

New Testament Foundations: Session Two

Introduction to the New Testament II

THE POLITICAL WORLD

The time from the close of Malachi (the last book of the Old Testament) until the birth of Jesus—over 400 years—is known as the “silent period.” During that time, Judea was under six separate governments, each of which shaped and prepared the nation for the advent of the Messiah.

1. The _____. (539-333 BC) When the Persians defeated the Babylonians in 539 BC, they added Judea to their empire and governed it through puppet rulers.
2. The _____. (333-323 BC) Alexander the Great conquered the Persians and the Egyptians around 333 BC and took over Judea at the same time.
3. The _____. (323-198 BC) The Ptolemies (Egyptians) controlled Judea until it passed to the Seleucids at the beginning of the second century BC.
4. The _____. (198-142 BC) The Seleucids (Syrians) ruled Judea for almost sixty years. It was a period of great social unrest.
5. The _____. (142-63 BC) Seven different Maccabees ruled Judea during this period. It was a time of prosperity and expansion for the nation.

The Romans

1. The Romans. (63 BC-638 AD) In 63 BC, the Roman general _____ crushed the Maccabees, conquered Jerusalem, and then marched into the Holy of Holies, making impossible any future peaceful coexistence between the Jews and Romans.
2. The Romans allowed a figurehead Jewish government to continue, and in 37 BC, Herod the Great became King of the Jews.

NAME	DATES	COMMENTS
Herod the Great	37 BC - 4 BC	A friend of the Romans and builder of magnificent buildings, including the Jerusalem temple (Jn 2:20), he tried to have the infant Jesus killed. (Mt 2:1-16)
Herod Antipapas	4 BC- AD 39	He executed John (Mt 14:1-10). Haunted by that memory (Mk 6:16), he refused to press charges against Jesus, sending Him back to Pilate for a decision. (Lk 23:11)
Herod Agrippa I	AD 37-44	He executed James and arrested Peter (Acts 12:2, 3), and then died while people worshipped him as a god. (Acts 12:21-23)
Herod Agrippa II	AD 50-100	He heard Paul preach and testify, and he was almost persuaded to become a Christian. (Acts 25:1-26:32)

3. When Herod died, he put three sons over various parts of his empire. But his son _____ so offended the Judeans that he was removed in 6 AD and Judea was organized as a Roman province under the control of a prefect appointed by the emperor.
4. Pontius Pilate, Judea's fifth _____, continually alienated the Jews by his disregard for their religion, temple, and holy city.

5. The Roman Prefect had the authority to appoint the _____. Though there were strict regulations against bribery, the Roman officials often found it difficult to resist the temptation. As a result, the High Priesthood became the province of the wealthiest families in Jerusalem—producing even more animosity among the Jews.

Developments Outside of Palestine

1. Alexander the Great was tutored by the Greek philosopher _____ between the ages of 13 and 16. This had a profound influence upon him, an influence he later transferred to the nations he conquered—importing Greek learning and culture through his realm.
2. When the Romans conquered most of Alexander's old empire, they retained the Greek _____ he had proliferated. By the time of Christ's birth, the Greek language and culture was universal throughout much of the Roman Empire, greatly simplifying communication.
3. The significant Roman emperors during the New Testament period were:

NAME	DATES	COMMENTS
Augustus	27 BC-14 AD	The first Roman emperor. He issued the census decree that brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem.
Tiberius	14-37 AD	The adopted son of Augustus and the emperor during the ministry of Jesus.
Caligula	37-41 AD	An unpopular man who persecuted the Jews and died by assassination.
Claudius	41-54 AD	Made a determined effort to restore paganism to its former place, expelling all the Jews from Rome.
Nero	54-68 AD	He organized the first systematic persecution of Christians after the Great Fire of 64 AD. He had Peter crucified upside down and Paul beheaded.
Domitian	81-96 AD	Banished or killed Christians who refused to pay him divine honors. He may have been the emperor who banished John to the Isle of Patmos.

Religious Movements in the Roman Empire

1. There was a revival of _____ and reverence for the gods under Emperor Augustus (27 BC-14 AD).
2. The concentration of the executive functions of the Roman _____ in one man gave him powers never known in the history of the world.
3. The _____ religions provided a spiritual experience and contact with the deity for those who were dissatisfied with the external ritual of paganism and emperor worship.
4. _____, fortune-telling, and horoscopes were proliferating in the Roman empire throughout the first century.
5. _____ taught that divinity was locked in man's material body and that secret knowledge and initiation rites would free it.

Four Movements within Judaism

1. The Pharisees. The term “Pharisee” comes from the Hebrew word “_____” because they were reacting to the Hellenization of the Maccabees.
 - The Pharisees believed in the resurrection of the dead, angels and demons, strict ritual purity, predestination, and the “tradition of the elders.”
2. The Sadducees. The Sadducees were composed mostly of _____, influential families, noblemen, and businessmen.
 - The Sadducees believed in a strict reading of the law with no interpretation and no oral tradition, free will, and political power.
3. The Essenes. The Essenes adopted a strict, _____, and communal lifestyle, withdrawn from normal human society.
 - The Essenes believed in extreme predestination, asceticism, and celibacy.
4. The Zealots. The Zealots were an extreme _____ political party calling for the violent overthrow of Rome's yoke over Judea.
 - The Zealots believed in the honor of God over due process of law, and the use of any means necessary to drive out the foreign invaders.

Development of Synagogue Worship

1. Judaism as it existed in the first century was largely a product of the Babylonian _____ of the sixth century BC.
2. Sometime during the _____ - _____ period, local gatherings of Jews began to form for study and prayer. This developed into an elaborate system of synagogues that eventually replaced the temple.
3. The Synagogue later became the early model for the _____ worship service.