

Intertestamental Period
Background of the New Testament

People and Events: 63 BC-AD 135

I. The Roman Period (63 B.C.-A.D. 135)

1. The Roman Empire

- Arrival of Pompey – under Roman rule from 63 BC on
- General absence of war (Pax Romana)
- Local leadership in Judea
- Palestine – most prominent

NT “Herod”s – several bearing same name in NT
Practice - match

MATCH THE HEROD

Herod the Great
Herod Archelaus
Herod Antipas
Herod Agrippa I
Herod Agrippa II

Herod the fox wants to kill Jesus (Luke 13:31-32)
Herod executes James (Acts 12:1-2)
Herod receives the wise men (Matt. 2:1-15)
Herod is almost persuaded by Paul (Acts 26:24-29)
Herod helps Jesus move to Nazareth (Matt. 2:22-23)
Herod arrests Peter (Acts 12:3-11)
Herod beheads John the Baptist (Mark 6:14-29)
Herod is struck down by an angel (Acts 12:21-23)
Herod tries Jesus (Luke 23:5-12)

2. Herod the Great - Paranoid ruler

- Ruler at time of Jesus’ birth
- Idumean
- General Characteristics –

a. Consolidation

- Stabilization of geo-political power
- Elimination of threats
Aristobulus III (high priest)
Antigonus II
Miriam (wife)

b. Building

Caesarea (Maritima)
Reconstruction of temple

Began in 20/19 BC; completed AD 63

c. Family Problems

- Paranoia toward wives and sons
 - Death – ordered executions of leading citizens so that mourning would take place (not followed)
 - Kingdom divided among three sons:
 - Archelaus: Judea, Samaria, and Idumea
 - Herod Antipas: Galilee and Perea
 - Philip: an area northeast of the Sea of Galilee
3. Herod Antipas - bad woman problems
- Son of Herod the Great who ruled in Galilee
 - Ruled during the earthly ministry of Jesus
 - Beheaded John the Baptist
 - Participated in the trial of Jesus
 - Wife: Herodias (be careful who you marry!)
 - Grand daughter of Herod the Great
 - wife of Philip (another brother to Antipas)
 - Antipas's niece and sister-in-law
 - divorced first wife (daughter of neighboring king)
4. Herod Agrippa I - wanted to please the Jewish leaders
- Grandson of Herod the Great (and the brother of Herodias),
 - Educated in Rome; fell into debt (imprisoned; released by Caligula)
 - Given authority over Philip's territory; eventually over Antipas' as well
 - He executed the apostle James and imprisoned Peter (see Acts 12)
5. Herod Agrippa II - not persuaded
- Acts 25-26 – trial of Paul
 - Sided with Rome in Jewish revolt; died in AD92 with no children

Herodian dynasty

-morally corrupt, often cruel

6. Pontius Pilate and the governors over Judea - Quick to cave in
- Archelaus (immoral, cruel, incompetent) deposed in AD 6; Roman governors
 - Pilate (AD 26-36) desired to be firm; ended up trying not to stir up trouble by time of Jesus; compromise with people
 - Felix and Festus – governors during time of Paul's trials
7. The first Jewish revolt against Rome - destruction of the temple
- Causes:

Rising anti-Roman sentiment in the 60's
Florus (governor) – stole from temple

- Revolt:
Began in AD 66
focused in Jerusalem
Titus enters Jerusalem after 5 month siege; temple destroyed
Note- Christians fled (recognized prophetic fulfillment)

8. Masada - last stand

- fortress in the Judean wilderness
- Final holdout for Jewish rebels
- All of the Jewish rebels (more than 900) committed mass suicide

9. Jamnia - the reworking of Judaism

Center of learning set up in Jamnia (Mediterranean coast) by Rabbis
Only group to survive: Pharisees
Emphasis on law, synagogue
Moving toward Mishnah and Talmud

10. Bar Kochba and the Second Jewish Revolt against Rome - destruction of the nation

Factors

ban on circumcision

Emperor Hadrian – attempt to build pagan temple in Jerusalem

Bar Kochba

Name – drawn from Num 24

many considered to be the Messiah

Result of Second Revolt - Romans crushed the rebellion (AD 135)

Jews were banished from the city of Jerusalem

Nation was destroyed

Israel as a political entity ceased to exist until 1948.

II. Conclusion: General lessons from the historical background to the New Testament

- Lesson 1: The events of the New Testament took place within history.
- Lesson 2: God sent His Son at the right time.

Factors:

Jewish diaspora and Gentile god-fearers

Pax Romana/political stability/ease of travel

Common language

Need for a Savior