

Introduction to the New Testament – 1

The Gospels

Class 1

Historical Background of the NT

- Syllabus
- Places, Religious groups in NT which are not found in OT
 - Pharisees, Rome, Herod, Sadducees, Synagogue, Crucifixion, Galilee, Samaritans, Greek
- Terminology:
 - c.35: circa ~35
 - cf. Lk 3: compare to Luke 3
- Historical events leading to the NT: Atlas 40-42

I. Introduction

A. Handout - Major Periods

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Primeval | 7. Surviving Kingdom |
| 2. Patriarchal | 8. Babylonian captivity |
| 3. Exodus | 9. Restoration |
| 4. Conquest and Judges | 10. Inter-testamental Period |
| 5. United Kingdom | 11. Jesus |
| 6. Divided Kingdom | 12. Early Church |

B. Following events occur through Periods 9 and 10:

II. Persian Empire 536-332 BC

Map Page 18

A. Persians are ruling Israel as the Old Testament ends

B. 3 Developments impacted the New Testament:

1. Beginning of the Synagogue
 - a. Jews in exile could not go to Jerusalem Temple
 - b. They gathered together where they were in order to study God's Word
 - c. This practice leads to the start of the synagogue
2. Beginning of the Oral Law
 - a. OT contains Torah – the written Law of Moses
 - b. Jews in exile had additional laws for 2 reasons:
 1. Clarify the meaning of the Torah
 - Ex: No work on Sabbath – what does this mean?
 - Ex: 20: 10 commandments – How do you apply Sabbath laws?
 2. Make Torah relevant in new situations - Jubilee year
 - c. These new laws were not written – these were not equal to the Torah
 - d. New laws eventually became more important than the written law
 - o cf. Jesus confronting Pharisees: Jesus is called the “law” breaker
 - e. A.D. 200: These oral laws are written down in Talmud, Mishnah, Tosefta and Gemara
3. Aramaic became the common language of the Jews
 - a. Language was learnt in exile and it eventually replaced Hebrew (Assyrians)
 - b. This is the daily, common language. Hebrew is used in the Synagogue in the NT

III Greek Empire after Persians 332-167 BC - 2 Divisions

A. Alexander the Great (self-named)

1. Accomplishments
 - a. 336 BC - King of Greece at age 20 (under Persia)
 - b. 334 BC - Fights and conquers Persia
 - c. 332 BC - Israel under Greek control
2. Two Developments impacted NT
 - a. Greek culture - Hellenism spreads
 - 1) Alexander believed Greek culture was superior to others
 - 2) Soldiers and teachers left behind in conquered areas
 - 3) Many Jews rejected Hellenism - Against moral values
 - a) Openness to different religions and philosophies
 - b) Accepting many gods instead of just One
 - c) Over-emphasis on athletics and human body
 - d) Allowed eating food forbidden by Jewish law
 - e) Greek pagan theatre - art present morally questionable ideas
 - 4) Other Jews accepted Hellenism - lead to cultural conflict
 - b. Greek language spread

B. Ptolemies and Seleucids 323-167 BC

1. Alexander had no heir - died in his early 30s
 - o Kingdom was divided among 4 of his generals: Map Pg 21
2. Two Generals impacting Israel: Ptolemy (Egypt) and Seleucus (Syria)
 - a. Both wanted to control Israel for Taxes
 - b. Barrier in case of attack by the other - scene of much fighting
3. Two Developments that impacted the NT from now
 - a. Septuagint - Greek OT (Latin word)
 - 1) Alexandria (Egypt) - became center of Jewish intellect
 - Ex: Acts 18 - Apollos from Alexandria
 - 2) Jews spoke Greek instead of Aramaic/Hebrew
 - Wanted scripture in their own language
 - 3) OT was translated from Hebrew into Greek - LXX - (Roman)
 - a) According to tradition - 70/72 scholars made translation
 - b) Date c. 240 B.C
 - 4) Version quoted most often in NT - Important!
 - Paul quotes from Septuagint, not his Hebrew translation
 - In areas outside of Israel, Greek was the language
 - b. Role of High Priest changed
 - 1) Aaron's descendant, 1st priest, brother of Moses
 - 2) Leader of Jewish religion (Pope-Catholics)
 - 3) Acquired position by bribing the political ruler
 - 4) Appointed by political rulers even without a bribe
 - Why? Priest presents the rulers' plan as the will of God
 - 5) Turned the religious position into a political one

IV Maccabeans 167-63 BC

- A. Seleucids took control of Israel in 198 BC (Ptolemies were pushed south)
- B. Increased taxes and tried to force Hellenism on Jews - Jews resisted
- C. 168 BC King of Seleucids - Antiochus Epiphanes IV did 4 things:
 - 1. Attacked Jerusalem on Sabbath
 - 2. Killed many Jews – they did not resist but wanted revenge
 - 3. Prohibited Judaism from being practiced - not a preference but a requirement
 - 4. As insult, built an altar to Zeus in temple, sacrificed pig in temple - where is your God?
- D. Sent agents and army to subdue whole nation of Israel
 - o Capital city is conquered; now take the rest of the land
- E. 167 BC Things did not go well for the king
 - 1. Old Jewish priest in Modein - Mattathaias asked to offer pagan sacrifice - He refused
 - 2. He killed another Jew offering to make sacrifice and the agent of Antiochus
 - 3. He started rebellion against Seleucids - even as it angered the king
 - 4. Mattathaias' son Judas, was nicknamed Maccabeus (meaning Hammer)
- F. 164 BC
 - 1. Jews captured and cleansed the temple
 - 2. 8 day 'feast of dedication' called Hanukkah - 'to dedicate'. cf. John 10:22
- G. 142 BC - Jews completely throw Seleucids out and have 80 years of independence
 - o They were last free in 722 BC. 580 years since they were free!
- H. 4 Developments impacting NT
 - 1. Jewish nationalism sparked increased hatred for Gentiles
 - 2. Desire grew for political, military (Maccabees-like) Messiah
 - a. To overthrow Gentiles for good
 - b. Many did not accept Jesus as Messiah as He did not meet expectations. cf. John 6
 - 3. Beginning of Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes
 - 4. The Herod family began to have political influence

V. ROMAN EMPIRE 62 BC- early 7th century AD

- A. c. 67 BC - 2 great-great grandsons of Mattathaias fought for leadership of Israel
 - o Both appealed to Rome
- B. c. 63 B.C Pompey - Roman General invaded. Israel under Roman control
- C. AD 66-74 (Big Gap)
 - 1. AD 66 – Jews rebelled and drove Roman army out of the country
 - 2. AD 70 – Romans returned and destroyed Jerusalem and Temple
 - 3. Many Jews taken to Rome as slaves. In Rome - Arch of Titus finished

World of NT - Israel at Jesus' time

I. POLITICAL BACKGROUND

A. Israel under the control of Rome

B. Two Consequences of Roman Presence (More Later)

- 1) Fortress Antonia was a barracks for Roman soldiers built next to the temple (Pg 25)
 - a) Fortress is significant for 2 reasons:
 - 1) Symbol of Roman oppression
 - God is in control but humanly Romans were looking down on the temple
 - 2) Soldiers have quick access if there is trouble in the temple
 - a) cf. Acts 21:30-34 - Paul is wrongly accused of bringing Gentiles' in
 - The soldiers "ran down"
- 2) Death penalty regulation was changed
 - a) Sanhedrin found Jesus guilty of blasphemy. OT requires death penalty by stoning
 - b) Under Roman law Jews could not carry death penalty
 1. They take Jesus to Pilate, the Roman governor
 2. Jn 18:28-31 " we cannot execute"

C. Roman Rulers

- 1) Empire is divided in political units called Provinces
- 2) Areas like Israel not already Hellenized were called Allies
 - a) Roman policy of Allies
 - 1) Rule from a distance
 - 2) Allow local officials to handle daily administrations where feasible - federalism
 - 3) Main responsibilities of the rulers of the Allies
 - Support Roman policies whether you like it or not
 - Keep the peace
 - Collect taxes
 - In return they are paid, they have power and job security
 - b) NT: Two lines of political officials in NT
 - 1) Local line: Herods' family
 - 2) From Rome: Governors appointed by Rome – Pilate
- 3) The Herods (Pg 42)
 - a) King Herod the Great 37-4 BC
 - 1) Appointed king of Jews by Rome when his father Antipater dies in Rome
 - 2) Not Jewish but from Idumaea, south of Israel – local (Pg 26)
 - 3) He was a pagan at heart and political opportunist - peace
 - 4) Benefits - expanded temple, completed other building projects, Herods' temple
 - 5) End of life he became very suspicious
 - Killed many political opponents and some of his own family
- 4) The Roman Governors
 - a) Herods' kingdom was divided among 3 of his sons
 - 1) His son Archelaus was appointed ruler over Judea which is an important area
 - 2) He was not a good ruler and was removed from office in AD 6
 - a) cf. Matt 2:19-23 is the only place where he is referred to
 - b) He is still not good but he is a feared man
 - b) Romans still appointed governors to rule Judea, this was plan B
 - 1) These were Roman men with military and administrative background.

- 2) Judea was a step to move up – it was far away and rebellious
 - 3) It was not the most wanted post
 - 4) There were 14 governors in total
 - 5) They were also called Procurators or Prefects
- c) 3 Governors are mentioned in the NT: they were the next best thing but not good
- 1) Pontius Pilate AD 26-36
 - 2) Antonius Felix AD 52 -58/60 (Acts 23-24)
 - 3) Porcius Festus AD 58/60 - 62 (Acts 24-26)
 - 4) Complete list:

Coponius	(AD 6-10)
Marcus Ambivulus	(10-13)
Annius Rufus	(13-15)
Valerius Gratus	(15-26)
Pontius Pilate	(26-36)
Marcellus	(36-38)
Marullus	(38-41)
<i>[41-44 AD: under Herod Agrippa I]</i>	
Cuspius Fadus	(44-46)
Tiberius Alexander	(46-48)
Ventidius Cumanus	(48-52)
M. Antonius Felix	(52-59)
Porcius Festus	(59-61)

D. Political Parties

- 1) Herodians
 - a. Supported Herodian rulers – esp. Herod Antipas in Galilee
 - b. Why? They had political connections, wealthy, influential
 - c. They accepted Hellenization and Foreign rule. Rome or with Greeks
 - d. Twice mentioned: Matt 22:15-22. Pharisees and Herodians Mark 3:6
- 2) Zealots
 - a. Opposite of Herodians
 - b. Fanatical in Jewish faith – Only God had right to rule Jews
 - c. Some refused to pay taxes to Rome – forced them to live on the run
 - d. Sicarii – radicals – Latin for “assassins”. Sica - dagger
 - e. Murder acceptable in resisting Rome – mostly Jews working with Rome as targets
 - f. AD 66 – Helped lead revolt against Rome
 - i. Hoped to imitate Maccabees – it did not work
 - ii. Committed suicide at Masada in AD 74 – last of them become slaves to Rome
 - iii. Cf. Luke 6:15 – Simon the Zealot, Matthew: Tax collector

E. Financial Obligations

- 1. Religious Obligation
 - a. Jews gave >23% of income to support temple system
 - b. 10% - Levites, 10% - feasts (Dedication, Pentecost, etc), 3% - support poor
- 2. Additionally, Israel was heavily taxed up to 30% of their income to Rome
- 3. These people were not wealthy to begin with
- 4. Some people paid over half their income for religious and government obligations
 - a. Result: Poor made up 70% of the population – “daily bread”
 - b. Jesus appealed to the poor by offering something money cannot buy

5. Tax Collectors (TCs) in the midst of all this
 - a. Many tax rates were not set – charge as much as they could
 - b. They bid for the job – they earn to pay for it and to pay the workers and the state
 - c. Money collected supported Israel's conqueror – Rome (IRAQ- Saddam governing)
 - d. Result: Tax collectors were despised
 - 1) Worst people in society were compared to tax collectors (lawyer/car salesman)
 - 2) Teacher eat with tax collectors, friend of TC, love, treat pagan TC and prostitutes
cf. Matt 5:46, 9:4-11, 11:19, 18:17, 21:31
 - e. If a man could not pay his taxes:
 - 1) Put in prison until family/friends paid tax for him
 - 2) Property sold to pay taxes (part of it)
 - 3) He or his family could be sold as slaves
 - 4) cf. Matt 18:23-35: King debt – servant sold

6. Three Positive ways in which Tax Collectors (TCs) are mentioned
 - a. Matthew: Matt 9:9-13: Sitting at the booth – not first meeting – left all and followed
 - b. Zacchaeus: Lk 19:1-10: Short, dinner, half my goods to poor, restore defrauded four-fold
 - c. TC and Pharisee parable: Lk 18:9-14 – Lord have mercy on me – sinner

7. Three Applications of financial obligations
 - a. Who/what do you trust to provide for your need – It must be God
 - b. How do you handle injustice – Zealot? – Submit
 - c. Can God reach the worst people I know – Jesus was able to change a TC