORTRESS. An aerial photograph of the palace – fortress built by Herod the Great is located two and a

424. Books 15 and 16 of Josephus' *Antiquities* describe the details of the life of Herod the Great; See also Blaiklock, "Herod." 7:816-17.

half miles south of Bethlehem. He took the top of one mountain (background) and placed it upon another to increase its height, then built a circular palace fortress on the top. At the bottom he had a swimming pool with guest houses. Since this is located near the edge of a desert, water was piped in from a spring near Bethlehem. The Herodian towers contained 20 rooms throughout the 7 stories. The palace also had a full-size bathhouse and lush gardens.



03.05.26.B. A COPPER COIN OF HEROD THE GREAT. The image of this eight protot coin reflects Herod's dictatorial rulership. LEFT: Shown is a military helmet with cheek pieces and straps, wreathed with acanthus leaves, and two palm branches.

RIGHT: Reads HRWDOU BASILEWS (of King Herod), shown is a tripod with ceremonial bowl. Source <http://www.edgarlowen.com/herod-10211.jpg>

In the seventh year of Herod's reign there was a power struggle between Caesar Octavian and Mark Anthony as to who would reign in the seat of the mighty Roman Empire. The soldiers who were loyal to each of the two commanders finally met at the Naval Battle of Actium in 30 B.C. And when it was over, Herod's good friend Mark Anthony was defeated. When Cleopatra heard the news, she committed suicide.⁴²⁵ Herod, in the meantime, was fighting the Arabs east of the Jordan River. During this conflict, he killed Hyrcanus of the Hasmonean family. As soon as he was able to restore some measure of peace in the land, he had to deal with the potential loss of his throne and possibly his life by the command of Octavian in Rome – the cost of being a good friend of Mark Anthony. Herod understood Roman politics very well and realized that since he was loyal to Anthony, the new Caesar would quite naturally be determined to kill him.

425. Stein, R. *Jesus the Messiah*. 71-73.

Therefore, he made a splendid political move: He went to Rome with the finest political speech of his life. He confronted his would-be judge and executioner, and stated that he (Herod) would be loyal to him just as he was loyal to Mark Anthony. He also said that he was the best candidate for Rome to serve in the eastern front in the event that there would be an Arab or Parthian invasion. Octavian evidently believed his story and kept him in power. The puppet king then returned to Judaea with more status than before. He had a network of spies who informed him of potential uprisings and possible problems inside and outside his domain. He was a faithful and loyal friend to the emperor and offered his assistance whenever possible.

Now that his rule was secure, he began a number of huge construction projects. As a teenager he had studied engineering in Rome at a time when Augustus decided to enrich the Roman culture with theaters, hippodromes, and other architectural wonders. Herod desired to acquire the fame that Augustus achieved. So he also built theaters, aqueducts, roads, and many other buildings as well as an amphitheater and hippodrome in Caesarea Maritima along the coast.⁴²⁶ Josephus said he then invited athletes from the surrounding nations to compete once every four years in Olympic-style games, giving expensive prizes to each winner.⁴²⁷ He introduced chariot races with chariots drawn by two, three, or four horses. In the year 27 B.C. Herod introduced in Jerusalem, sporting events that included gladiator fights and wild animals fighting and devouring condemned criminals, much to the delight of Gentile spectators. But since there is only one account of a gladiator and wild animal fight in the Holy City, the conclusion by scholars is that there must have been an incredible Jewish protest against this form of barbaric entertainment.⁴²⁸ Josephus said Herod built a theater in or near Jerusalem,⁴²⁹ and he referred to a hippodrome south of Jerusalem.⁴³⁰ But scholars do not know of their locations.

These facilities and accompanying sporting events were enjoyed by the Sadducees and Hellenized Jews, but orthodox Jews looked upon them as deliberate attempts to destroy their faith and culture – an invasion of Greek and Roman paganism. Jerusalem was a mix of Jewish and Greek cultures – a truly cosmopolitan city.

426. Theaters were semicircular whereas amphitheaters were circular. The Greeks built them into hillsides that had natural accommodating formations, however, the Romans who used arches and developed concrete, built free-standing structures. Both had tiered seating that surrounded the theatrical performance area. Hippodromes were constructed for horse races.

427. Josephus, *Antiquities* 15.8.1 (268).

428. Goodman. "Under the Influence." 62, 65-66.

429. Josephus, *Antiquities* 15.7.1; 15.7.4 and 15.8.1.

430. Josephus, *Wars* 2.3.1 (44) and *Antiquities* 17.10.2 (255); See also Sanders, "Jesus in Historical Context." 434-36.



03.05.26.C. AN ILLUSTRATION OF CAESAREA MARITIMA. An artist's rendering of Herod's Caesarea "by the sea." The city and its artificial port were built between 23-9 B.C., and was one of the wonders of the first century. He built an aqueduct to bring a continuous supply of fresh water and designed the sewer system so the tides would clean out the waste. Ships were safely guided into the port at night with a lighthouse. Recently archaeologists have determined that the ancient city was far larger than depicted in this rendering.



03.05.26.D. A MODEL OF HEROD'S HIPPODROME. Scholars are unsure where in Jerusalem Herod the Great built a hippodrome in Jerusalem. This 50:1 scale model, as shown in a miniaturized first century Jerusalem. But when the model city was relocated to the Israel Museum, the hippodrome was not included due to disagreements concerning location by various historians. Photograph by the author.



03.05.26.E. RUINS OF THE HIPPODROME IN JERASH. A modern charioteer is anxious to use the hippodrome in ancient Jerash, one of the ancient Decapolis cities. These were first used for horse and chariot races, then for animals and gladiators, and in the second century Christians were fed to the lions in hippodromes as well as amphitheaters. Photo courtesy of the Jordanian Bureau of Tourism.



03.05.26.F. A MODEL OF HEROD'S THEATER. This 50:1 scale model of a Roman theater is typical of what scholars believe Herod constructed in Jerusalem but its location is unknown. However, archaeologists have uncovered several theater seat tokens for this theater mentioned by Josephus in *Antiquities*, 15.8.1.⁴³¹

The subject of a theater and what Josephus meant when he said that the amphitheater of Jerusalem was located “in the plain” has been fuel for scholarly debates.⁴³² There is no disagreement, however, that Jerusalem was not the “pure little Jewish community” often envisioned by Bible students.⁴³³ It was a cosmopolitan city with constant tension of cultural and religious conflict. The lack of archaeological evidence, other than some theater seat tokens, does

431. Charlesworth, *Jesus and Archaeology*. 44-45.

432. Josephus, *Antiquities* 15.8.1 (268); See also Sanders, “Jesus in Historical Context.” 435.

433. Lichtenberger, “Jesus and the Theater in Jerusalem.” 283, 288-91.

not help the matter any. The theaters Herod built in Jericho and Caesarea are the oldest in the Middle East.⁴³⁴

Some have said that Herod's goal was to make Caesarea the Rome of the Middle East. Rome, which had a reputation for outlandish sports and depraved social life, was Herod's ideal city. In true Greek and Roman tradition, most games were incredibly violent.⁴³⁵ Scholars debate as to whether the Olympic games, which were played once every four years, were in Jerusalem and/or in Caesarea.⁴³⁶ He honored Caesar and other Roman dignitaries by hosting the 192nd Olympiad in the most lavish style possible. Josephus writes,

About this time it was that Caesarea Sebaste which he had built was finished. The entire building being accomplished in the tenth year, the solemnity of it fell into the twenty-eighth year of Herod's reign, and into the hundred and ninety-second Olympiad. There was accordingly a great festival, and most sumptuous preparations made presently, in order to its dedication; for he had appointed a contention in music, and games to be performed naked; he had also gotten ready a great number of those that fight single combats, and of beasts for the like purpose; horse races also, and the most chargeable of such sports and shows as used to be exhibited at Rome, and in other places. He consecrated this combat to Caesar, and ordered it to be celebrated every fifth year.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 16.5.1 (136-138a)

The word *naked* to the Greeks and Romans meant complete nudity whereas to the Jews the term meant wearing nothing but undergarments, as was done by men during night time fishing on the Sea of Galilee. The word *gymnasium* is from the Greek word *gymnos*, meaning *naked*,⁴³⁷ because the Greeks loved the human body. Athletes performed in total nudity and criminals were crucified in total nudity. In military terms, Josephus said the word meant to be without armor.⁴³⁸

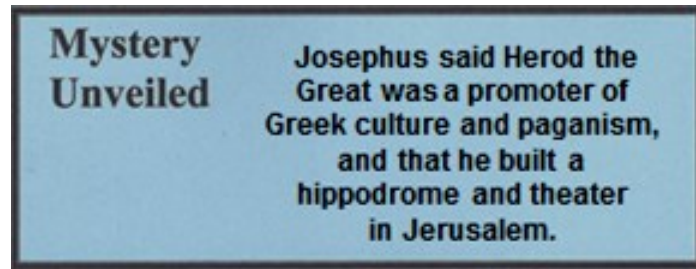
434. Lichtenberger, "Jesus and the Theater in Jerusalem." 299.

435. King Agrippa, the grandson of Herod the Great, was also a builder who constructed an amphitheater in Berytus (today's Beirut, Lebanon). According to Josephus, at one time 1,400 gladiators fought there in a single contest (*Antiquities* 19.7.5).

436. Josephus, *Wars* 1.21.7 (414); See also Sanders; "Jesus in Historical Context." 430.

437. Scott, Jr. *Jewish Backgrounds of the New Testament*. 127.

438. Josephus, *Antiquities* 8.14.2.



His feats in architecture were surpassed only by his ability to manipulate others, often with fear. His court was filled with Greek advisors who flattered him with the phrase “the great Herod.” This complementary title was eventually changed to “Herod the Great.”⁴³⁹ The Greeks, as well as the Romans, believed the Jews were an uncivilized people and Herod was determined to prove them wrong by making Israel the pinnacle of Hellenism. As a result, the Jewish people had no government or temple authority that placed a check on the encroaching Greek culture. Of the four levels of Pharisees,⁴⁴⁰ the upper echelon was as corrupt as the Sadducees, while the other three made an attempt to help Jews maintain their Jewishness. Unfortunately, as will be shown, the Pharisees did so by instituting the strict legalism called the “traditions of the elders” (Mt. 15:1-2).

Herod had statues of Caesar erected in Caesarea and Sabaste in Samaria. In Sabaste he built a temple to Caesar for those who desired to worship their emperor. But when he attempted to erect one in Jerusalem, the Jews greatly objected. Consequently, since the Samaritans did not raise similar objections, the Jewish hatred for them intensified.

439. Goulb, *In the Days*. 206.

440. See 02.01.14.Q1.



03.05.26.G. THE TEMPLE RUINS OF EMPEROR AUGUSTUS. Herod built a temple in Samaria so the Samaritans could worship Emperor Augustus. This reflects, in part, the deep influences of Hellenism in the region, even though he was hated by both the Jews and Samaritans. Photograph by the author.

From the time Alexander the Great conquered the land until the end of the Maccabean Revolt, Israel had been ruled by Greek dictators who promoted Hellenism. The cultural invasion intensified during the short reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. While the temple and Jerusalem were “purified” after the Maccabean Revolt, in the countryside vestiges of Hellenism continued. The ruling Maccabees were, for the most part, interested in power and wealth, not purifying the land other than Jerusalem.

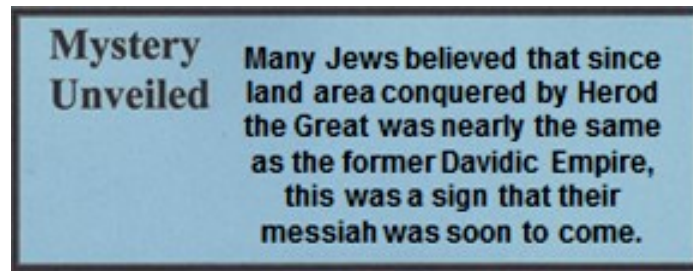
When Herod the Great entered the scene, he reintroduced these pagan cultural icons. This was especially damning since they had just removed the yoke of tyranny from the Greek Seleucids, and now a son of Esau, who supposedly converted to Judaism under John Hyrcanus, was re-instilling paganism. However, to gain the respect of the Jewish people, his coins did not have any images of humans or deities. Nonetheless, outside of Jerusalem he built temples to worship various gods as well as the emperor. Statuettes of Asclepius, the god of healing, and his daughter Hygieia, the goddess of cleanliness and healing, have been uncovered in the seaport city Caesarea. Amazingly, when Jesus took His disciples to Caesarea Philippi (now known as Banias), He took them to the shrine of Pan, the most pagan city in the Holy Land and asked

them, “Who am I?” The influence of the pagan Greek and Roman culture upon the Jewish people cannot be overstated.



03.05.26.H. STATUETTES OF HEALING GODS. LEFT: Portion of a marble statuette of the god Asclepius (height 26 cm.) from Caesarea (Courtesy of the Sedot Yam Museum). RIGHT: Portion of a statuette of his daughter, the goddess Hygieia (height 24 cm.) from Caesarea Photographs courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority.

Under Herod’s ruthless leadership and Roman military might, he took control of nearby regions, many of which had been under Hasmonean control previously, but divided by Pompey. So now nearly all the land that God had promised to Abraham and his descendants was now in the control of a descendant of Esau, not Jacob. This was an abomination to the Jews. They wondered how people, such as the Idumeans who worshiped idols and lived in debauchery, could possibly inherit the land God promised to Abraham and His chosen people. They concluded that since God permitted most of the land area of the Davidic Kingdom to come under Herod’s domain, certainly the messiah was to come soon and take control of the resurrected kingdom. They interpreted the political and social events around them as prophetic indicators that their long awaited Davidic Kingdom was at hand, with the son of David as the conquering messiah on the throne.



Herod was a shrewd businessperson, taxing the Jews to the point of making them economic slave peasants. He taxed international caravans traveling through his district on the *Kings Highway*, located east of the Jordan River, and on the *Via Maris* that went through Capernaum. There is no question that he managed to squeeze every shekel out of every possible source, yet when he died his country was in the verge of bankruptcy and rebellion.

From 63 B.C. until the temple was destroyed in A.D. 70, there were thirteen freedom revolts,⁴⁴¹ and sixty claimants to the title of messiah.⁴⁴² Only one of them, Menahem ben Hezekiah, claimed to be a descendant of David.⁴⁴³ The area around Galilee, especially Mount Arbel and Gamala, was a hotbed of rebellion. During the ministry of Jesus there was constant fear that, at the slightest clash or infraction, another rebellion would break out. Fear of war was constant, while the rest of the Roman Empire enjoyed the military-enforced *Pax Romana*.⁴⁴⁴ Herod had his kingdom, wealth, and power, but he was miserable – there was no time to enjoy a peaceful life.

03.05.27 30 – 20 B.C. School of Hillel;⁴⁴⁵ School of Shammai⁴⁴⁶

Throughout the entire Second Temple Period (515 B.C. - A.D. 70) there were no greater rabbis than Rabbis Hillel (50 B.C.- A.D. 10) and Shammai (c. 50 B.C. - A.D. 30). Many of their biblical and Oral Law opinions became subjects of discussion and have been preserved in the *Mishnah*. Hillel, who came from Babylon, was interested in bringing the Jewish people back to

441. See Appendix 25 for a listing of false prophets who had messianic expectations and for a partial listing of revolts and social disturbances from 63 B.C. to A.D. 70.

442. Geikie, *The Life and Works of Christ*. 2:114.

443. Jerusalem Talmud, *Berakhoth* 2.4, 5a.18. Menahem ben Hezekiah was a major leader in the revolt of A.D. 66 (Josephus, *Wars* 2.17.8). For more than a hundred years the Hezekiah family was involved in various revolts, and mutinies. This has given credibility to some that they were of royal lineage as they claimed.

444. Lee, *The Galilean Jewishness of Jesus*. 72-73; Mellows and Cran, Executive Producers. *From Jesus to Christ: The First Christians*. (DVD). Part 1.

445. See 02.01.19 for the School of Hillel.

446. See 02.01.20 for the School of Shammai.

a more orthodox interpretation of Scripture as opposed to Shammai, who granted a broad range of permissiveness.⁴⁴⁷ These two rabbis and their opposing Pharisaic schools of biblical interpretation became well established by the time of Christ. They debated some 350 times on issues that most modern Christians would consider insignificant. Yet some issues did affect how legalistically people lived their daily lives in order to be considered holy before God.⁴⁴⁸ When Jesus went to the temple at the age of twelve, He most likely challenged not only the priests and the teachers of the Law, but probably also encountered Hillel, Shammai, or their disciples. The lives of Hillel, the great rabbi of classical Judaism, and Jesus overlapped as did the life of Shammai. Although Hillel was still teaching at the time of Jesus' birth, his disciples continued his theology during the life of Christ. He was known for his kindness, humanity, and humility. Once when an aspiring convert asked him to sum up the whole Torah, and he said, "That which is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow man. That sums up the whole Torah."⁴⁴⁹ An amazing similarity to what Jesus said only a couple of decades later.

03.05.28 24 – 21 B.C. Famine in Judaea

In the years 24 to 21 B.C., a famine fell upon the entire land east of the Mediterranean Sea, especially in the years 22 – 21 B.C., which threatened the survival of entire populations. It is believed to have been one of the worst since the days of King Ahab in the ninth century B.C. (1 Kg. 17-18). While Herod is known for his incredible cruelty, at this time he demonstrated unusual acts of kindness. Using his personal funds, he purchased grain from Egypt and insured the survival of his people. He also acquired sufficient clothing for the elderly, the infirm, and others who had difficulty caring for themselves, during the cold winters.⁴⁵⁰

03.05.29 20 B.C. Treaty Established between Rome and Parthia; Rebellion near Nazareth

The Romans and Parthians established a treaty that set the Euphrates River as the boundary between the two empires. While the Euphrates was hundreds of miles to the east of Jerusalem, there was nothing other than a massive desert between the river and the Holy City. The Jewish enclave was, in effect, the real Roman eastern frontier and Herod was always concerned about a Parthian invasion or overthrow.

447. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. 9-10.

448. Falk, *Jesus the Pharisee*. 93.

449. Boteach, *Kosher Jesus*. 25, in a summary of the Babylonian Talmud *Shabbat 31a*.

450. Wilkinson, *Jerusalem as Jesus Knew It*. 26.

While Rome and Parthia were discussing peace, a revolt broke out in Galilee, only three miles from Nazareth in Sepphoris⁴⁵¹ which was led by a Zealot named Judas ben Ezechias. According to Josephus, the news of the uprising spread quickly, and just as quickly the Roman legate of Syria, Quintilius Varus, sent the Roman army into Galilee.⁴⁵² At the same time Aretas, king of Arabia, sent infantry and cavalry to assist the Romans. Together they not only crushed the Jewish rebellion and sold many Jews into slavery, but not until the city was burned.⁴⁵³

03.05.30 20 B.C. Leadership Change in Sanhedrin

Rabbi Shammai succeeded Rabbi Menachem as *Av Bet Din*, meaning *Vice-President of the Sanhedrin*, and, therefore, Shammai's interpretive philosophy had the dominating influence upon Jewish society. Shammai stated that there should be a greater separation between the Gentiles and the Jews concerning how certain burnt offerings were to be made on the feast days.

But the School of Hillel opposed these restrictive regulations as unnecessary. In the following decades, these two sages and their students would frequently oppose each other on various theological and practical points. Hillel believed that the time of the messiah had come, and he was expecting to meet him. It is unknown if he did.⁴⁵⁴

03.05.31 20-19 B.C. Herod the Great Begins Temple Remodeling and Expansion

Herod's Hellenistic lifestyle so greatly offended the Jews, that scholars have concluded that he reconstructed the temple, (see 03.05.31.B) and built the Machpelah,⁴⁵⁵ the tomb for Abraham and the patriarchs (see below), to appease them. So Herod took it upon himself to remodel the simple and modest Jewish temple that had stood for five centuries. Zerubbabel built it when the Jews returned from Babylon in 515 BC. Since the Jews had a great disdain for Herod, the tyrant needed to attain their favor, so he met with them, and together planned a massive remodeling

451. At this time Sepphoris was the capital city of the District of Galilee. Later the capital was moved to the new city of Tiberias along the Sea of Galilee.

452. Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.10.5.

453. Batey, *Jesus and the Forgotten City*. 53-54, 76.

454. Falk, *Jesus the Pharisee*. 93-94; Falk is a Jewish scholar who believes the School of Shammai was the controlling force within the Pharisaic establishment at the time of Christ. Some Christian scholars agree with him, notably William D. Davis in his *Paul and the Rabbinic Judaism* (page 9) who, in turn, agrees with and quotes B.H. Branscomb *Jesus and the Law of Moses* (page 54). Another is George F. Moore in his two volume work titled *Judaism in the First Century of the Christian Era* (page 1:81).

455. The Machpelah is huge building, is exceedingly larger than any other massive tomb, and may have been referred to by Jesus as a "monument" in Luke 11:48. However, other scholars have suggested Luke 11:48 may be a reference to the tomb of Zechariah (see 09.02.02.A).

project. Josephus said that his greatest architectural accomplishment was the expansion of the sacred temple.⁴⁵⁶ His plan was to build a lavish structure that would surpass the famous Solomon's temple. In fact, it was so massive and significant that some scholars refer to it as the "third temple," even though Zerubbabel's structure remained intact throughout the reconstruction period.⁴⁵⁷ His dream to build one of the great wonders of the world was completed decades after his death, in A.D. 63, but only seven years before its destruction.

According to Josephus, when Herod announced his plans to enlarge the temple, the people feared he would destroy the existing temple, however, after Herod and the religious leaders assured them it would not be destroyed, Herod obtained,

A thousand wagons that were to bring stones for the building, and chose ten thousand of the most skillful workmen, and bought a thousand sacerdotal garments for as many of the [Levitical] priests, and had some of them taught the arts of stone cutters, and others of carpenters, and then began to build.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 15.11.2 (390)



456. Josephus, *Antiquities* 15.11.1-7 and *Wars* 1.21.1.

457. Mackowski, *Jerusalem City of Jesus*. 175.

03.05.31.A. THE MACHPELAH. Herod built this massive building as a tomb for Abraham in Hebron. It is an excellent example of Herodian construction and design. The exterior is believed to be similar to that of the exterior of the temple at the time of Christ. Courses of stone are identical to the Herodian wall in Jerusalem with some blocks measuring as long as 20 feet.⁴⁵⁸ The Muslims, however, increased the height of the walls, added the minaret, and transformed the edifice into a mosque, now known as the “El-Haram el-Ibrahimi.” Photograph by the author.

His architectural achievements on behalf of the Jews were not because he was a religious person, far from it. As previously stated, Herod knew that he repeatedly offended his Jewish subjects, but valued religion as a means of influence, manipulation and control. The lavish temple was to appease them and, like so many of his other building projects, impress Rome. In fact, his goal was to make Jerusalem the “Rome or Athens of the east.”⁴⁵⁹ It is at this point that scholars debate whether he tried to appease the Jews, or simply desired to impress Rome – most believe it was the latter. The construction lasted eighty years, more than sixty after his death. When it was finally completed, so many highly trained skilled craftsmen – eighteen thousand – were out of employment that the nation suffered an economic recession.⁴⁶⁰

Video Insert >

03.05.31.V *The Temple: Yesterday and Today* Professor Gary Byers discusses the expansion of Herod’s temple of the first century and Dr. Paul Wright discusses the Temple Mount as it is today. But first, an introduction by Dr. Bill Heinrich. [Click here if Internet connection is available.](#)

458. Mackowski, *Jerusalem City of Jesus*. 117.

459. Mellowes and Cran, Producers. *From Jesus to Christ: The First Christians*. (DVD). Part 1.

460. Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 3:258; Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*. 13; Farrar, *The Life of Christ*. 100-03. See also 02.03.03 “Economy.”



03.05.31.B. A MODEL OF HEROD'S TEMPLE. Herod the Great began reconstructing the temple in 20-19 B.C., and while most of the work was completed within 15 years, the ornamental work was finally completed in A.D. 63 – more than eighty years later. It required thousands of skilled workers and slaves. During that time, the religious worship and temple rituals continued without interruption. Photo by the author.

03.05.32 22-10 B.C. Construction of the Artificial Seaport Harbor at Caesarea

Herod had a passion to make his domain the “Rome of the East.” But this would not occur without a major improvement of trade and commerce. While the Hasmoneans of the previous century had a strong navy, they did not have a good harbor for their ships. To accomplish his dream, Herod decided to build a city and the world’s first artificial harbor – one that was 40 acres in size that could accommodate an estimated 300 ships.⁴⁶¹ He chose the former Phoenician port known as Strabo’s Tower as his location; a new seaport that would not only accommodate the ships of the Roman navy, but also ships of trade that would build the wealth he desired.

Back in Rome, a newly developed material called “hydraulic concrete,” was developed. It was a mixture of local lime and volcanic sand, called “pozzolana,” shipped in from the Bay of

461. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qmHJUR70hA0> Retrieved December 19, 2012. Note that ancient ships were much smaller than today’s sea-going vessels.

Naples.⁴⁶² Architectural archaeologists believe there were two possible ways that Herod built the world's first artificial harbor.

1. He may have placed the concrete powder material in forty-five foot long chests or barges and floated them to the desired position.⁴⁶³ Carpenters then drilled holes in the sides of the barges, carefully sinking each vessel beside another one to create a breakwater. When the water mixed with the pozzolana, the wet powder hardened to become concrete.⁴⁶⁴ In essence, Herod created a "train" of sunken barges that that extended out into the Mediterranean Sea almost a half mile, and the breakers were wide enough to accommodate a modern two lane highway.
2. Some scholars believe that Herod may have constructed forty-five foot long caissons which were then filled with the concrete powder that hardened when in contact with water.⁴⁶⁵

Regardless of how the breaker was constructed, he was certainly an engineering genius of his time. After twelve years of hard work, the harbor could accommodate a sizeable navy.⁴⁶⁶ He was one of the most prolific builders of antiquity and his projects dotted the entire eastern Mediterranean area as evidenced by numerous archaeological sites.

However, visitors today do not see much of Herod's famed harbor. Only divers who explore the depths of the sea can admire the work of this incredible architectural mastermind. Historians have always assumed that the harbor was buried as the result of the many earthquakes that have rocked the region. However, in recent years archaeological divers, using sophisticated equipment, have come to a different conclusion. When the barges sank, they rested on sand. Over time, they simply continued to sink deeper into the sand until they were no longer visible from the shore or useful for ships. Jesus said that he who builds his house on the sand is not

462. However, some scholars believe hydraulic plaster may have originated in the Aegean Sea area in the late second millennium B.C. by the Philistines.

463. In 2005, Professor Robert Hohlfelder of the University of Colorado and his team uncovered the ancient concrete recipe written by Roman engineer Pollio Vitruvius. With it, they recreated the Roman process of pouring underwater concrete. "Caesarea's Underwater Concrete Recreated." *Artifax* Spring, 2005:20:2,7; www.azom.com Retrieved April 7, 2005.

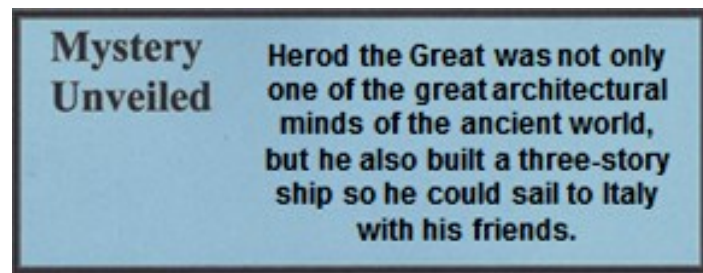
464. Crossan and Reed, *Excavating Jesus*. 58.

465. For further study on this possible technique, see Palley, *Concrete: A Seven-Thousand Year History*. 30-38.

466. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qmHJUR70hA0> Retrieved December 19, 2012. Note that ancient ships were much smaller than today's sea-going vessels.

wise, and Herod's harbor, after a few centuries, met the same fate – it sank into the archives of history and disappeared.

The harbor was a huge success and immediately became a center bustling with commercial and military activity. Nearly all ships crossing the eastern Mediterranean stopped there. And when the harbor and city of Caesarea were finished, he constructed a three-story ship so he and his friends could sail in comfort and style to Rome.⁴⁶⁷ Little wonder then, that the Greeks and Romans gave him the sur-title “the Great.”



03.05.33 Summary of the Political Tensions among Various People Groups at the time of Jesus.

While there were a wide diversity of opinions among the various Jewish groups and sub-groups, a generalization can be made from segments of chapter 17 of the *Psalms of Solomon*,⁴⁶⁸ which was written about 40 B.C. or shortly thereafter. While some verses are clearly an exaggeration, the overall tenor of these passages reflects the common Jewish opinion.

Concerning the Roman Empire, most Jews believed that

- ¹¹ The lawless one (Rome) laid waste [to] our land, so that no one inhabited;
They massacred young and old and children at the same time,**
- ¹² In his blameless wrath he expelled them to the west,
And he did not spare even the officials of the country from ridicule.**
- ¹³ As the enemy [was] a stranger
And his heart alien to our God, he acted arrogantly.**
- ¹⁴ So he did in Jerusalem all the things
That gentiles do for their gods in their cities⁴⁶⁹**

467. Josephus, *Antiquities* 14.14.3 (378).

468. Quotations from Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. 2:666-67.

469. This statement suggests the erection of idols and possibly the introduction of temple prostitutes.

Psalms of Solomon 17:11-14

Concerning their Jewish neighbors, the Jews believed that

¹⁵ The children of the covenant [living] among the gentile rabble⁴⁷⁰ adopted these [practices]⁴⁷¹

No one among them in Jerusalem acted [with] mercy or truth (cf. Ps. 14:3).

¹⁶ Those who loved the assemblies of the devout fled from them as sparrows fled from their nest (cf. Ps. 11:1).

**¹⁷ [They became] refugees in the wilderness
To save their lives from evil.**

The life of even one who was saved from them was precious in the eyes of the exiles.

¹⁸ They were scattered over the whole earth by these lawless ones.

Psalms of Solomon 17:15-18

As a result, when considering their plight with the Romans (vv. 11-14) and the apostasy of fellow Jews (vv. 15-17), pious Jews presented their pleas to God that included the coming of the son of David. Notice the similarities of their requests to the message presented later by John the Baptist.

**²¹ See, Lord, and raise up for them their king,
The son of David, to rule over your servant Israel (cf. Isa. 42:1-4; 49:1-6)
In a time known to you, O God (cf. Isa. 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12).**

**²² Undergird him with the strength
To destroy the unrighteous rulers (cf. Ps. 18:33),
To purge Jerusalem from Gentiles
Who trample her to destruction;**

**²³ In wisdom and in righteousness to drive out
The sinners from the inheritance.**

**To smash the arrogance of sinners
Like a potter's jar (cf. Ps. 2:9);**

**²⁴ To shatter all their substance with an iron rod;
To destroy the unlawful nations with the word of his mouth;**

**²⁵ At his warning, the nations will flee from his presence;
And he will condemn sinners by the thoughts of their hearts.**

470. The word *rabble* means a large disorderly crowd; a gang; throng; those who are socially inferior.

471. This statement clearly points to the Hellenistic Jews who replaced their Jewish faith with the Hellenistic lifestyle.

Psalms of Solomon 17:21-25

The term **son of David** is clearly an appeal to God for the coming of the eschatological king – the eternal king of the proverbial “end times.”⁴⁷² Therefore, the common Jews believed God would send a messiah⁴⁷³ who would be a son of David⁴⁷⁴ who would restore Judaism and the Holy City. That included, but was not limited to the following:

- ²⁶ He will gather a holy people
Whom he will lead in righteousness
And he will judge the tribes of the people
That have been made holy by the Lord their God**
- ²⁷ He will not tolerate unrighteousness [even] to pause among them (cf. Ps. 101:7),
And any person who knows wickedness shall not live with them.
For he shall know them
That they are all children of their God.**
- ²⁸ He will distribute them upon the land
According to their tribes (cf. Isa. 49:6; Ezek. 45:8; 47:13, 21);
The alien and the foreigner will no longer live near them.**
- ²⁹ He will judge peoples and nations in the wisdom of his righteousness.**

(Pause)⁴⁷⁵

- ³⁰ And he will have gentile nations serving him under his yoke,
And he will glorify the Lord in (a place) prominent (above) the whole earth.
And he will purge Jerusalem
[And make it] holy as it was even in the beginning.**
- ³¹ [For] nations to come from the ends of the earth to see his glory (cf. Isa 55:5);
To bring as gifts her children who had been driven out.
And to see the glory of the Lord.
With which God has glorified her.**
- ³² And he will be a righteous king over them, taught by God.
There will be no unrighteousness among them in his days (cf/ Jer. 23:5),
For all shall be holy,**

472. Saperstein, *Essential Papers on Messianic Movements and Personalities in Jewish History*. 93.

473. The Jews did not comprehend the possibility that the *messiah* could be God – as Jesus was.

474. The term *son of David* to mean a descendant of King David is well established in biblical and extra-biblical literature. The full term is not capitalized because no one expected the son of David to be Deity.

475. Some Jewish writings, such as the biblical book of Psalm, occasionally have the word *Pause*, suggesting a time to reflect upon what was written.

And their king shall be the Lord Messiah.

Psalms of Solomon 17:26-32

Those who understand the future thousand-year reign of Christ will recognize this amazing narrative. It is unknown if all people groups anticipated the coming of a messiah who would bring peace, but clearly there was a vast majority who did. Furthermore, many other within the entire Mediterranean and Middle Eastern areas expected the birth of a profound ruler. Anticipations are as follows:

1. The Cumaean people expected a messiah (see 03.05.24)
2. 63 B.C. Romans anticipate the birth of a king who would rule the earth (see 03.05.15)
3. 50 B.C. Rabbi Nehumias predicted the birth of a messiah in 50 years (see 03.05.19)
4. 42-38 B.C. The Roman poet Virgil predicted the birth of a messiah (see 03.05.24)
5. The Parthians, who sent the magi, obviously expected a messiah.
6. The Samaritans expected a messiah they called the *Taheb*.⁴⁷⁶
7. The Persian Zoroaster holy book *Bahman Vasht* mentions a messiah and star.

However, within the Jewish communities there was another serious issue of concern – hatred and bitterness between various religious sects. While the cultural influences of this era have been listed elsewhere, it is important to summarize the social political tensions. It has often been said that this was a time of *Pax Romana*.⁴⁷⁷ While there was limited military conflict, the social-political tension was worse than what exists today in the Middle East.⁴⁷⁸ The hatred between various groups was as follows:

The Jews hated the Samaritans because:

⁴⁷⁶. Barclay, *Jesus*. 231.

⁴⁷⁷. Lee, *The Galilean Jewishness of Jesus*. 72-73; Mellowes and Cran, Executive Producers. *From Jesus to Christ: The First Christians*. (DVD). Part 1; See “Pax Romana” in Appendix 26.

⁴⁷⁸. The author’s doctoral dissertation was a study on the differences of 20th century Israelis and Palestinians. For more information, download his book *REALITY DENIED: The Inconvenient Truth About the Middle East Conflict*.

1. For theological reasons, the Samaritans altered the Torah and rejected the rest of the Hebrew Bible
2. The Samaritans kept their old alphabet
3. They challenged the Jews in the days of Nehemiah and Ezra.
4. They fought with the Syrian-Greeks against the Jews during the Maccabean Revolt
5. They denied their Jewish background and worshipped Greek gods to avoid persecution from Antiochus IV Epiphanes.
6. They persecuted, and sometimes killed Jews traveling through Samaria toward Jerusalem.
7. They desecrated the temple by throwing human bones in the sanctuary during Passover.

The Samaritans hated the Jews because:

1. Theological reasons: they believed the Jews altered the Torah and accepted the rest of the Hebrew Bible
2. Jewish leader John Hyrcanus destroyed the Samaritan temple in 128 B.C.
3. The sons of Hyrcanus captured and sold many Samaritans into slavery in 108-07 B.C.
4. The Jews won the Maccabean Revolt
5. The Jewish temple was well-known for its corrupt Sadducean leadership

Leading Pharisees hated the Sadducees because:

1. For theological reasons, the Sadducees believed only in the Torah and rejected the rest of the Hebrew Bible
2. The Jewish temple was well-known for its corrupt Sadducean leadership

3. In the 90-88 B.C. Civil War, the Sadducees crucified 800 Pharisees and, as they hung dying on crosses, their wives and children were slaughtered in front of them.⁴⁷⁹

4. All Jews hated the descendants of the Hasmonean (Maccabean) Dynasty because murder, corruption, bribery, and total corruption existed in nearly every leader except Queen Salome.

The Sadducees hated the Pharisees because:

1. For theological reasons, the Pharisees believed in the Torah, and other Scriptures, but held the Oral Law in higher authority.
2. The Pharisees required the Sadducees to perform ceremonial rituals according to their traditions, otherwise the people would have rioted.
3. The fact that the Pharisees controlled the synagogues throughout the land and overseas was a point of jealousy for the Sadducees.
4. The Sadducees hated the Pharisees, especially those who did not have formal religious training. In 63 B.C., the Sadducees killed Honi;⁴⁸⁰ the miracle worker did not attend any formal school in Jerusalem and dared to speak of righteous living.

The Essenes hated non-Essenes:

1. For theological reasons, the Essenes believed all other Jews left the orthodox faith of Judaism.
2. The Essenes believed they were God's chosen remnant and everyone else would eventually be destroyed by the messiah. They were, however, open to have Jews join their group after a three-year initiation period.

Orthodox Jews hated the Hellenists because:

1. For theological reasons, the orthodox Jews (mainly the Pharisees and Essenes) were passionately angry with the Hellenists for abandoning Judaism and accepting the Hellenistic culture of sexuality and materialism.

479. See 03.05.10; Josephus, *Antiquities* 13.14.2 and *Wars* 1.4.1, 6. See also Dead Sea Scroll Fragment 4QpNahum.

480. See 03.05.14.

2. The Hasidim (Pharisees) Jews hated the Hellenists for killing 60 of their members in 162 B.C. (see 03.05.03).

Jews hated the Idumeans because:

1. The long history with the descendants of Ishmael (Esau/ Edomites/ Idumeans) was one of constant warfare with the Israelites/Jews.⁴⁸¹
2. Nearly all the Jews hated Herod the Great because he was an Idumean. The Romans placed him in the position of King of the Jews because he was an effective administrator and military leader. The Romans wanted a governor with whom the Jews would not join and start a revolt. Herod was the perfect candidate.
3. Herod was the ideal agent of Hellenism, but skillfully respected and manipulated Jewish sensitivities to prevent riots.

The Herodians hated the orthodox Jews and Zealots because:

1. They opposed the Herodian dynasty and Roman Empire.
2. They opposed Hellenism.

Into this quagmire of human conflict Jesus came to teach the principles of the Kingdom of God. Clearly the Sermon on the Mount was absolutely stunning to His audience – a message they had seldom heard except from an occasional small-town rabbi.

⁴⁸¹. See 03.05.26 and the Old Testament book of Obadiah.

Unit 03

Historical Background

Chapter 06

The Advent Of John The Baptist And Jesus (7 – 5 B.C.)



03.06.00.A. BIRTH OF THE SAVIOR. Artist Unknown. The miraculous births of various prophets in the Old Testament Era ended with John the Baptist who was born to elderly parents, but these incredible events were superseded by the virgin birth of Jesus.

03.06.01 7 – 6 B.C. John the Baptist is Born; Roman Peace

John the Baptist was born in Ein Karem,⁴⁸² a small village outside of Jerusalem that today has been absorbed into the city limits. Both John and Jesus were born and lived under Roman authority. In essence, throughout their entire lives, they were Roman subjects as were all the Jews of Israel. Scholarship seldom studies their lives from the perspective that they were orthodox Jews living in a Roman-Greek culture.

He was well acquainted with the evils of the time; the hypocrisy of the religious parties, the inroads the Roman-Greek culture had upon the common people. In light of that, he not only told the Jews to repent and be baptized; the mere fact that they were descendants of Abraham would not be sufficient for admission into the Kingdom of Heaven.

03.06.02 6 – 5 B.C. The Birth of Jesus

Nearly all scholars today agree that Jesus was born in 6 or 5 B.C. Yet this seems hardly possible to the novice who would wonder how Jesus could have been born 6 or 5 years “before Christ.” This miscalculation occurred in 533, when Dionysius Exiguus (*Exiguus* meaning *insignificant*) was commissioned by Pope John I to reckon a calendar to determine the date of the birth of Christ. He carefully made his calculation and decided that March 25 was the day of the conception of Jesus, which was celebrated in the church’s Feast of Annunciation. This day was also to be the first day of the New Year in his calendar.⁴⁸³ By the time the error was discovered, people had been using the calendar too long as a basis for writing history, that the change was not made.

If one considers that Jesus was born in 5 B.C., then according to the Roman calendar that birth date would be 748 A.U.C. *ab urbe condita*, meaning “from the founding of the city.”⁴⁸⁴ In 1582, Pope Gregory XIII sponsored the research and development of a new calendar that is now known as the Gregorian Calendar. It replaced the Julian Calendar that had been used since the year 45 B.C. It was Pope Gregory who introduced the years “B.C.,” meaning “before Christ,” and the Latin term *ab incarnatione Domini* meaning, “from the incarnation of the Lord.”⁴⁸⁵ But the term was changed in later traditions to *anno Domini*, meaning, “In the year of our Lord.”⁴⁸⁶ More

482. There is some debate among scholars as to where John was born. A minority viewpoint is that his birthplace was in Hebron. See Geikie, *The Life and Works of Christ*. 1:111.

483. Geating. “The Star of Bethlehem.” 121.

484. Maier, *In the Fullness of Time*. 24-25.

485. Cosby, *Interpreting Biblical Literature*. 299.

486. Finegan, *Handbook* rev. ed., 1964, 132.

recently, B.C. has been replaced with B.C.E. “before Common Era,” and A.D. has been replaced with C.E. meaning “Common Era.” Since the pope used the calculations of Dionysius, the errors of Christ’s birth remain unchanged.

The birth of Jesus was placed on December 25, a pagan holiday in the Roman Empire. The Roman festival was the feast of *Sol Invictus*, meaning the *Unconquerable Sun*, and was a few days from the feast of *Saturnalia* that the Romans incorrectly thought was the winter solstice of December 25 (instead of December 21). Since the pagans were already celebrating various gods, Dionysius simply added the birth of Christ to their celebration without any real evidence of the actual date of birth.⁴⁸⁷ Unfortunately, Dionysius was less than accurate by at least four years in calculating the year of the birth, since Herod died in 4 B.C.⁴⁸⁸ While the actual day of the birth of Jesus remains unknown, recent Messianic scholarship has offered some clues that will be discussed later.⁴⁸⁹

03.06.03 5 – 4 B.C. Mary, Joseph, and Jesus Flee to Egypt

The gospels recorded the account of Mary and Joseph taking their child, Jesus, to Egypt to escape the coming slaughter by Herod the Great. They remained there until after his death and order was restored in the land.⁴⁹⁰

03.06.04 4 B.C. The Death of Herod the Great

Herod constructed and reconstructed a number of fortresses, huge temples, and other buildings. The following is a summary of his projects *only* within the Jerusalem vicinity.

1. He remodeled and enlarged the Jewish temple built by Zerubbabel five centuries earlier. The construction began in 20/19 B.C. and ended decades after Herod’s death in A.D. 62 or 64 – only a few years before the Romans destroyed it.⁴⁹¹
2. He rebuilt a beautiful palace for himself in the Upper City by the gate that is known today as the Jaffa Gate.⁴⁹²

487. Maier, *In the Fullness of Time*. 10, 29.

488. Keller, W. *The Bible as History*. 366.

489. See 04.03.10.Q2 “When was Jesus born?”

490. Additional details follow the biblical narrative below in 04.05.01.

491. When Jesus spoke with the Jews in A.D. 27 and said that if the temple would be destroyed He would raise it in three days (Jn. 2:20), Herod’s temple was still under construction, but Jesus was referring to Himself as the “Temple.” See 03.05.31.B.

3. He built three massive towers near his palace and named them after his friend Hippicus, his brother Phasaël, and his favorite wife, Mariamne.⁴⁹³

4. At the northwest corner of the temple was the Bira or Baris Fortress (Neh. 2:8; 7:21) that was rebuilt in the second century B.C. by the Hasmoneans. In 35 B.C. Herod enlarged and renamed it the Antonia Fortress.⁴⁹⁴ It is called a “barracks” in Acts 21:37 and is where Paul gave an address to the Jews in Acts 22:1-21. Pilate may have judged Jesus there or at his palace at the western end of the city.

5. He built the Herodian palace-fortress with a splendid tomb for himself just south of Bethlehem. In doing so, the top of one small mountain was placed on the top of another.⁴⁹⁵

6. He built a theater within the city limits of Jerusalem.⁴⁹⁶ Its location remains a mystery although seat tokens have been found.

7. He built a hippodrome but its location is also unknown.⁴⁹⁷ The model 50:1 first-century model of the city of Jerusalem at one time placed it within the city, but recently it was removed as scholars continue to debate the location.⁴⁹⁸

8. A water channel, or aqueduct, that brought water from a spring near Bethlehem to serve the temple. This pipe was ten miles long from beginning to end and had a drop of only 200 feet – and incredible engineering feat. However, Herod died before its completion, and when Pilate raided temple funds to complete the project, the Jews

492. Josephus, *Wars* 5.4.4 (176-83).

493. Josephus, *Wars* 5.4.3-4 (171-76).

494. Josephus, *Wars* 5.5.8 (238-47). A model of the Antonio Fortress can be seen at the upper right corner of the Temple enclosure on 03.05.31.B.

495. See 03.05.26.C and 03.05.26.D.

496. Josephus, *Antiquities* 15.8.1 (268). See 03.05.26.H.

497. Josephus, *Antiquities* 15.8.1 (268); 17.10.2 (255); *Wars* 2.3.1 (44). See 03.05.26.F.

498. Visitors today can see the model of first-century Jerusalem at the Israel Museum, behind the Shrine of the Scroll (Dead Sea Scrolls).

rioted.⁴⁹⁹ One ancient writer said it was lined with lead and lime mortar, which is probably an accurate report.⁵⁰⁰

9. Herod at one time stole more than 3000 talents of silver from King David's tomb. However, after an angel of the Lord killed two of his guards, he immediately constructed a beautiful memorial over the tomb.⁵⁰¹

10. Finally, within Jerusalem he built five impressive porticoes, each about 27 feet high, around and across the twin pools of Bethesda (Jn. 5:2).⁵⁰²

For his architectural achievement, Herod certainly deserves the title of "the Great." However, his personal and political life was a disaster. In his final years, he became miserably ill and in a great deal of pain. He frequently went to the hot springs of Hammat-Tiberias (in Tiberias), or to his preferred hot springs in Callirrhoe, east of the Dead Sea to find the relief he so desperately desired. At the age of seventy, the brutal life of Herod ended. His reign can be delineated into three distinctive periods.

1. Even though he was titled "King of the Jews" by the Roman senate in 40 B.C., he had to fight various nationalistic factions as well as the Parthians from 40 to 37 B.C. Thereafter, from 37 to 25 B.C., he consolidated his power and he eliminated rebels and challengers to his throne.

He was always suspicious of anyone he perceived to be a challenger to his throne.⁵⁰³ For that reason, his body guards were from Galatia, Thracia, and Germany.⁵⁰⁴ When Queen Cleopatra of Egypt committed suicide in 30 B.C., Emperor Augustus sent the 400 body guards she had to serve Herod.

2. From 25 to 13 B.C. was a period of massive building projects, stability, growth, and expansion. During this period the Jewish people prospered even though there was a two-

499. Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.3.2 (60); *Wars* 2.9.4 (175). See 09.03.08.A and 10.01.20.A.

500. *Pseudo-Aristeas* 90. At this time lead was a relatively new metal to the ancient world and its bio-hazard qualities were unknown. Lime mortar was used for centuries as a sealant in water cisterns and aqueducts.

501. Josephus, *Antiquities* 16.7.1 (179-82); *Wars* 7.9.1 (392).

502. Scholars debate the date of the construction as well as whether Herod built it. The consensus is that he did, but future archaeological discoveries may prove otherwise.

503. For example Josephus said that once the Pharisees plotted, with some women in Herod's court, to have him put to death. See *Antiquities* 17.2.4.

504. Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.8.3.

year drought that caused widespread famine (22-21 B.C.). It is for his success in construction and economic growth that he was titled “the Great” by historians.

3. Finally, from 13 to 4 B.C. he was plagued with a diversity of problems within his family and his own mental instability. Fearful of losing his throne, he became extremely paranoid, thinking that his closest family, as well as others, would overthrow him.

The longer he ruled, the more his life disintegrated. While he was a great architect and administrator, his personal life was in shambles. He exploited his subjects and family. He murdered innocent people of whom he became suspicious. He usurped the kingdom of his sovereign from the last unfortunate Hasmonean. To legalize his treachery, he married a Hasmonean princess, Mariamne. From this point on, his ruthless tactics went unchecked within his own family. A summary list of *survivors* is as follows:

1. Herod’s first wife was Doris. Together they had a son, Antipater, who was beheaded shortly before Herod’s death. He divorced Doris.

2. Herod’s second wife was Mariamne and they had two sons, Alexander and Aristobulus, both of whom were strangled to death by Herod in 7 B.C.⁵⁰⁵ She also had two daughters Salampsis and Kypros. Salampsis married her first cousin Phasaelus, and they had three sons and two daughters. Mariamne was a Hasmonean princess.

3. Malthace was a third wife with whom he had two sons, Archelaus and Antipas and a daughter, Olympias. Antipas married Herodias whose first husband was Herod (son of Mariamne). Malthace was a Samaritan woman, whom Herod probably married in an attempt to make peaceful a relationship with the Samaritans.

4. In 24 B.C., he married his fourth wife, Mariamne who was the daughter of Simon Boethos, the high priest of Alexandrian origin.⁵⁰⁶ Together they had a son Herod who was the first husband of Herodias (daughter of Aristobulus and Bernice). This Mariamne is not to be confused with his second wife by the same name whom he killed earlier in 29 B.C.

5. Then came Cleopatra of Jerusalem which whom he had two sons, Philip and Herod. Philip married Salome, the daughter of Herodias who was the wife of Herod and Antipas.

6. Pallas with whom he had a son named Phasael.

505. Josephus, *Antiquities* 16.11.7-8 (392-394).

506. Geikie, *The Life and Works of Christ*. 1:50.

7. Phadra, who had a daughter named Roxana
8. Elpis, who had a daughter named Salome
9. Name unknown – a brother's daughter, no children.
10. Name unknown – a sister's daughter, no children.

Thus, some scholars believe Herod the Great had five wives, but others say the number could have been as many as ten. He also had nine sons and five daughters. The king most certainly had several other partners as well,⁵⁰⁷ because Josephus said that at one time he gave a concubine as a gift to King Archelaus of Cappadocia.⁵⁰⁸ His personal life was an on-going disaster filled with bribery, broken loyalties, lustful sex, scandalous banquets, revenge, and murder. Those who survived were said to be more miserable than his victims.⁵⁰⁹

His enemies, knowing his sense of suspicion, had taken advantage of every opportunity to portray Mariamne (wife # 2) as an unfaithful queen. So he had her executed, but when he realized his horrific error, his mental illness became obvious to everyone. He would lament over her, he would call her as if she was still alive, for a while he even gave up all affairs of state and even fled to Samaria where he had married her to seek relief from his haunting guilt. He finally fell into an unpredictable state – sometimes sane, sometimes insane. There were many in his immediate family who were murdered, not to mention others who also met their end at his hand. A summary list of *those who died* is as follows:

1. In the year 37 B.C., Herod, with the help of his friend Mark Anthony, had Mattathias Antigonus executed. Herod then proceeded to have 45 associates of Antigonus executed.⁵¹⁰
2. The grandfather of his second wife, Mariamne, and her brother, both died at his command.

507. Scholars who believe that polygamy disappeared may have to reconsider their position. Johannes Leipoldt in *Jesus und die Frauen*, Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer, 1921 (reprint 2013), 44-49, gives a number of examples in his notes. See also Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*. 93.

508. Josephus, *Wars* 1.25.6 (511).

509. Metzger, *The New Testament*. 44-45; Pasachoff and Littman, *Jewish History in 100 Nutshells*. 59-61; Farrar, *Life of Christ*. 19.

510. Josephus, *Antiquities* 15.1.2 (5-10).

3. In 35 B.C., Herod had his 17-year old brother-in-law, Aristobulus of the Hasmonean dynasty murdered. The young man was to be the high priest in the temple. For some reason, Herod became distrusting of the youthful priest and had him drowned by “accident” in the royal pool of his Jericho palace. Thereafter, Ananelus resumed the priesthood while Herod and all of Jerusalem deeply mourned for the young man’s death.⁵¹¹

4. He condemned his brother-in-law, Joseph, to death.

5. In 30 B.C., he had his brother-in-law, John Hyrcanus II strangled over an alleged overthrow plot.⁵¹²

6. In 29 B.C., he had Mariamne, his favorite wife murdered on a baseless suspicion. Afterwards he wept bitterly and had illusions that she visited him.⁵¹³

7. About the year 28 B.C., he had Alexandra, the mother of his wife Mariamne, murdered.⁵¹⁴

8. His death squads also killed two friends, Dositheus and Gadias.

9. Around 20 – 19 B.C., about the time he began to rebuild the temple, he established an internal spy network and arrested those whom he suspected of a revolt. Most of them were taken to the Hyrcania Fortress⁵¹⁵ where they met their end.⁵¹⁶

10. Rabbi Ben Buta was a mild mannered rabbi who spoke against Herod, and for this his eyes were gouged out.⁵¹⁷

11. A distant kinsman Cortobanus died an unnatural death. Herod was highly suspected.

511. Josephus, *Antiquities* 15.3.3 (50-56).

512. Josephus, *Antiquities* 15.6.2-3 (173-178).

513. Josephus, *Antiquities* 15.7.4 (222-236).

514. Josephus, *Antiquities* 15.7.8 (247-251).

515. The Hyrcania Fortress was one of several fortresses along Herod’s southern border. See map at 03.05.26.Z.

516. Josephus, *Antiquities* 15.10.4 (365-372).

517. Geikie, *The Life and Works of Christ*. 1:227.

12. Dosithai was a zealous opponent of Herod, and unfortunately, the long arm of Herod put an end to his life.⁵¹⁸

13. In the year 7 B.C. he had 300 military leaders executed.⁵¹⁹

14. Mariamne and Herod had two sons, Alexander and Aristobulus, both of whom were strangled to death by Herod in 7 B.C.⁵²⁰ She also had two daughters Salampsis and Kypros. Salampsis married her first cousin Phasaelus, and they had three sons and two daughters. Mariamne was a Hasmonean princess.

15. In 4 B.C. Herod was near the end of his life and still constantly threatened that power, wealth, and authority would be taken from him. In spite of being well-grounded in Jewish sensitivities, he had his soldiers hang a golden eagle over the temple gate. It was the Roman custom to hang golden shields in all the temples and dedicate them to the gods as an acknowledgement of some deliverance, or thankfulness in health and fortune.⁵²¹ However, two rabbis, Judah of Sarafaus and Matthew of Margoloth with their followers, tore down the Roman icon. They were soon captured and sent to Jericho where they were burned alive. Josephus reported that on that night of their execution there was a lunar eclipse.⁵²²

16. Herod believed that the high priest was involved in some way with Rabbi Judah of Sarafaus and Rabbi Matthew of Margoloth. So the priest was tied to the corpse of one of his rebels. Consequently, the high priest died a slow and agonizing death as the corpse decayed.

17. When he was about to die, he ordered the death of another son, Archelaus, but the order was never carried out.

518. Geikie, *The Life and Works of Christ*. 1:227.

519. Josephus, *Antiquities* 16.11.7-8 (393-394).

520. Josephus, *Antiquities* 16.11.7-8 (392-394).

521. Josephus did not record this event, probably because his source of information was Herod's personal friend and historian, Nicholas of Damascus. But neither did Nicholas record the slaughter of infant boys in Bethlehem. The burning of the rabbis and their students was recorded by the Jewish philosopher, Philo of Alexandria in *Embassy to Gaius*. 38:299-305.

522. Josephus, *Wars* 2.1.2 (5) and *Antiquities* 17.6.2-4 (149-167, esp. 151).

18. In 4 B.C., his son, Antipater, was beheaded at his command.⁵²³ This was only five days before Herod's own death. Antipater, the son of Herod's wife Doris, was buried at the Hyrcania Fortress without honors or ceremony.⁵²⁴

Unfortunately, the list above is not complete, as any pretender to his throne made him tremble. His reputation of cruelty was well known throughout the empire. The Roman historian Macrobius recorded these choice words of Caesar Augustus concerning him:

On hearing that the son of Herod (Antipater),⁵²⁵ had been slain when Herod ordered that all boys in Syria under the age of two be killed, Augustus said, "I'd rather be Herod's pig than his son."

Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 2.4⁵²⁶

Augustus no doubt used a deliberate play on words, as in Greek the words *pig* and *son* sound similar.⁵²⁷ Furthermore, pigs were a forbidden food to the Jews, and hence, Herod would permit pigs to live in peace. His family died out within a century with one or two obscure exceptions.⁵²⁸ There is little question, when considering how many of his own family Herod ordered to be killed, that he was completely capable of murdering innocent little boys in Bethlehem in order to wipe out any possible challenger to his throne.

Amazingly, some critics of the gospels in the past century have stated that the slaughter of the innocent boys in Bethlehem is mythical. They say there is no proof that his personality would command such an act. On the other hand, psychiatrists have debated whether he was paranoid schizophrenic or had a similar mental disorder.

Yet, among his numerous acts of terrible wickedness, there were acts of kindness. His international reputation was favorable not only among the Romans, but also among Jews scattered in the Diaspora. He contacted other monarchs, intervening on behalf of Jews in their

523. Some scholars believe that Doris was Herod's concubine or "consort," rather than his wife.

524. Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.7.1 (182-187).

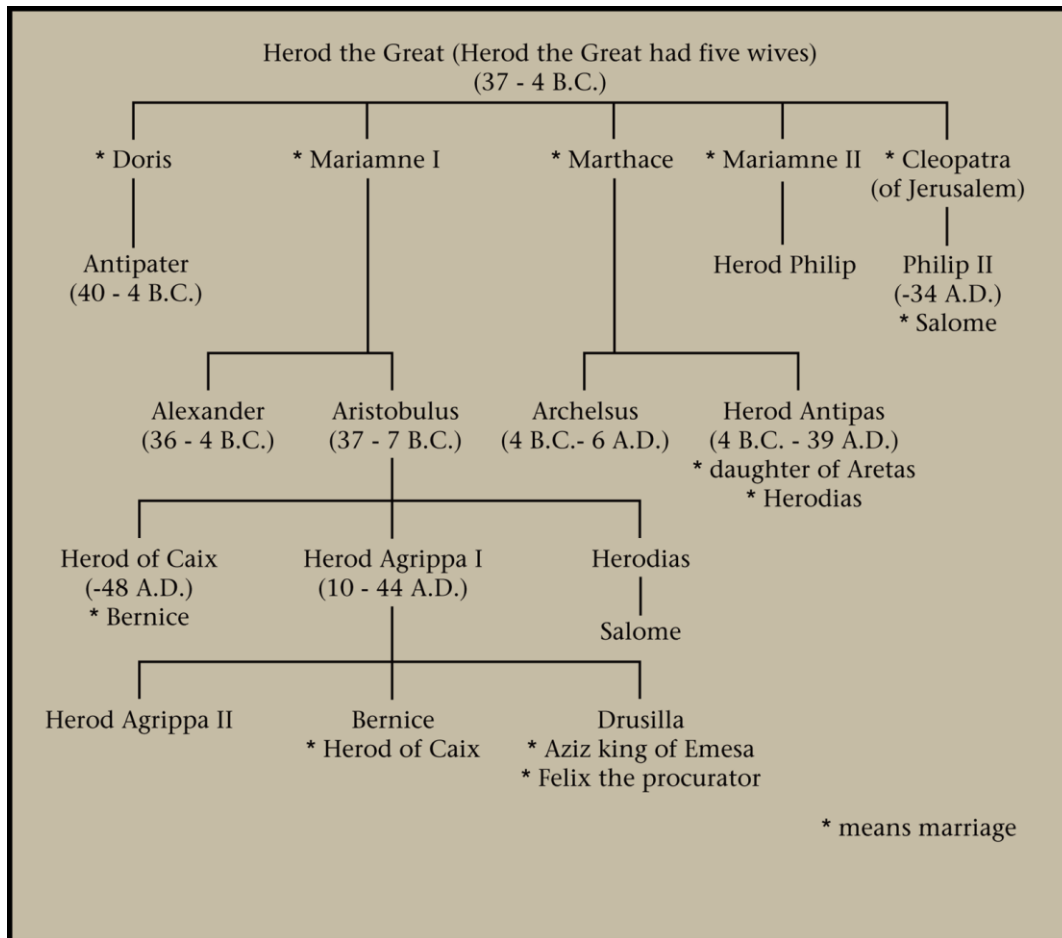
525. Insert mine for clarification. The son was Antipater whom Herod the Great ordered killed five days prior to his own death.

526. Farrar citing Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, II.4 in *Life of Christ*. 19; Johnson, "Matthew." 7:260.

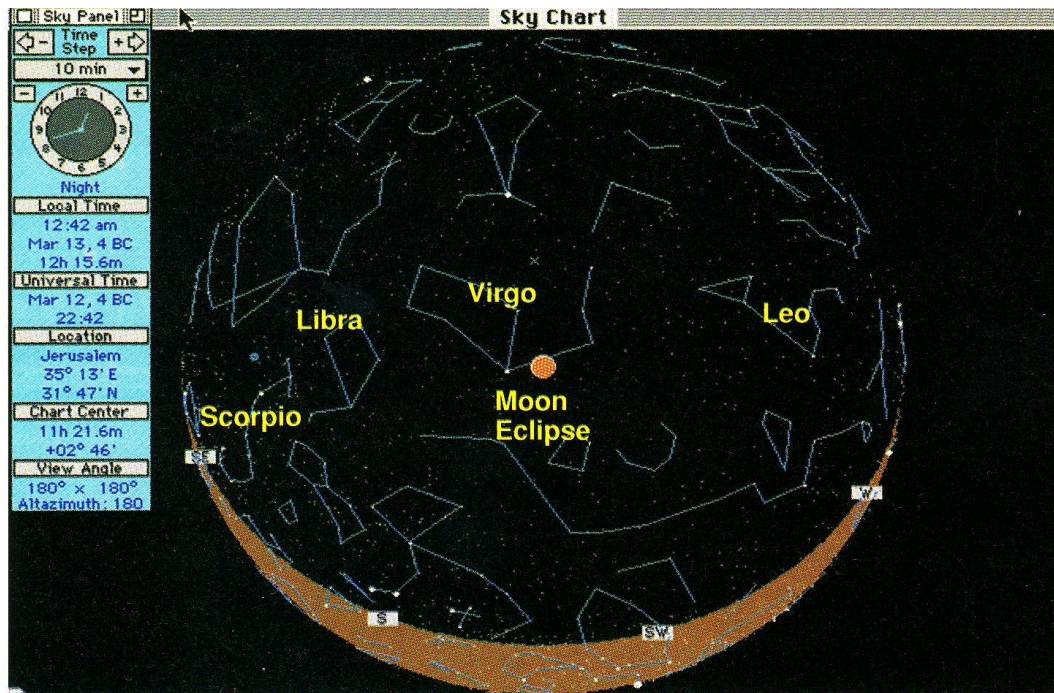
527. Another example of a wordplay is a statement by Jesus when He quoted Psalm 118:22 in the Parable of the Wicked Tenants (Mt. 21:42-44). There, the words "stone" and "son" sound similar in the Hebrew and Aramaic languages. (See 13.03.05).

528. Geikie, *The Life and Words*. 1:570.

countries and, thereby, making life easier for them. Consequently, foreign Jews loved him while those at home hated him.



03.06.04.A. THE FAMILY TREE OF HEROD THE GREAT. This genealogical chart shows the only relationships of significant descendants to each other. Herod could have killed more of his family than are shown. Courtesy of International Mapping and Dan Przywara.



03.06.04.B. NASA GRAPHIC OF THE LUNAR ECLIPSE ON MARCH 12, 4 B.C. The *Voyager* astronomy computer program indicates that there was a lunar eclipse over Jerusalem on March 13, 4 B.C. If this is the eclipse Josephus meant, then the birth of Jesus would have been as early as 5 or 6 B.C. Graphic courtesy of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

The last months of Herod's life were misery beyond description. Being in constant fear, he immediately killed those he imagined would challenge his throne, and he removed a son from his last will and testament. In a single day he deprived Matthias the position of high priesthood, and had another Matthias and his companions who raised a conspiracy, burned alive. That night, as if an ominous sign came from heaven itself, Josephus said that there was an eclipse of the moon.⁵²⁹

The day of Herod's death was a festival for the Jews. His death was recognized by Josephus to be a divine judgment and he said it was as if eternal hell came upon him as various horrible diseases slowly engulfed him. The historian said,

But now Herod's distemper greatly increased upon him after a severe manner, and this by God's judgment upon him for his sins: for a fire in him glowed slowly, which did not so much appear to the touch outwardly as it augmented his pains inwardly; for it brought upon him a vehement appetite to eating, which he could not avoid to supply with one sort of food or other. His entrails were also excruciated, and the

529. Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.6.4.

chief violence of his pain lay in his colon; an aqueous and transparent liquid also settled about his feet, and a like matter afflicted him at the bottom of his belly. His private member was putrefied and produced worms, and when he sat up, he had a difficulty of breathing, which was very loathsome, because of the stench of his breath and the quickness of its returns. He had convulsions in all parts of his body, which increased in strength to an insufferable degree.

He also sent for his physicians and did not refuse to follow what they prescribed for his assistance; and went beyond the river Jordan, and bathed himself in the warm baths (natural hot springs) that were at Callirrhoe ... which water runs into the lake called Asphaltitis (Dead Sea).

Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.6.5 (168-171)⁵³⁰

Amazingly, his body began to putrefy while he was still alive. Worms consumed his organs as he groaned in agony. He burnt up with fevers, gasping air; he could hardly draw his tainted breath. He attempted suicide, but that failed.

There simply was no relief for the dying king. He had a personal physician, but all the physicians in the land could not bring him comfort.⁵³¹ Herod's final act was to gather all of the prominent men of Judea and Israel together in his hippodrome in Jericho. He instructed his assistants to kill them at the moment of his death, as he feared that there would be no mourners. Josephus tells that he died a painful, prolonged, and agonizing death at age 70.⁵³² When his life departed, fortunately, his assistants failed to carry out his orders.⁵³³ Ironically, he died on the Feast of Purim and there was much rejoicing at the death of Herod the wicked.⁵³⁴ His body was buried in a hidden area of the southern fortress-palace, the Herodian which has now been found. Josephus described the lavish funeral appointments:

The bier was of solid gold, studded with precious stones and draped with the richest purple embroidered with various colors. On it laid the body wrapped in a crimson robe, with a diadem resting on the head, and above that a golden crown and the scepter by his right hand.

530. Insert mine.

531. Josephus, *Wars* 1.1.5 (657).

532. Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.6.1 and *Wars* 1.23.1.

533. Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.6.5; 17.8.1-4; Kokkinos, "Herod's Horrible Death." 28-35, 62.

534. For the origin of Purim, see Esther 8:15-17. Chronology established by Eugene Faulstich, "Studies in Old Testament and New Testament Chronology." 110.

Josephus, *Wars* 1.33.9 (671)

Many breathed a sigh of relief upon his demise. By his ten wives and many concubines, he had nine surviving daughters and five sons who miraculously outlived him. However, God's judgment was to come, as within a century the entire Herodian family dynasty was utterly destroyed by disease and violence.

Prior to Herod's reign, the country enjoyed prosperity with low unemployment as he was determined to bring the glory of Rome to Jerusalem. Even in the early years of this reign, the nation fared well. However, his greed drove the nation into bankruptcy, financially and morally. Upon his death, the nation was demoralized by the Hellenistic inroads and impoverished by the high taxation – Judea alone had to pay 600 talents annually.⁵³⁵

Note the words of the historian:

When he took the kingdom, it was filled in an extraordinary flourishing condition, he had filled the nation with the utmost degree of poverty; and when under unjust pretenses, he had slain any of the nobility, he took away their estates and when he permitted any of them to live, he condemned them to the forfeiture of what they possessed. And, besides the annual impositions which he laid upon every one of them, there were to make liberal presents to himself, to his domestics and friends, and to such of his slaves as were vouchsafed the favor of being his tax gatherers, because there was no way of obtaining a freedom from unjust violence without giving gold or silver for it.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.11.2 (307-08)

With his passing, those with nationalistic dreams were motivated to revolt against the Herodian Dynasty and the Romans. In fact, there were so many revolutionary movements, that historians have difficulty counting them. Would they have been an organized cohesive force, the Romans would have had a serious challenge. Josephus said there were "ten thousand other disorders in Judea,"⁵³⁶ which might have been an exaggeration, but clearly stated the war-like tension of the time. Among them were two thousand of Herod's old soldiers who fought against the Herodian

535. Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.11.4 (320). That was a huge sum and, according to Tacitus (*Annals* 2.42), in the year A.D. 17, the provinces of Syria and Judea begged to have their taxes reduced, but their petition was denied. See also 02.03.03 "Economy."

536. Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.10.4.

dynasty. The final outcome was not written, but it is assumed they were either killed in battle, crucified, or fled the country.⁵³⁷

03.06.05 4 B.C. Jews Revolt at Passover; Thousands Killed⁵³⁸

The death of Herod immediately inspired great hope of Jewish nationalism and independence. That hope was connected to a long-standing opinion that the messiah would appear at Passover to defeat the Romans. In the year 4 B.C., while Caesar Augustus and the Roman senate were evaluating Herod's last will and Testament, the Jews began a rebellion.⁵³⁹ It was started by a shepherd known as Athronges, and with his four brothers, they led a revolt at Passover against the Romans and their sympathizers. Passover was believed to be a key to their victory. They had a common belief that God would intervene if they went to war in faith, believing God for the victory. To be assured of victory, Athronges claimed to be the king of the Jews, wore a crown, and served in a self-appointed judicial capacity.⁵⁴⁰ During this revolt, two scholars at the temple were covered with oil, set on fire and called "Roman torches," and burned to death.

While Jews were uprising in Jerusalem, there was another revolt only three miles from Nazareth in Sepphoris⁵⁴¹ which was led by a Zealot named Judas ben Ezechias. According to Josephus, the news of the uprising spread quickly, and just as quickly the Roman legate of Syria, Quintilius Varus, sent the Roman army into Galilee.⁵⁴² At the same time Aretas, king of Arabia, sent infantry and cavalry to assist the Romans. Together they not only crushed the Jewish rebellion, they also burned Sepphoris and sold many residents into slavery.⁵⁴³ Under the command of

537. Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.10.4.

538. The Romans had to contend with several minor Jewish revolts and four major ones in 4 B.C., A.D. 66-74, The Kitos War of A.D. 115-117, and Bar Kokhba Revolt of A.D. 132-135. Historians, however, refer to the revolt of A.D. 66-74 as the "First Revolt" and to the Bar Kokhba Revolt of A.D. 132-135 as the "Second Revolt." These two conflicts (First and Second) had a major impact upon Jewish and Christian lives. The Jews who lived in the districts of Galilee, Judah, and Perea revolted thirteen times between the years 63 B.C. and A.D. 132. Little wonder then, that when the Second Revolt started, the Romans wanted to eradicate them.

539. A partial listing of an estimated 60 messianic pretenders is found in Appendix 25 "False Prophets, Rebels, Significant Events, And Rebellions That Impacted The First Century Jewish World."

540. Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.10.7 and *Wars* 2.4.3.

541. At this time Sepphoris was the capitol city of the District of Galilee. Later the capital was moved to the new city of Tiberias along the Sea of Galilee.

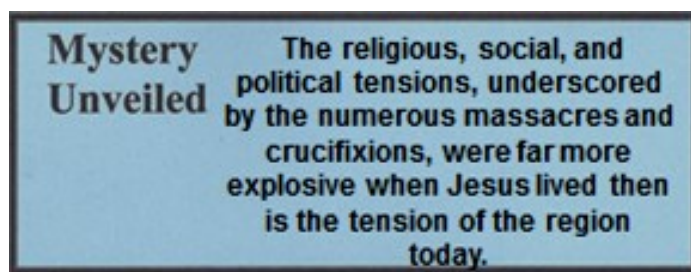
542. Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.10.5.

543. Batey, *Jesus and the Forgotten City*. 53-54, 76.

Varus, in the Jerusalem area thousands were slaughtered and 2,000 crucified.⁵⁴⁴ Any suspected revolutionaries were captured and quickly crucified.⁵⁴⁵

Another revolutionary was Simon, a former slave of Herod the Great. He placed a diadem on his head, then gathered discharged soldiers and attempted to overthrow the Herodian dynasty. He attacked the Romans and Roman sympathizers, burned down a palace in Jericho, and a number of other royal facilities. After causing havoc throughout Judea, Herod's cousin, Achiab, and his loyal army captured and beheaded him and his rebel soldiers.⁵⁴⁶

The religious, cultural, and political tensions, underscored by the rebellions and subsequent widespread slaughter and crucifixions when Jesus was a child, are clearly indicative of a social environment that was far more explosive than the Middle East is today. This was the tension-filled environment in which Jesus grew up.



While the death of Herod brought increased passion for national sovereignty, there was a restless mood for independence. As was stated previously, from the time the Romans arrived in 63 B.C. until the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70, there were thirteen rebellions⁵⁴⁷ and sixty claimants to the title of messiah⁵⁴⁸ but only one of them, Menahem ben Hezekiah, claimed to be a descendant of David.⁵⁴⁹

544. Josephus comments on the Jewish Revolt of 4 B.C. in *Antiquities*. 17.9.6-7 and in *Wars* 2.1.1; Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. 167.

545. Neusner and Green, eds., *Dictionary of Judaism*. 65.

546. Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.10.6.

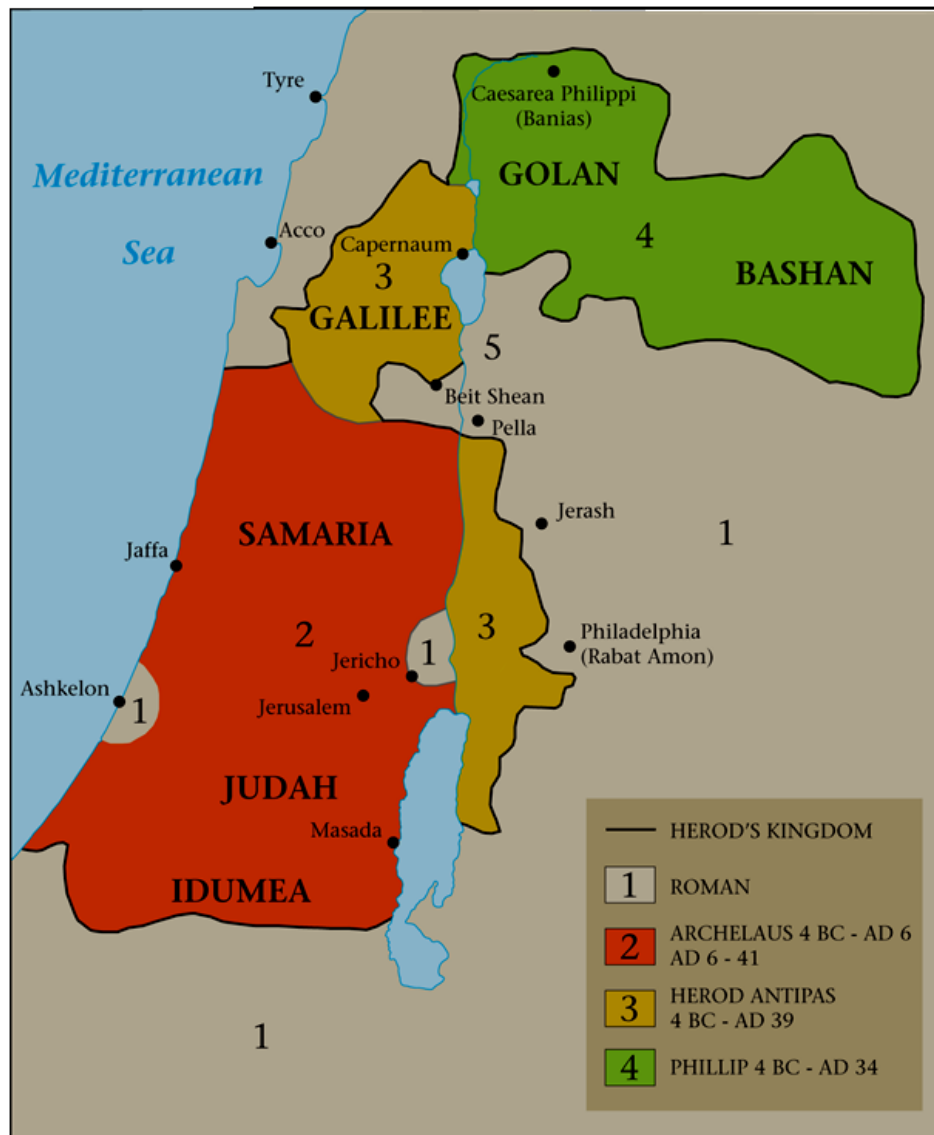
547. See Appendix 25 for a listing of false prophets who had messianic expectations and for a partial listing of revolts and social disturbances from 63 B.C. to A.D. 70.

548. Geikie, *The Life and Works of Christ*. 2:114.

549. Jerusalem Talmud, *Berakboth* 2.4, 5a.18. Menahem ben Hezekiah was a major leader in the revolt of A.D. 66 (Josephus, *Wars* 2.17.8). For more than a hundred years the Hezekiah family was involved in various revolts, and mutinies. This has given credibility to some that they were of royal lineage as they claimed.

03.06.06 4 B.C. – A.D. 41 The Divided Monarchy

Herod's body was not even in the Herodian tomb when his sons began to squabble about their inheritances. Philip and Antipas each felt they deserved their own kingdom – which they received. But issues concerning Archelaus were different – he wanted to be king.



03.06.06.Z THE DIVISION MAP OF HEROD'S KINGDOM. After the death of Herod the Great, the Roman Senate reviewed his last will and testament. While the former monarch desired his kingdom to go to his three sons, the Senate modified Herod's final request and gave parts of it to others who would be more effective administrators. Courtesy of International Mapping and Dan Przywara.

Herod's widow Doris and his sister Salome went with Archelaus to Rome. Archelaus believed they were traveling with him to support his claim for the title of "king of the Jews," but in reality, they traveled with him to oppose him. When they arrived, they discovered a deputation of fifty Jews had also come from Jerusalem. They all opposed the title Archelaus so dearly desired – "King of the Jews." However, what the Jewish delegation really desired was to be rid of the Herodian dynasty and be annexed to Syria, as it had been in the past.⁵⁵⁰ That did not happen. However, Archelaus was so bitter against the Jews that he mistreated them more than his father did. It was for that reason that Mary and Joseph returned to Nazareth instead of Bethlehem.

Therefore, when Rome executed Herod's Last Will and Testament, his kingdom was divided into four districts: one was given to Syria and the others were given to his three sons as indicated below. Of Herod's six surviving sons, three received dominions and three did not. Notice that Rome maintained control over two small areas by Jericho and Ashkelon.

03.06.07 4 B.C. – A.D. 6 Herod Archelaus Ethnarch Rules over Judea, Samaria, and Idumea⁵⁵¹

To have successfully ruled over these three provinces would have required considerable administrative skill, as each province had its own distinctive people group.

1. In Judea/Israel lived the Jewish people who were divided into a number of religious sects, from the Greek-loving Hellenistic Jews on the left to the orthodox and Essene Jews on the right.
2. In Samaria were the Samaritans who believed only in a modified version of the five books of Moses.
3. In Idumea were descendants of Esau who were forcibly converted to Judaism in the second century B.C. In later centuries they became absorbed into the Arab world.

The nineteen year old Archelaus inherited these three provinces but had none of his father's administrative qualities. When his father passed away, the people rejoiced at the death of the tyrant and were delighted to see a new monarch come to the throne. In a public speech in the

550. At various times throughout the Inter-Testamental period, the Jewish land was one of several districts of which Damascus was the capital city for the Greeks, and later for the Romans.

551. Since ancient writers, as well as other writers throughout history, have used the terms "Judaea," "Judea," "Judah," and "Israel," interchangeably, see "Judaea" in Appendix 26.

temple Archelaus wished them peace and prosperity. However, once his position was secured by Rome, his attitude change and he became far more brutal than was his father.

At this time the hatred and conflicts between the Samaritans and Jews was well-known. But a common enemy can turn squabbling neighbors into cooperative teams. The persecution initiated by Archelaus upon both groups was so severe, that for a while the two groups set aside their hatred and bitterness for each other, and formed a delegation that went to Rome and appealed to Caesar Augustus.⁵⁵² While there, Jews revolted in Jerusalem and the Samaritans did likewise in their communities. Roman soldiers responded in Jerusalem by robbing the temple treasury and setting fire to the temple pillars.⁵⁵³ When the people protested this evil act, 3,000 more were slaughtered in a single day by Herod's son, Archelaus.⁵⁵⁴ Because of his brutality and ongoing conflict, when Joseph returned from Egypt, he most likely took his young family along the *Via Maris* northward along the coast, and then inland to Nazareth.⁵⁵⁵ Joseph avoided Bethlehem and the area ruled by the nineteen year old tyrant.

In response to the sacrilege of the temple, more Jews joined the riots and nearly every Roman garrison was attacked. By the time Archelaus returned, the Roman generals enforced Roman peace – *Pax Romana*.⁵⁵⁶ The Jewish people continued to appeal to Rome for a change of leadership and a greater degree of self-rule. Rome finally agreed and in the ninth year of his reign, Archelaus was banished to Vienna in Gaul (modern France).⁵⁵⁷ The office of “kingship” was replaced by the office of “procurator,” a Roman governor.⁵⁵⁸

From this experience, the procurators who reigned were wise enough to forbid Roman soldiers from entering the temple area that was restricted to only Jews. Soldiers who did so were put to death by the order of the procurator. Of all the people groups within the Roman Empire, the Jewish people were the only ones who were granted the following exemptions:

552. Finegan, *Chronology*. 300; Josephus, *Antiquities*. 17.9.6; Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. 163.

553. Golub, *In the Days*. 268.

554. Keller W. *The Bible as History*. 371.

555. See map 04.05.02.Z depicting the most likely route of travel for the Holy Family.

556. Lee, *The Galilean Jewishness of Jesus*. 72-73; Mellowes and Cran, Executive Producers. *From Jesus to Christ: The First Christians*. (DVD). Part 1; See “Pax Romana” in Appendix 26.

557. From 4 B.C. to A.D. 6 is nine years, not ten, because there is no year “zero.”

558. Golub, *In the Days*. 268.

1. They did not participate in Roman worship and,
2. The Romans agreed not set up any images in their temple. In fact, Roman generals even agreed not to have their soldier's units carry images of military eagles throughout Jewish territory.⁵⁵⁹

In spite of the cruelties of Rome, these two concessions show that the Romans were willing to compromise with their subjects in order to maintain peace.

03.06.08 4 B.C. – A.D. 34 Herod Philip, Tetrarch, Rules Over Northern Districts

Herod Philip (Lk. 3:1) had a small kingdom known as Gaulanitis, and related regions north and east of the Sea of Galilee, namely Gaulanitis, Trachonitis, Batanea, and Auranitis – in what is now Syria⁵⁶⁰ which did not affect the life of Christ.⁵⁶¹ These districts were largely non-Jewish and Herod Philip was a surprisingly mild and peaceful ruler as evidenced by the length of his reign.

03.06.09 4 B.C. – A.D. 39 Herod Antipas, Tetrarch, Rules Over Galilee and Perea

Since Herod the Great's title, "king of the Jews," had caused a furor, his son Antipas was titled "ethnarch," meaning "ruler of a nation" by Rome.⁵⁶² Herod Antipas, who is often referred to as "Herod" in the gospels,⁵⁶³ was known for his lavish lifestyle and deceitful manners. He (Antipas, son of Cleopatra of Jerusalem) is at times confused with Herod Philip (son of Mariamne II).⁵⁶⁴ The primary responsibility of Herod Antipas was to maintain the peace and forward the taxes from Galilee and Perea to Rome. He caused the death of John the Baptist and found Jesus innocent of Jewish accusations. Later, in A.D. 39, his wife Herodias convinced him to travel to Rome to request the rank of king. No doubt, it came as a great surprise when Emperor Caligula instead, exiled him to Lyons in Gaul where he and Herodias eventually died.⁵⁶⁵

559. Golub, *In the Days*. 270-71.

560. Mantey, "New Testament Backgrounds." 6.

561. Finegan, *Chronology*. 300; Josephus, *Antiquities*. 18.4.6.

562. Batey, *Jesus and the Forgotten City*. 52-53.

563. Mk. 6:14-29; Lk. 3:1; 13:31-35; 23:7-12.

564. Finegan, *Chronology*. 300; Josephus, *Antiquities*. 18.7.2.

565. Metzger, *New Testament*. 26.

03.06.10 2 B.C. Sepphoris Becomes the Seat of Government

Herod Antipas, the new tetrarch of the province of Galilee, began a massive long-term building program to make Sepphoris his capitol. The city that was destroyed by fire and rebellion ten years earlier was rebuilt to be the strongest city in the Galilee. This provided employment opportunities for skilled craftsmen such as carpenters (who were also stonemasons) from the entire Galilee area. The theater was most likely constructed at this time since many cities throughout the empire imitated the popular trends of Rome.⁵⁶⁶ There were also had ten synagogues, a bathing facility, a mint for stamping coins, and two market places.⁵⁶⁷ It is significant that Sepphoris lies only an hour's walk from Nazareth, as many scholars believe that Jesus and His father and half-brothers traveled there for employment opportunities. It was also dedicated to the Greco-Roman god Dionysus and was a city filled with debauchery of every kind – male and female prostitution, gluttony, materialism, alcoholism, etc. Orthodox Jews in Nazareth, Jerusalem, and elsewhere faced the same cultural temptations as do Jews and Christians today. Several years later, in A.D. 26, the capitol was relocated to Tiberius along the western shore of the Sea of Galilee.

03.06.11 4 (end) – 3 B.C. Mary, Joseph, and Jesus Return from Egypt

As stated previously, Herod Archelaus, who ruled Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and all of Judea, was more corrupt and cruel than was his father. For this reason Mary and Joseph, on their return trip from Egypt, bypassed Bethlehem and went directly to Nazareth. His reign was so horrible, that it caused the Jews to complain to Caesar Augustus, an event that Jesus used in a parable (Lk. 19:11-27). As for Nazareth, it was in the District of Galilee (Mt. 2:22) and under the control of his brother Herod Antipas.

03.06.12 0 There was No Year Zero

There was no year zero. The modern Julian calendar ends the B.C. era with December 31, 1 B.C. and the A.D. era begins with January 1, A.D. 1. The time from December 31, 1 BC to January 1 A.D. 1, is one day, not one year. The second century began with the year 101, not 100. This has been problematic for some Bible and history students in calculating the number of years in the B.C. era to the A.D. era. For example, the number of years from January 1, 2 B.C. to December 31, A.D. 4 is 6 years.⁵⁶⁸

03.06.13 A.D. 1 Greeks Form a Trade Embargo against Jews

566. Minkoff, *Approaches to the Bible*. 2:92; Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. 60-61, 167.

567. Fischer, *The Gospels in Their Jewish Context*. (Lecture on CD/MP3). Week 7, Session 2.

568. Finegan, *Handbook*. 134; Metzger, *New Testament*. 102; See 03.06.02 for additional details.

The Greeks of the Decapolis cities formed a trade embargo against the Jews. Its effectiveness was not documented since Israel lay in the crossroad center between three continents and enjoyed considerable international trade. It appears, however, that it was not successful, but did increase tensions between Jews and Gentiles.⁵⁶⁹

03.06.14 A.D. 6 Jews Revolt against Archelaus; Zealot Movement Solidified

Life was miserable, especially for those living under the reign of Archelaus. Through high taxation people were reduced to peasant slaves. Anger and frustration were brewing along with a desire for national sovereignty. All the ingredients for a peasant uprising were present and ready to explode. Rebels who desired sovereignty were willing to kill and steal to accomplish their political goals. The wealthy and powerful aristocracy had no understanding of life for the common people, nor did they care. Therefore, when a new poll tax was imposed on all adult men, it was as the proverb says, “The straw that broke the camel’s back.” Especially since the tax was symbolic of slavery and was paid directly to the pagan treasury in Rome.⁵⁷⁰ Not only was the tax offensive, but the coin with which it was to be paid had a graven image of Tiberius Caesar who claimed to be God (violation of Ex. 20:3-4). This tax, along with the harsh dictatorship of Archelaus, gave rise to another Jewish revolt.

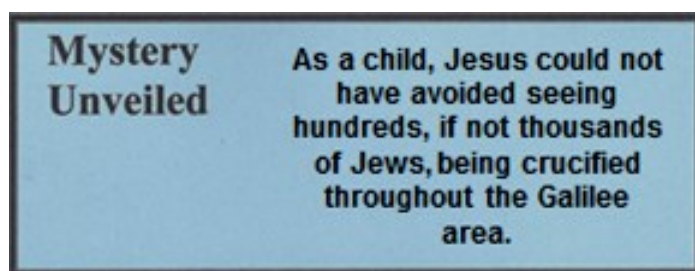


03.06.14.A. COIN OF TIBERIUS CAESAR. The coin referred to by Jesus in Matthew 22:19-21 was probably one as shown, with the words “Tiberius Caesar, son of the deified Augustus.” Some Jews considered themselves defiled if they even touched such a coin. Wikipedia Commons.

569. Tongue, “Decapolis.” 1:379.

570. Gilbrant, “Mark.” 333; Geikie, *The Life and Works of Christ*. 2:418.

In the midst of this social and political caldron, a new “religious” group emerged known as the *Zealots*, more commonly known as the “men of the dagger.” The Romans called them the *Sicarii*,⁵⁷¹ although some historians believe these were two different but similar groups. They were fanatically religious and passionately nationalistic.



The founder of the Zealots was Judah of Gamala (a/k/a Judas the Galilean; Acts 5:37), who was the son of Ezekias, (a/k/a Hezekias of Gamala), a well-known rebel leader executed by Herod the Great in 47 B.C. Judas had a co-conspirator, a Pharisee named Sadok, and together they taught a new doctrine that appealed to the Jewish nationalists – a doctrine that said God alone was to be the king of Israel. Together, they instigated riots and rebellions as well as theological disputes in the temple and said it was a sin to pay taxes to any pagan government such as Rome. Decades later when Jesus was confronted by the Pharisees about paying tribute (taxes) to Caesar, that tax issue was based on this new nationalistic doctrine.

Judas and Sadok organized freedom fighters throughout the land into a guerrilla-type military movement. It was their hope that someday a political-messiah or leader would rise to the occasion and bring political-salvation and freedom to the Jewish people.⁵⁷² Some scholars believe this was the same Judas who led a band of men into battle and captured a Roman armory in Sepphoris from which they stole a great deal of weaponry. It was an extremely humiliating defeat for the Romans, who not only executed the guards who failed their duty, but also crucified anyone suspected in the Zealot movement. All this took place less than three miles from Nazareth where Joseph and Mary lived with their son Jesus, who would have been about ten years old at the time. There can be little question that Roman soldiers searched every home in Nazareth and other nearby villages to look for weapons and crucify any suspected Zealot. Judas was among those who were quickly apprehended and crucified. His sons Jacob and Simeon continued the cause of nationalism, but they too, were captured and crucified by the Romans in A.D. 46 and 48 respectively. The Zealot movement eventually led to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70. Although Judas the Galilean was crucified, his doctrine

571. See 02.01.21 and 02.01.22.

572. Flusser, *Jesus*. 260; Crossan, *Who Killed Jesus?* 55-56.

continued to be a debated issue among the Jews. It would be the background of the discussion when Jesus was challenged by the Pharisees concerning whether it was right to pay taxes to Caesar, since this poll tax went directly into the Roman treasury. Just as Athronges, a self-proclaimed messiah, led a revolt with his four brothers that began on Passover (4 B.C.), believing it would bring divine victory, so did Judas the Galilean. Josephus recorded the event.

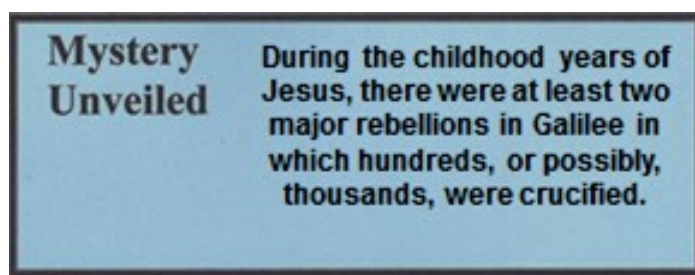
At the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which was now at hand, and is by the Jews called Passover, and used to be celebrated with a great number of sacrifices, an innumerable multitude of the people came out of the country to worship; some of these stood in the temple bewailing the rabbis (that had been put to death), and procured their sustenance by begging, in order to support their sedition. At this time Archelaus was affrighted, and privately sent a tribune with his cohort of soldiers upon them, before the disease should spread over the whole multitude, and gave orders that they should constrain those what, began the tumult by force, to be quiet. At these the whole multitude were irritated, threw stones at many of the soldiers, and killed them; but the tribune fled away wounded, and had much ado to escape so. After which they betook themselves to their sacrifices, as if they had done no mischief; nor did it appear to Archelaus that the multitude could be restrained without bloodshed. So he sent his whole army upon them, the footmen in great multitudes, by way of the city, and the horsemen by the way of the plain, who, falling upon them on the sudden, as they were offering their sacrifices, destroyed about three thousand of them; but the rest dispersed upon the adjoining mountains; these were followed by Archelaus's heralds, who commanded everyone to retire to their homes, to which they all went, and left the festival.

Josephus, *Wars* 2.1.3 (10-13)⁵⁷³

Archelaus' cruel and inhumane treatment of his Jewish subjects was the cause of another rebellion. He crushed the Jewish freedom fighters and had some 2,000 of them crucified along the seven roads⁵⁷⁴ leading into the city of Jerusalem when Jesus was about ten or twelve years old. The public executions were a strong intimidation for most Jews to submit to the iron hand of the Romans. Shortly thereafter, the Roman Senate replaced Archelaus. There can be no doubt, that Jesus as a young boy would have seen these crucified Zealots and He most certainly heard of discussions concerning possible rebellions and the horrific suffering people endured. It was part of life.

573. See also Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.8.4 and 18.1.1.

574. Kloner and Zissu, *The Necropolis of Jerusalem in the Second Temple Period*. 22-23.



03.06.15 A.D. 6 – 8 Jesus goes to the Temple

While the chronology at this point in history is somewhat difficult to determine with absolute certainty, if these events did not occur in the same year they most certainly happened within a year or two prior. Jesus went to Jerusalem at the age of twelve to celebrate the Passover (Lk. 2:41-45) at which time He questioned the brightest intellectuals of the Second Temple Period (515 B.C. - A.D.70). The tradition was that at the age of twelve the rabbis would ask the child questions to determine if the basics of the faith were understood. But Jesus turned this around to the amazement of scholars and asked them questions.

Also significant to this event was that since there was a major revolt in the year 4 B.C., and another in A.D. 6, when Jesus was at the temple, every movement of every person was carefully observed by soldiers on the top of the Antonia Fortress.

03.06.16 A.D. 6 – 10 Coponius Replaces Herod Archelaus as Procurator of Judea

Herod Archelaus was removed from office by the Roman senate in A.D. 6. He was the reason the angel of the Lord told Joseph not to return to Bethlehem. Even though a new procurator (i.e. governor), Coponius, was appointed in his place, Joseph and Mary remained in Nazareth.

03.06.17 A.D. 6 – 15 Annas Appointed High Priest

Ananus (shortened to Annas, also spelled Ananos), son of Sethi, was a Sadducee and father-in-law to Caiaphas.⁵⁷⁵ He was originally from Alexandria, Egypt, and came to Jerusalem at the invitation of Herod the Great.⁵⁷⁶ His appointment to the position as high priest was a point of immense tension with the common people who viewed the priesthood under his leadership as being equally as corrupt as the Romans. The high priest was also the president of the Sanhedrin, the supreme Jewish judicial and legislative body. After his full service, he retired, but retained

⁵⁷⁵. Neusner and Green, eds., *Dictionary of Judaism*. 33, 38; See also Lk. 3:2; Jn. 18:13, 24; Acts 4:6.

⁵⁷⁶. Wilson, *The False Trials*. 26.

the title in a ceremonial capacity until his death and, hence, he is referred to as the high priest during the life of Christ even though he officially did not function in that office. After his tenure in office in A.D. 15, Ishmael ben Phabi held the office followed by his son Eleazar until the year A.D. 18. Neither of these two high priests had any recorded significance in the biblical narratives.⁵⁷⁷ Beginning in the year A.D. 18, the Annas dynasty ruled again under the leadership of Caiaphas.

The dynasty of Annas produced eight high priests who served between the years A.D. 6 and 65, and accumulated nearly forty years of corrupt temple service. Besides the founding father, Annas I, there were five sons, a son-in-law, and a grandson. It is believed that the first three Christian martyrs mentioned in the book of Acts were executed under the tenure of the Annas Dynasty. They were:

1. Stephen: killed under the directives of Caiaphas.⁵⁷⁸
2. James, the brother of John: was killed under the directives of Matthias.⁵⁷⁹
3. James, the brother of Jesus: was killed under the directives of Annas II.⁵⁸⁰

03.06.18 A.D. 7 Samaritans Defile the Temple

By this time the anger and bitterness between Jews and their Samaritan neighbors was intense. Among the Samaritans, it was common knowledge that any dead animal or person that touched a priest or Levite would defile him and prevent him from performing his duties in the temple. Furthermore, if anything dead was brought into the Jewish temple, it too would become defiled.⁵⁸¹ Knowing this, a group of Samaritans infiltrated the temple and defiled it by throwing dead men's bones in the temple yard and sanctuary. It was done for no other reason than pure spitefulness. Into this socially explosive environment Jesus taught His listeners to love their neighbors, including the Samaritans. Actions as this one made the teachings of the Good Samaritan and the healing of the Samaritan leper all the more stunning to the Jewish people, especially the leading Pharisees.

577. Stein, R. *Jesus the Messiah*. 56-57.

578. Acts 6-7.

579. Acts 12:2.

580. Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.9.1 (200).

581. See "Defile" in Appendix 26.

03.06.19 A.D. 12 Artabanus III Becomes King of the Parthian Empire

Far to the east of the land of the Jews, Artabanus III became king of Parthia. Under his ingenious leadership, Parthia became an incredible threat to Rome as he desired to have access to the Mediterranean Sea. He was a genius, and his military philosophy and tactics were continued by his successors. As a consequence, the Parthian Empire continued to be Rome's nemesis for the next two centuries. His rulership and constant threat resulted in a tighter Roman reign over all the provinces in the eastern Roman Empire, including Israel.

03.06.20 A.D. 14 – 37 Tiberius Caesar of the Roman Empire

Emperor Augustus died and was succeeded by Tiberius⁵⁸² who had a successful military and political career, but would be challenged by a deceptive Sejanus. As will be explained later, it was because of Sejanus that the term “friend of Caesar” became powerfully important when Jesus stood before Pilate.⁵⁸³

03.06.21 A.D. 16 – 17 Eleazar ben Ananus Appointed High Priest

The Roman legate Cyrenius (spelled Quirinius in Latin) appointed Eleazar ben Ananus (also Annas or Ananais) to the position of high priest in A.D. 6. This was shortly after the Romans deposed Archelaus, Ethnarch of Judea that the province came under direct Roman rule. As high priest, Annas had absolute power over the affairs of the temple, especially since he had the Roman army at his beck and call. As in the traditional proverb, “Absolute power corrupts absolutely,” Ananus (a/k/a Annas) quickly used his position to attain immense wealth and prestige.

03.06.22 A.D. 18 – 36/37 Josephus bar Caiaphas Appointed High Priest

The Roman Prefect Valerius Gratus appointed Josephus bar Caiaphas to the highest position in Judaism – high priest in the temple. However while Caiaphas, the son-in-law of Annas (Jn. 18:13), held the priestly title, Annas was still considered influential in religious matters because the position was as much of a social honor as an official office, even after retirement.⁵⁸⁴ Like Annas, Caiaphas was known for his extensive commercial interests and profiteering.⁵⁸⁵ The fact that Caiaphas was replaced shortly after the removal of Pontius Pilate was no accident. A change of rulership often brought with it a change in priesthood. Jesus lived at a time when corruption in the temple was at its worst in Jewish history.

582. See Appendix 1 for dates of reign.

583. See John 19:12; 03.06.25; 15.04.02; 16.01.05.

584. Neusner and Green, eds., *Dictionary of Judaism*. 110.

585. Wilson, *The False Trials*. 26-27.

03.06.23 A.D. 18 Herod Antipas builds Tiberias

In July, Herod Antipas founded the Galilean city of Tiberias built around 17 natural hot springs. After he relocated his capitol there from Sepphoris, the region became so prosperous, that the Sea of Galilee became known as the Sea of Tiberias. Since Tiberias is only a few miles from Capernaum and other areas where Jesus ministered, He was always under the watchful eye of Herod and his spy network.

03.06.24 A.D. 19 Jews Rioted in Rome

According to Josephus, the Jews in Rome enjoyed peace and had exceptional privileges with the exception of a few years (beginning in A.D. 19) when some 4,000 were sent to Sardinia to fight the Banditti. Rarely was there any conflict between Jews and the Romans outside of the Holy Land in the early first century. In essence, during the days of Emperors Tiberius and Augustus, Jews in the Diaspora enjoyed peace, prosperity, and freedom of religion throughout the empire.⁵⁸⁶

03.06.25 A.D. 22 – 31 Sejanus, the Arch Enemy of Tiberius Caesar

In far distant Rome, there was an intense political battle between the years A.D. 22 and A.D. 31 that influenced Pilate when he determined the fate of Jesus. It was an escalating power struggle, and no one threatened Caesar Tiberius more than did Lucius Aelius Sejanus. In fact, so much political chaos erupted that Tiberius placed himself in exile on the island of Capri, off Naples, from 26 until 31. He found that in a quiet and peaceful villa far removed from the potential activities of Rome, he could rule the empire with the full attention that was required of him.

Sejanus, on the other hand, promoted himself as a true Roman, but all the while he accused the closest supporters and counselors of Tiberius of treason or disloyalty to Rome. He was a master of deception and was cunning in every conceivable manner. He was also the commander of the Praetorian Guard, the elite Roman military unit that was highly skilled and respected and feared.

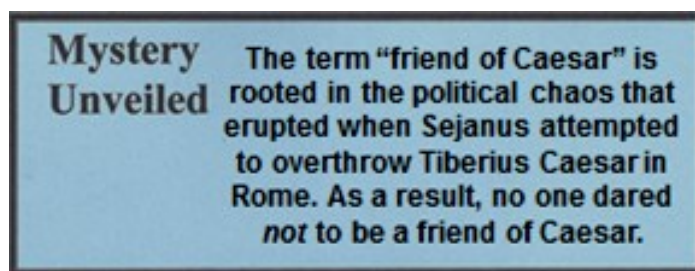
When Drusus, the son of Tiberius, mysteriously died in December of A.D. 22, many suspected Sejanus in the plot. By the following year he was the most powerful voice in the Roman senate. By A.D. 23 he had organized an efficient spy ring of more than two hundred informants who monitored the actions of advisors and counselors closest to Tiberius.⁵⁸⁷ When he felt he had sufficient information, he accused them of treason and sedition. It was then that his anti-Semitic feelings were clearly revealed.⁵⁸⁸ With the Praetorian Guard at his command, he became a powerful and persuasive accuser. As a result, hundreds were executed or committed suicide.

586. Josephus, *Antiquities* 14.10.1; Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. 47-50.

587. Webb, "The Roman Examination and Crucifixion of Jesus." 721-26.

588. Schurer, *A History of the Jewish People* First Division, 2:21.

By skillful manipulation while preaching social reform and justice, he weakened the political support of Tiberius to the point that the Caesar placed himself in exile; his government was moved permanently to the island of Capri. From A.D. 23 to 31, Rome was in political chaos as Sejanus made thousands of accusations. If there was anything that Tiberias desperately needed, it was a true friend. Therefore, when the Jews cried out to Pilate that he was no friend of Caesar,⁵⁸⁹ his thoughts went to the political turmoil in Rome and all those who had been executed, imprisoned, or committed suicide. However, by the end of A.D. 31, Sejanus himself was caught in his own web of deception and was executed. Many of his friends and supporters chose suicide rather than crucifixion.⁵⁹⁰



03.06.26 A.D. 26 – 36 Pontius Pilate Prefect⁵⁹¹ of Judea

Pontius Pilate was the fifth prefect of Judea, appointed by Tiberius.⁵⁹² Although he was under the general supervision of the Roman legates in Damascus, he had considerable independence. The procurators lived in Caesarea but relocated to Jerusalem at times of various festivals to insure peace. Pontius Pilate (Lk. 3:1; 23:1) enjoyed the second longest reign of all the rulers of Judea. His longevity makes a positive statement to his administrative abilities, which have often been criticized by historians. While he was incredibly brutal and clearly blundered in some incidents as reported by the historians Josephus and Philo, the length of his reign would indicate that he was to some extent an able administrator.⁵⁹³

589. See John 19:12; 15.04.02; 16.01.05.

590. See 16.01.05; Maier, “Sejanus, Pilate, and the Date of Crucifixion.” 10-13.

591. Traditional scholarship has taught that Pilate was authorized by Rome to be the official *procurator cum potestate*, meaning he had full rights in civil, criminal, and military jurisdictions. However, in 1961 scholars discovered that this was an error, and that his proper title as “Prefect” or “Prefectus Judaea” (see 16.01.06.B). It has been suggested that beginning from the time of Emperor Claudius (reigned 41-54), the title of the ruler of Judaea was *procurator*. Josephus and Tacitus who decades later wrote of Pilate used that title rather than his real one – *praefectus*, in Latin. Webb, “The Roman Examination and Crucifixion of Jesus.” 726. Amazingly, of the procurators and prefects who ruled Judea, very little is known of any of them except for Pontius Pilate – and that is courtesy of Josephus and Philo. Without the writings of these two historians, the world would be starved for knowledge concerning the time of Jesus.

592. See Appendix 1 and related footnote concerning the proper title and title change of the ruler of Judaea.

593. Maier, *The First Easter*. 148.

Years earlier Herod the Great began a ten-mile aqueduct to bring water from nearby Bethlehem to serve Jerusalem and the temple.⁵⁹⁴ However, he died before the construction was completed and lay dormant for more than two decades. Josephus recorded that the task was continued by Pontius Pilate. However, to finance it, Pilate plundered temple funds known as the “Corban” (Mk. 7:11),⁵⁹⁵ which caused riots. By the time Roman peace was restored many Jews had died.⁵⁹⁶ Josephus reports this confrontation:

But Pilate undertook to bring a current of water to Jerusalem, and did it with sacred money, and derived the origin or the stream from a distance of two hundred furlongs. However, the Jews were not pleased with what had been done about this water; and many ten thousands of the people got together, and made a clamor against him, and insisted that he should leave off that design. Some of them also used reproaches, and abused the man, as crowds of such people usually do. So he habited a great number of his soldiers in their habit, who carried daggers under their garments, and sent them to a place where they might surround them. So he bade the Jews himself go away, but they boldly casting reproaches upon him, he gave the soldiers that signal which had been beforehand agreed to; who had laid upon them much greater blows than Pilate had commanded them ... and there were a great number of them slain by this means, and others of them ran away wounded; and thus an end was put to this sedition.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.3.2 (60-62)

However, the maintenance of the infrastructure of Jerusalem – the walls, water-channels, towers, storm sewers, maintenance workers and street sweepers⁵⁹⁷ – were all paid for by the temple.⁵⁹⁸ The irony is that when Pilate raided temple funds to complete the construction of the aqueduct,

594. See photo of Herod's Aqueduct pipe at 09.03.08.A. According to author of *Pseudo-Aristeas* 90, the pipe was sealed with lead and lime mortar.

595. A corban (Heb *qorban*; Gk *korban* 2878)) was a gift consecrated to God and, therefore, it was considered sacred. Vine, “Corban.” *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:129.

596. Mackowski, *Jerusalem City of Jesus*. 86; Mantey, “New Testament Backgrounds.” 7.

597. Since Jerusalem was considered to be a Holy City, the streets were swept every day, (Babylonian Talmud, *Baba Metzja* 26A and *Pesahim* 7A). The Valley of Hinnom had a dump site by the dung gate where all the filth was thrown, but generally picked up by others to fertilize their gardens. With the exception of rose gardens, gardens were not permitted in the city because they required dung (Mishnah, *Maaseroth* 2.5; Babylonian Talmud, *Baba Kamma* 82B). This illustrates to what measures the laws of purity were taken by the time of Jesus.

598. Mishnah, *Shekalim* 4.2.

he essentially finished the work that the religious aristocrats should have done in the first place even though the project originated by Herod the Great.

Pilate either did not know the history of the Jewish-Roman relations in Israel, or he ignored them. In the early days of his administration, he abolished Jewish laws and established the symbols of Roman sovereignty. He evidently was unaware of what had occurred nearly two centuries earlier when Antiochus IV Epiphanes attempted to abolish Judaism from Israel, and a revolt followed. The account was recorded by Josephus:

But now Pilate, the procurator of Judea, removed the army from Caesarea to Jerusalem, to take their winter quarters there, in order to abolish the Jewish laws. So he introduced Caesar's effigies, which were upon the ensigns, and brought them into the city.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.3.1 (55a)

In response, the Jews met with Pilate and asked for reconsideration of the imperial proclamation. Josephus continues the lengthy description of the confrontation of nerves when suddenly the Jews found themselves surrounded by soldiers who had their swords drawn. However, they did not retreat from their commitment. According to Josephus who continued the story, they chose to throw ...

Themselves upon the ground, and laid their necks bare, and said they would take their death very willingly, rather than the wisdom of their laws should be transgressed; upon which Pilate was deeply affected with their firm resolution to keep their laws inviolable, and presently commanded the images to be carried back from Jerusalem to Caesarea.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.3.1 (59)

For whatever reason, Pilate had a gift of making horrible decisions that caused the Jews to riot or revolt. On another occasion he erected plain golden shields in his Jerusalem headquarters. The Jews loudly protested these shields. He knew that Jews in Alexandria, Egypt had golden shields in their synagogues, so he could not understand why his subjects protested.⁵⁹⁹ He refused to

599. Maier, "The Episode of the Golden Roman Shields." 109-21; See also Philo *De Legatione ad Gaium*. xxxviii, 299-305.

acknowledge that his subjects were far more orthodox than those in Egypt, and he appeared to care little about the results of his decisions.



03.06.26.A. COINS OF PONTIUS PILATE. Two bronze coins of the same denomination minted by Pontius Pilate with a “litus” (*bent staff*), the symbol of his office and the name of Tiberius Caesar. It is notable that he did not place the symbol of a pagan deity on his coins as this would have caused a riot by the Pharisees (the Sadducees would not have cared very much).

03.06.27 A.D. 27 The Ministry of Jesus, the Christ Begins

Jesus came during a turbulent time which was no different than today in the Middle East. There were constant riots, wars, and rumors of wars resulting in military crack-downs and multiple crucifixions. The peaceful settings depicted on Christmas cards or of when He was teaching is hardly reflective of the social and political environment in which He taught and ministered. Yet it was within this context that the world was changed forever.



Please note that all references to footnotes are in the “Works Cited” section located in the last volume.