

## Exploring the Historical, Religious, and Social Contexts of Jesus

### The Teaching Series

(Feb 21) The Self-Understanding of Israelites was shaped by their story of God choosing his covenant people.

(Feb 28) The Religion of Second Temple Israel depends upon the grace of God.

(March 7) The Distinctive Groups and Characters in Jesus' World – with a focus on Pharisees and Sinners.

(March 14) Social-Cultural Assumptions and Worldviews shared by the Gospel writers and their readers/hearers.

### Week One:

Part A (20 mins): Jesus was religiously Jewish, not just ethnically Jewish.

Part B (10 mins): Reading the Bible of Jesus from the perspective of a Second Temple Jew

Part C (60 mins): The Story of God and His People (Israel)

### Summary Week One

Every detail needs a story (a context); every story needs a “back story.” (ILLUSTRATION: “It’s not raining today!”) The Gospels locate Jesus within the world of his time:

In the fifteenth year of the reign of **Emperor Tiberius**, when **Pontius Pilate** was governor of Judea, and Herod [Antipas] was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John, son of Zechariah, in the wilderness. (Luke 3:1-2)

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, “**The time is fulfilled**, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news” (Mark 1:14-15).

- 1) The relationship between the one God and his one people, Israel, was expressed in **Covenant**. The sign of that covenant was **circumcision**. The story of Israel is the story of a relationship between the One True God (**monotheism**) and the One People he calls to himself (**election**). God dwelt in the Holy of Holies within the **Temple**, in the midst of his holy people, in the holy city Jerusalem, in the holy land. Every aspect of their lives reflected this privileged relationship.
- 2) The hope of Israel was that God would bless his people as a Nation that the whole world would envy, as a testament to his glory. (As in the days of David and Solomon.)

Those who are weak will survive as a remnant; those who were exiles will become a strong nation. Then I, the LORD, will rule from Jerusalem as their king forever. As for you, Jerusalem, the citadel of God’s people, your royal might and power will come back to you again. The kingship will be restored to my precious Jerusalem. (Micah 4:7-8)

- 3) The Hebrew Bible is a story of blessing, of judgment and exile, and of remnant and restoration. Psalm 106 is an example of how Israel frames its story.

Like our ancestors, we have sinned. We have done wrong! We have acted wickedly! Our ancestors in Egypt were not impressed by the LORD’s miraculous deeds. They soon forgot his many acts of kindness to them. Instead, they rebelled against him at the Red Sea. Even so, he saved them—to defend the honour of his name and to demonstrate his mighty power... Save us, O LORD our God! Gather us back from among the nations, so we can thank your holy name and rejoice and praise you.

- 4) Israel knew that the Day of the Lord was approaching, and that this would be a day of salvation and judgment.
- 5) At the time of Jesus, the theme of the common story – Israel is God’s chosen people who will be a great nation that will bring blessing to the world, seemed to be contradicted by the domination of the Romans over Israel. This raised three questions:
  - a) Where is God?
  - b) Who are his people?
  - c) Where are we up to in the story (i.e., what happens next)?

## Part A: Jesus was religiously Jewish, not merely ethnically Jewish

- (1) **Jesus' heritage:** Matthew 1:1, "An account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of [King] David, the son of Abraham."
- (2) **Circumcision.** Luke 2:21, "When the eighth day came, it was time to circumcise the child, and he was called Jesus..."
- (3) **Piety of Jesus' family.** Luke 1:5-6, "there was a priest named Zechariah... His wife was descended from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. Both of them were righteous before God, living blamelessly according to all the commandments and regulations of the Lord." And, v.30, "The angel said to her, 'Mary, for you have found favour with God.'" And Matthew 1: 19, "Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man..." Also, cousin John (the Baptist). And, the witness of Simeon ("righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, Luke 2:25) and Anna ("She never left the temple but worshipped there with fasting and prayer night and day," Luke 2:37).
- (4) **Sabbath and Synagogue.** Luke 4:16, "When he came to Nazareth, where Jesus had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom."
- (5) **Temple.** John 8:2, "Early in the morning Jesus came again to the temple."
- (6) **Passover.** Luke 2:41, "Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover."
- (7) **Festival of Dedication (Hanukkah).** John 10:22, "At that time the Festival of the Dedication took place in Jerusalem. It was winter..." **Festival of Booths.** John 7:14, "About the middle of the festival Jesus went up into the temple and began to teach."
- (8) **Baptism.** Matthew 3:13, "Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him." And, vv.1-2, "In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.'"
- (9) **Commitment to YHWH.** Mathew 3:16-17, "...suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw God's Spirit descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from the heavens said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.'" And 6:9-10, Jesus taught them, "Pray, then, in this way: Our Father in heaven, may your name be revered as holy. May your kingdom come..."
- (10) **Jesus' expertise in Israel's Scriptures.** Matthew 22:36, The experts in Torah came to test Jesus asking, "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?"
- (11) **Jesus' place within the story of Israel.** Matthew 1:17, "So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David to the deportation to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to the Messiah, fourteen generations." And v.21, "you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

**Conclusion:** We cannot understand Jesus, his actions, or his teachings unless we accept that he was a first-century Jew. Without an historically informed imagination, we are in danger of projecting our contexts and religious assumptions on to Jesus. Years before his crucifixion, Jesus called his fellow Jews to believe the gospel, which obviously must be more than a reference to his death on the cross for our sins.

## Part B: Story Tellers, Scribes, and Editors

The origin of what we now call the Old Testament is, mostly, an unobserved phenomenon. Even acknowledging the inspiration of God in the process does not resolve questions around the sources that contribute to what we now possess in the text. Undoubtedly, part of the process involved stories told and retold, the use of written sources (some of which we know of only by name), and editors and compilers creating texts. Acknowledging the history of the how the Old Testament came to be allows us to read it with a clearer eye and to hear it better as authoritative Scripture. (See the broad overview provided by *The Lion Handbook of the Bible*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (1999) or, from the Bible Odyssey site (provided by the academic Society of Biblical Literature), [How Was the Bible Formed?](#) and [How Was the Bible Written and Transmitted?](#).)

The Old Testament did not arise at one time, in one place, from a single author. The Old Testament contains evidence in its language and cultural assumptions of coming into existence gradually.

- (1) **Oral transmission.** Stories are told and retold because they remain valuable to successive generations. The retelling is shaped by story patterns and motifs, and by the needs of contemporary hearers. Stories are told to be heard rather than read.
- (2) **Written sources.** “Archaeology has shown that Judah developed a writing culture quite late in its history, with the 8th and 7th centuries B.C.E. marking the zenith.” This does not mean that there are no written sources prior to that. Rather, it suggests that those earlier written sources were brought together by a process of editing and compilation into the documents that we now know. Decisions about which sources to include and how to integrate those sources would be influenced by contemporary application of the texts.
- (3) **Purpose of history.** The Ancient Near East developed a form of history that comprised record-keeping and religious accounts of their gods. In the Greco-Roman world, led by Herodotus, narrative history was developed to learn from the past and for the edification of the contemporary reader.

(4) **Purpose of Scripture**

Deuteronomy 6:4-9, “Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone., You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”


2 Timothy 3:14-17, “But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have known sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that the person of God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.”

Romans 15:4, “For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope.”

1 Corinthians 10:11, “These things happened to them to serve as an example, and they were written down to instruct us...”

**Conclusion.** Our reading of Scripture is intended to shape us into the people of God, evidenced by our good work and faithfulness. When the Bible is used as a reference source to address questions of abstract, academic interest it is no longer being read as Scripture.

---



# The Lion Handbook to the Bible

THIRD EDITION  
Completely revised and expanded

Edited by  
PAT AND DAVID ALEXANDER





# The scribes

Jo Bailey Wells

Ancient Israel did not live in a world dependent on oral tradition alone. Our inheritance of the Bible, and of the Old Testament in particular, owes its existence entirely to generations of Jewish scribes, who copied and recopied portions of scripture for more than 1,500 years.

The alphabet was already established in Canaan when Israel became a nation. This provided a simple means for recording accounts of divine revelations, oral traditions and historical events.

The oldest Hebrew texts which have been found date from the 9th century BC, though it is quite likely that previous generations of Israelite scribes were also writing with the alphabet.

## The written word

While much was told by word of mouth and passed on that way from generation to generation (for example, Exodus 13:14-15), the existence of writing meant there was something to check against.

Consider, for example, the giving of the law on Mount Sinai. It is highly significant that the story says Moses was given the commandments, not just verbally, but also written down on tablets of stone. According to the accounts in Exodus and Deuteronomy, Moses carried these down the mountain and placed them in the Ark for safe-keeping (Deuteronomy 10:4-5).

Writing carries significant impact within a predominantly oral culture:

- It lends authority Writing gives power to words in a way that

every doorstep (Deuteronomy 6:9; 11:20). While the original texts of the law were kept safely in the Ark (eventually, in the sanctuary of the Temple in Jerusalem), copies could be made that anyone with questions or doubts might consult.

**It provides for accuracy** The words of a prophet might be written the day they were spoken and kept for verification (compare Deuteronomy 18:22). Records about kings, their policies and related events could be maintained and updated, and later used as sources by the biblical historians (for example, 1 Kings 11:41; 2 Kings 23:28).

## Scribes as writers

Understood literally, a scribe – in Hebrew, *sopher* – is any person who writes. Although anyone who was determined could learn to read and perhaps also write Hebrew without enormous effort, the term is normally used to describe a designated guild of people who fulfilled the special task of writing – and copying – Israel's sacred and historical accounts.

Before the exile, these people probably formed administrative centres in the royal court. Later on, around the 2nd century BC, 'the Scribes' became a distinct political party made up of a highly-educated class of people, affiliated with the Pharisees.

Ezra is depicted as the archetypal scribe (see also 'The scribe'). That is to say, he was a member of a learned class of people who devoted himself to copying, guarding and

One recurring motif is that of the hero who leaves home and later returns having found fortune:

- Jacob flees his brother Esau and returns with wives and wealth (Genesis 27 – 35).
- Joseph is banished by his brothers yet later rules over them (Genesis 37 – 45).

The significance of these stories does not lie with the motif itself, but in the subtle way in which the motif is used and varied to make a point. For Jacob, it is hard to return because he must first make peace with Esau. In the story of Joseph, the homecoming takes place in reverse, with the brothers unwittingly encountering Joseph.

## The art of the storyteller

Stories which are told (parables, for example) are different from stories intended to be read (such as novels). They must hold the hearers' attention to gain effect. We can identify some storytelling techniques in the parables of Jesus:

- **Reversal** The motif of the hero leaving home and returning with a fortune is reversed in the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32). This provides a surprise twist-in-the-tail.
- **Repetition** In the parable of the tenants (Luke 20:9-16) there is a three-fold repetition of the sending of a servant to the vineyard for the harvest. This serves to build tension and anticipate the climax when – finally – the owner sends his son.
- **Brevity** The narrative detail of an oral story is terse, leaving much to the listeners' imagination. That which is given, therefore – the name of a character or the colour of a garment (the rich man, in purple, and Lazarus, Luke 16:19-20) – carries great moment.
- **Direct speech** The plot of a



parable frequently unfolds through the use of direct speech. In the parable of the persistent widow, we hear not only the pleas of the widow but also the private mutterings of the unjust judge (Luke 18:1-8).

- **Language** If stories are to be striking, their language must be colourful and concrete, even to the point of exaggeration. It is not necessarily intended to be taken literally. Consider the scale of the debt in the parable of the unmerciful servant (Matthew 18:21-35). Ten thousand talents is an unimaginable amount of money, so as to emphasize the limitless scope of God's forgiveness.

## Can we rely on oral tradition?

Understanding the likely origins of biblical material helps us to be wise in the way we read and use it. For example, although it might be unwise to seek to reconstruct Israel's earliest history in precise detail from the stories in Genesis, it is highly appropriate to use the same stories as examples of faithful (and unfaithful) living. They express truths which have proved revelatory and instructive in the experience of countless generations who have

lived by them, treasured them and passed them on.

Furthermore, inhabitants of oral cultures have more reliable memories than those of us who depend upon filing-cabinets and computers. The Israelites, especially, worked hard at story-keeping. They valued the gift of memory – developing sophisticated memorization techniques – and undertook to recount the stories of God's faithful deeds to succeeding generations:

'Take care: keep careful watch on yourselves so that you do not forget the things that you have seen with your own eyes; do not let them pass from your minds as long as you live, but teach them to your children and to your children's children' (Deuteronomy 4:9; see also 5:1; 6:7, and so on).



In the pre-exilic period Hebrew shared a script with the Canaanites and Phoenicians, based on a 22-letter alphabet. This made reading and writing relatively simple, compared with the cuneiform writing systems in Mesopotamia and Egypt. After the exile, under the influence of the Aramaic script, Hebrew came to be written with fuller block-shaped letters in a 'square' script, as above.

makes them different from the spoken word. Once written, the law could be preserved and remain unchanged for centuries. Thus it became an authoritative source.

- It allows accessibility A piece of writing can be copied any number of times – even onto



# Storykeepers – the oral tradition

Jo Bailey Wells

The story of the people of God in the Old Testament begins with Abraham in Genesis 12. Yet the stories about Abraham and the other patriarchs who followed him – Isaac and Jacob – are told in Genesis from the perspective of hindsight. We read of Abraham's call to *set out* in faith for the promised land from the settled position of Israel's *arrival* in the promised land. The stories are told as if – through the eyes of Moses – Israel is looking back over its pre-history.

This raises the question of how Moses – or whoever wrote Genesis – knew about events that happened at least 600 years before his lifetime. Without denying that Moses was inspired by God, we might imagine he had some written sources from which to build the account. However, we have no evidence of these. Indeed, it is unlikely that a nomadic people was concerned with reading and writing and preserving records. The matter of survival would be more immediate.

It is now recognized, rather, that

the stories in Genesis stem from oral sources circulating among the people. That is, stories about the patriarchs were passed by word-of-mouth from one generation to another, in the manner of folktales, until the point where this living tradition developed also into a written tradition.

Scholars in the field of form criticism (see 'The text and the message') have identified the influence of oral tradition behind many parts of the Bible. In the Old Testament these include particularly the books of Genesis, Exodus, Joshua, Judges and the books of Samuel. In the New Testament, oral tradition has especially influenced the Gospels.

## Travellers' tales

Stories which have come to be written down from oral sources have a particular character, and this is important for the way they are to be understood.

- We cannot tell where or when they originated. The form and

content of a story is liable to change as it is told and retold. Therefore these stories are not suitable material from which to reconstruct a detailed and accurate history.

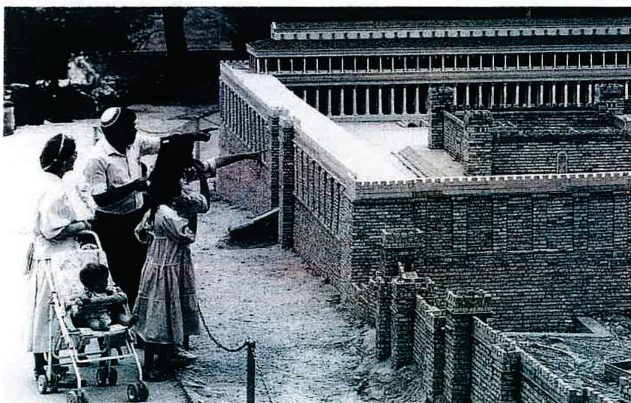
- **The stories are adapted to the needs or situation of the hearers** The patriarchal stories are concerned with promises of land, family rivalries, the longing for descendants and the associated need to protect the patriarch's wife – important concerns for a migrant people. It is therefore relevant for us to ask, 'How might this story be adapted to my situation?', which may be very different.

- **The stories are told to make a particular point**, often a moral point, to enliven or inspire. For example, the story of Abraham's obedience in offering Isaac for sacrifice (Genesis 22) is told in such a way as to inspire the people of Israel to live with the same single-minded faithfulness to God.

- **The themes of oral stories follow typical patterns and motifs** Just as each culture has characteristic genres of folktales (the English tell jokes about Irishmen, Germans recount romances between royal princes and lowly maidens, Kenyans explain how the leopard gained its spots), so there are specific genres of biblical folktales.

An Orthodox Jew in Jerusalem follows God's instruction to pass the story on to his children, as they look at a model of the Temple.

Previous pages: An African storyteller holds an audience spellbound in this painting by Tony Hudson.



interpreting the law. This work demanded care and training over several years (see Psalm 45:1; Ezra 7:6) and was taken very seriously (Jeremiah 8:8). It operated in close relation with the work of the priesthood. According to the tradition, Ezra performed several roles. These are probably idealized in the writing of Ben Sira (Ecclesiasticus 38:24 – 39:11):

- preacher: assembling the people every year in order to read out the law, explain it and urge people to keep it
- judge: listening to those with complaints and giving rulings on particular matters of Jewish law
- teacher: running schools in writing and for the training of apprentice scribes
- academic: studying the law, and producing writing and theory in response.

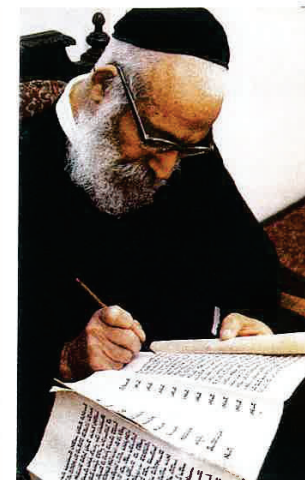
**Copying** The copyist's task was to reproduce the text as accurately as possible. So we cannot tell how many times a portion of the Old Testament has been copied, as long as it has been done well. We can only identify the occasions where mistakes were made, based on the variations between texts.

Differences between texts can be understood to stem from:

- the omission or addition of a word
- misspellings, which later result in misreadings
- the inclusion within the main text of an interpretative note originally intended for the margin
- damage to a scroll, leaving us to guess illegible or missing words
- a scribal alteration, made to soften ideas perceived as offensive.

## Ben Sira's portrait of the ideal scribe, from Ecclesiasticus 39

'He seeks out the wisdom of all the ancients, and is concerned with prophecies; he preserves the sayings of the famous and penetrates the subtleties of parables; he seeks out the hidden meanings of proverbs and is at home with the obscurities of parables. He serves among the great and appears before rulers... If the great Lord is willing, he will be filled with the spirit of understanding... The Lord will direct his counsel and knowledge... He will show the wisdom of what he has learned, and will glory in the law of the Lord's covenant.'



In days long before printing, Hebrew scribes made copies of the scriptures with a care and accuracy which seems extraordinary to readers today, living in a world which generally cares less for truth. Jewish scribes still work with the same scrupulous attention to detail.

Though minor errors were committed by copyists which have passed into the printed text, the process of copying included careful checking and correction.

The close similarity between different copies of the text, transmitted through different channels, originating from different eras and even received in different languages, is remarkable.

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947 – manuscripts over 1,000 years older than anything previously known – has highlighted the extraordinary accuracy of this process.

# Editors at work

Jo Bailey Wells

The Hebrew scriptures, as we know them, are likely to have come into existence gradually. The original sources make up the raw materials, from which it is supposed that generations of editors worked to compile these 'ingredients' until the books reached their final form in the 'canon' (the official agreed list).

This process of editing – or 'redaction', to use the technical term – probably took place from some time before the exile through to the 2nd century BC. The New Testament became 'fixed' much more quickly, and the work of editors is less significant.

## The importance of the editors

Study of the work of the editors is known as 'redaction criticism' (see 'The text and the message'). This attempts to uncover the theological purposes behind the arrangement of material in a book, since the form of the books as we now have them reflects the editors' work as well as the authors' and translators'.

If we can understand how a book came to be written as it is, we are more likely to understand its particular message and perspective.

For example:

- In the books of Samuel, the Song of Hannah is placed at the beginning of the story. This tells the alert reader at an early stage that the story is going to focus on the identification of a 'king', or 'anointed one', in Israel (1 Samuel 2:10), and about God's faithfulness to him. The arrangement of texts within a book affects our broad understanding of the meaning of the whole book.
- In Kings and Chronicles there are



different portrayals of King Manasseh. According to the editor of Kings, judgment and exile came to Judah because of an accumulation of sin, especially that of Manasseh (2 Kings 23:26). In contrast, the Chronicler tells of the *repentance* of Manasseh, to show how God is always ready to respond to a penitent (2 Chronicles 33:12-17). In the history books, especially, the editors selected their stories to bring out a particular interpretation of events.

Without the work of editors who gathered and arranged material, there would be no Bible. These scrolls of the scriptures in a synagogue at Tsefat in northern Israel stand as a testimony to their work.

## COLLECTING AND ARRANGING THE OLD TESTAMENT SECTIONS

### The Pentateuch: Genesis to Deuteronomy

The first five books of the Bible appear as a single coherent story – as if produced by a single author with no need for an editor. Yet there are many different styles of writing, and some stories are repeated from different perspectives. It is commonly supposed, therefore, that this represents the final work of compilers who wove together several sources.

The 19th-century German scholar, Wellhausen, suggested there were four, known as J, E, D and P, which originated from different periods and places. Each treated the origins of Israel in its own distinctive way. If this is actually so (and it remains a theory), the story we now have represents not only the work of 'weaving' by the final editors – during or after the exile – but also that of earlier 'sub-editors' on the individual sources.

### The Deuteronomistic history: Joshua, Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings

These historical books take their section title from Deuteronomy, the book they follow, since they continue the same themes and theology of covenant.

Their composition is complicated, because they contain traditions from Israel's early period as a tribal organization in the promised land, as well as the stories of royal administrations from David through to the exile.

So the books bring together work done by different generations of historians. The reports of past events are also given the benefit of hindsight: the editors reflect on the past in the light of current events (around the time of exile). These 'editors' were, therefore, sophisticated scholars and writers too.

### The later histories: Chronicles – Ezra – Nehemiah

Whether or not these books originated from the same author, or are by different authors, they have been brought together by an editor (known as 'the Chronicler') to form a continuous narrative, emphasized by the repetition at the beginning of Ezra of the last two verses of 2 Chronicles.

This narrative, dated around 400 BC (though sometimes later), is told so as to encourage the small restored community to believe that they really are the inheritors of God's ancient promises to Israel.

It is possible that 'the Chronicler' had a major influence in gathering and arranging other Old Testament books to form the canon.

### The Psalms

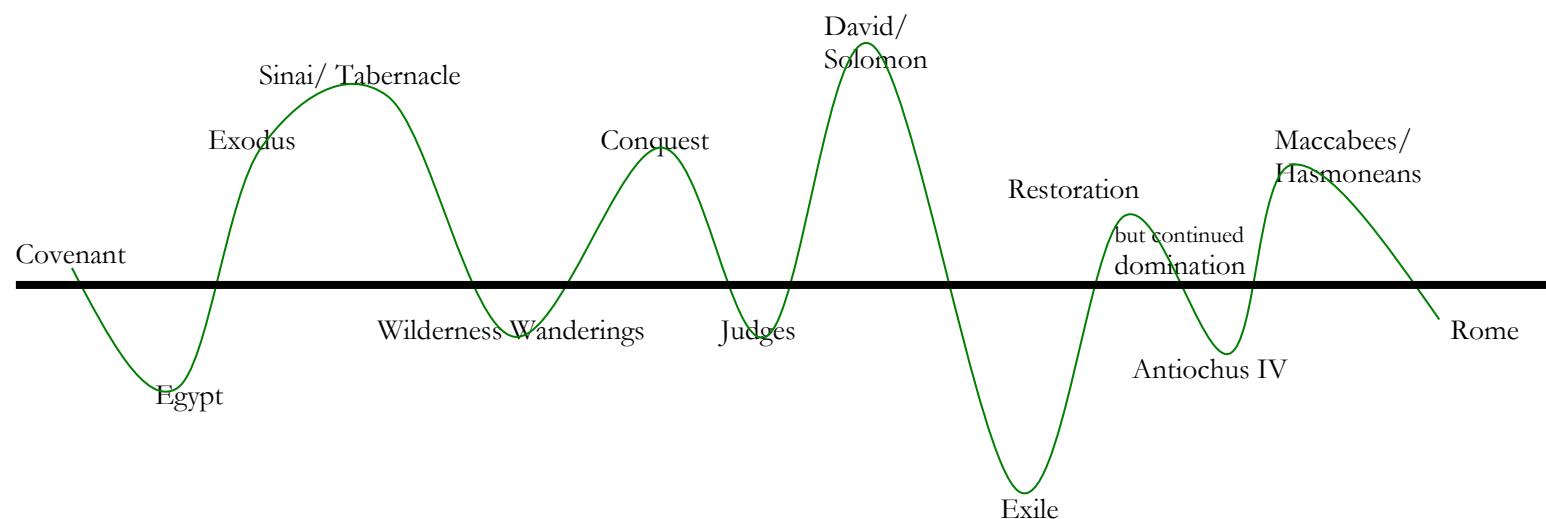
These derive from the worship of ancient Israel. It is likely that these 'hymns' were assembled during the exile, when the people were deprived of normal worship at the Temple. The process of editing has gathered the collection so as to create a book for study (Psalm 1 sets out this idea at the very beginning). So the psalms are arranged into five 'books', which include smaller collections as whole units (e.g. the Psalms of Asaph, 73-83; the Songs of Ascent, 120-134). Furthermore, each psalm is given a heading to aid meditation (see e.g. Psalm 51).

### The Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, the 12 'minor prophets'

It is possible that Jeremiah was responsible for the formation of the book bearing his name (see Jeremiah 36:32). But, in general, it is likely that the records of the pre-exilic and exilic prophets were preserved through the exile and edited afterwards.

As with the Deuteronomistic history, the material is re-assessed in the light of the experience, and post-exilic books (Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi) are added.

## Part C: The Story of God's Covenant with Israel



<b>Covenant (Abraham)</b>	I belong to God's chosen people – a privilege and an obligation.
<b>Exodus (YHWH), Sinai/Torah (Moses), Tabernacle, Wilderness</b>	God is our Redeemer, who rescues his people from dominating “godless” powers. The Torah instructs on how to live lives pleasing to God.
<b>Conquest, Settlement in the “Promised Land”</b>	God has given this land for our own possession. When we are dominated by a “godless” nation, then God is punishing us for our faithlessness.
<b>Kingdom – David, Solomon, Temple</b>	Israel as a nation, led by a King after God's own heart, will be a beacon to the world. The God of all the Earth, dwells in his Temple – the point at which earth and heaven meet.
<b>Divided Kingdom – Destruction of Israel (“ten lost tribes”) and Exile of Judah to Babylon</b>	Faithless Kings and a faithless people lose the blessings and their access to God. (Although God always preserves a remnant.
<b>Restoration and establishment of Second Temple</b> (Persian rule, 538-332 B.C.E., Hellenistic period – 333-110 B.C.E.)	“Those who are weak will survive as a remnant; those who were exiles will become a strong nation. Then I, the LORD, will rule from Jerusalem as their king forever.” Micah 4:7
<b>Desecration of the Temple, Antiochus IV Epiphany, Judas Maccabees (Hanukkah)</b> Judaism(s) wrestle with their Story	God fights on the side of those who are zealous for his ways. Martyrdom does not defeat the purposes of God. It is possible for the Temple and the leaders of Israel to be corrupted and bring the nation under judgement.
<b>Herod the Great (37 – 04 B.C.E.)</b>	Not a true King of Israel.
<b>Time of Jesus</b>	Where is God? Who are his people? Where are we up to in the story (i.e., what happens next)?
<b>Destruction of the Second Temple and Jerusalem, and futile <i>Bar Kokhba</i> rebellion</b>	



## The Chronology of the Story of Israel

Patriarchs, Exodus, Wilderness, Conquest and Settlement, Kingdom, Divided Kingdom, Exile/Babylonian Captivity, Post-exile (Second Temple)

	Historical Setting (not time of writing)	
<b>Genesis</b>	Pre-history – 17 <sup>th</sup> C. B.C.E.	<b>Covenant</b> (Abraham)
<b>Exodus / Leviticus / Numbers / Deuteronomy</b>	14 <sup>th</sup> – 13 <sup>th</sup> C. B.C.E.	<b>Exodus</b> (YHWH), Sani/ <b>Torah</b> (Moses), <b>Tabernacle</b> , Wilderness
<b>Joshua / Judges / Ruth / 1 Samuel</b>	13 <sup>th</sup> – 12 <sup>th</sup> C. B.C.E.	Conquest, Settlement in the “Promised <b>Land</b> ”
<b>2 Samuel / 1 Kings / 1 Chronicles</b>	12 <sup>th</sup> – 11 <sup>th</sup> C. B.C.E.	Kingdom – <b>David</b> , Solomon, <b>Temple</b>
<b>Job / Psalms / Proverbs / Song of Songs / Ecclesiastes</b>	11 <sup>th</sup> – 6 <sup>th</sup> C. B.C.E.	
<b>2 Kings / 2 Chronicles / Lamentations</b>	11 <sup>th</sup> – 7 <sup>th</sup> C. B.C.E.	Divided Kingdom – Destruction of Israel (“ten lost tribes”) and <b>Exile</b> of Judah to Babylon
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Northern (Israel):</b> Amos, Hosea</li> <li>○ <b>Southern (Judah):</b> Jonah, Micah, Isaiah, Nahum Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Jeremiah, Obadiah</li> <li>○ <b>Post-Exilic:</b> Ezekiel, Daniel</li> </ul>	c.975 B.C.E. Israel and Judah 722 B.C.E. Assyrians conquer Israel 597-586 B.C.E. Babylonians exile Judah	
<b>Ezra / Esther / Nehemiah</b>	516 B.C.E.	<b>Restoration</b> and establishment of Second Temple
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Zechariah, Haggai, Malachi, Joel</li> </ul>		(Persian rule, 538-332 B.C.E., Hellenistic period – 333-110 B.C.E.)
<b>1-2 Maccabees</b>	167-164 B.C.E. Maccabean revolt	Desecration of the Temple, Antiochus IV Epiphany, Judas Maccabees (Hanukkah)
	140-63 B.C.E. Hasmoneans	Judaism(s) wrestle with their Story
	63 B.C.E. Rome	Herod the Great (37 – 04 B.C.E.)
<b>Gospels</b>	06 B.C.E. – 30/33 C.E.	<b>Time of Jesus</b>
<b>Acts, Epistles</b>	33 C.E. - 62 C.E.	Early Church
	70 C.E.	Destruction of the Second Temple and Jerusalem,
	132 – 136 C.E.	futile <i>Bar Kokhba</i> rebellion

### Genesis 12-50. The Patriarchs – Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (= Israel)

Genesis 12:2-3, “**I will make of you a great nation**, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse, and **in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.**”

Genesis 17:1-14, “...I [the LORD] will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for **an everlasting covenant**, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land where you are now an alien, **all the land of Canaan, for a perpetual holding**, and I will be their God... This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: ...Throughout your generations **every male among you shall be circumcised** when he is eight days old... Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.”

- 1) Begins with God’s call of Abraham (Gen 12) and includes the covenant of circumcision (Gen 17:11-14).
- 2) The Promises of the Covenant. A great nation (Gen 17:6) and possession of the land (Gen 12:7; 15:8).
- 3) The Twelve sons of Israel enslaved in Egypt (Gen 15:12-14).

### Exodus/Leviticus/Numbers/ Deuteronomy. Moses, Exodus, Mt. Sinai, Tabernacle, Wilderness

- 1) Moses and the Exodus. God (Elohim) reveals himself uniquely to Moses as the God of the Jews by his name YHWH (Yahweh, LORD). God commands the Pharaoh, “Let my people go.”
- 2) Sinai Covenant – The relationship between God and his people is sealed (Ex 19:5). NB: God’s redemptive grace is demonstrated towards Israel before he gives to them the Torah.
  - i) Monotheism – Henotheism
  - ii) Sabbath -
  - iii) Morality and purity and ceremonial –
- 3) The Building of the **Tabernacle** provides a dwelling place for God is in the midst of his people – “Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle” (Exodus 40:34).
- 4) Life and Death, Blessings and Curses. Deuteronomy 28-30

See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity. If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I am commanding you today, by loving the LORD your God, walking in his ways, and observing his commandments, decrees, and ordinances, then you shall live and become numerous, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to possess. But if your heart turns away and you do not hear but are led astray to bow down to other gods and serve them, I declare to you today that you shall certainly perish; you shall not live long in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, loving the LORD your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him, for that means life to you and length of days, so that you may live in the land that the LORD swore to give to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.”

### Joshua/Judges Conquest and Possession of the Land

- 1) Joshua and the Land of Milk and Honey, the Promised Land.
- 2) Israel demands their own king, 1 Samuel 8:1-22

But the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel; they said, “No! but we are determined to have a king over us, so that we also may be like other nations, and that our king may govern us and go out before us and fight our battles.” The LORD said to Samuel, “Listen to the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but **they have rejected me from being king over them.**”
- 3) Saul is chosen to be the first king but proves unworthy.

### The Davidic Kingdom and the Building of the Temple – David, Solomon

- 1) The establishment of Israel as a kingdom led by King David, a friend of God, and his son, King Solomon the Wise. David became the symbol of the ideal king of Israel (the king when Israel was “at its best”).
- 2) Establishment of Jerusalem as the centre of the kingdom and the building of the Temple
- 3) **The high point of Israel as a Nation.**

### Divided Kingdom – Rehoboam/Jeroboam I (922 B.C.E.), Assyrians (721 B.C.E.)

- 1) Rehoboam, son of Solomon, king of Judah and Jeroboam I, king of Israel (1 Kings 12)
- 2) The Fall of Samaria (721 BCE) to the Assyrians; 2 Kings 18:9-12.  
“In the sixth year of Hezekiah [King of Judah], which was the ninth year of King Hoshea of Israel, Samaria was taken. The king of Assyria carried the Israelites away to Assyria, settled them in Halah, on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes, because they did not obey the voice of the LORD their God but transgressed his covenant-- all that Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded; they neither listened nor obeyed” (2 Kings 18:9-12).

### The Fall of Jerusalem – Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (586 B.C.E.)

- 1) The destruction of the Temple and the Exile of the People (2 Kings 24:20-25:21) – “So Judah went into exile out of its land” (25:21).
- 2) The Babylonian Exile is Judah’s ultimate low point: “How could we sing the LORD’s song in a foreign land?” (Psalm 137:4).

### (Partial-) Restoration known as the Second Temple Period (516BCE – 70CE)

- 1) In 539BCE, the Persian king Cyrus allowed the Jews to return and rebuild Jerusalem. Not all the Jews returned to Jerusalem; this was the beginning of the **Diaspora**.<sup>1</sup>  
In the first year of King Cyrus of Persia, in fulfillment of the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah, the LORD stirred up the spirit of King Cyrus of Persia so that he sent a herald throughout all his kingdom and also declared in a written edict: “Thus says King Cyrus of Persia: The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may the LORD his God be with him! Let him go up.” (2 Chronicles 36:22-23).
- 2) 516BCE the Second (rebuilt) Temple (see Haggai 2:1-9) and the reforms of Ezra  
In the second year of King Darius, in the seventh month, on the twenty-first day of the month, the word of the LORD came by the prophet Haggai, saying: Speak now to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people, and say, Who is left among you that saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now? Is it not in your sight as nothing? Yet now take courage, O Zerubbabel, says the LORD; take courage, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest; take courage, all you people of the land, says the LORD; work, for I am with you, says the LORD of hosts, according to the promise that I made you when you came out of Egypt. My spirit abides among you; do not fear. For thus says the LORD of hosts: Once again, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land; and I will shake all the nations, so that the treasure of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with splendor, says the LORD of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, says the LORD of hosts. The latter splendour of this house shall be greater than the former, says the LORD of hosts; and in this place I will give prosperity, says the LORD of host (Haggai 2:1-9).
- 3) The great hopes and prophecies of Haggai were not to be realised in a concrete way. For this reason many Jews (according to the New Testament scholar

---

<sup>1</sup> The **Diaspora** is the term used to describe those Jews who live outside of Israel, e.g., Alexandria (Egypt), Rome, Babylon.



## A Time of Foreign Domination– Cyrus the Persian (539 B.C.E.), Diaspora, Alexander the Great (331), Ptolemy (311-198), and Seleucus (198-143)

- 1) Persian Domination until 331 BCE when the Greeks conquer (Alexander the Great). In 311 BCE Alexander's kingdom is divided among his generals.
- 2) 311-198 BCE, Israel is subjected to Ptolemaic domination (Egyptian). Then in 198 BCE – Syria (the Seleucids) conquers and establishes domination over Israel. (It must be remembered that both the Ptolemaics and the Seleucids are Greek.)
- 3) 175 BCE – **Antiochus IV Epiphanes** (= Manifest of God)
  - i) The King of Syria, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, wants to unite his nation, which includes a number of conquered peoples, around one culture, one language, and one approach to religion. This process of **Hellenization** – the domination of Greek language and culture – meant that the religion and practices of the Jewish people needed to be stopped.
  - ii) This process was implemented in Jerusalem through the corruption of the High Priests. E.g., Jason – a Greek name – built a Greek gymnasium (= school) in Jerusalem.

## Maccabean Revolution (167-143 B.C.E.)

- 1) 15 Kislev (Nov 29 – Dec 27) 167 BCE – **The Abomination in the Temple** (cf. Mark 13:14)
  - i) Antiochus IV Epiphanes tried to impose syncretistic worship by placing the statue of Zeus Olympus in the Temple of YHWH and by forbidding observance of Torah (1 Macc. 1:41-57; 2 Macc. 6:1-6).  
**2 Maccabees 6:1-6** *Not long after this, the king sent an Athenian senator to compel the Jews to forsake the laws of their ancestors and no longer to live by the laws of God; also to pollute the temple in Jerusalem and to call it the temple of Olympian Zeus, .... Harsh and utterly grievous was the onslaught of evil. For the temple was filled with debauchery and reveling by the Gentiles, who dallied with prostitutes 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 that were forbidden by the laws. People could neither keep the sabbath, nor observe the festivals of their ancestors, nor so much as confess themselves to be Jews.*
  - ii) “Antiochus...made virtually all of Judaism's distinctives illegal and transgressed its holiest laws by renaming the temple for Zeus Olympius, setting up a pagan altar there on which swine were sacrificed, prohibiting circumcision and Sabbath observance, banning and burning copies of the Torah, and ordering sacrifices to pagan gods at various altars around the country” (Blomberg, JG 15).
- 2) In response to this attempt to forcefully assimilate Jews into Greek religious practices those practices that were distinctly Jewish, e.g., circumcision and food purity laws, came to identify a person's faithfulness to the God of Israel.
- 3) A pious Jew named **Mattathias** and his sons, including **Judas Maccabees** (the “hammer”), Jonathan, and Simon, lead a unlikely revolt against Antiochus IV. This revolt becomes known as **the Maccabean Revolt** in light of Judas' military leadership.
  - i) **1 Maccabees 2:15-28** *The king's officers who were enforcing the apostasy came to the town of Modein 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 town, and supported by sons and brothers. Now be the first to come and do what the king commands, as all the Gentiles and the people of Judah and those that are 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, everyone of them abandoning the religion of their ancestors, I and my sons and my brothers will continue to live by the covenant of our ancestors. 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 on the altar in Modein, 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 on 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, just as Phinehas [Numbers 25] did against Zimri son of Salu. Then Mattathias cried out in the town with a loud voice, saying: “Let every one who is zealous for the law and supports the covenant come out with me!” Then he and his sons fled to the hills and left all that they had in the town.*

- 4) 25 Kislev 164 BCE – Reconsecration of the Temple by Judas Maccabeus. (Although there was insufficient holy oil to burn for 7 days while more oil was consecrated for use in the temple, miraculously the one day supply of oil burnt for 7 days. This “miracle of lights” is still celebrated by Jews today in the festival of Hanukkah.)  
Judah... Judah... Judah! Twenty-two hundred years ago, Mattathias bore Judah, a worthy foe, Judah and his Maccabees, oh Judah and his Maccabees. / Now, the Greeks were ruling the world back then, It was Helen this, Helen that, Helen back again, Judah and his Maccabees, oh Judah and his Maccabees Antiochus was the ruler of the Greek army, and Mattathias (Who?) led the Maccabees. / Mattathias said "Judah, Listen son, We've got to get this Antiochus on the run, Now I'm gettin' old and tired and sore, So take my killer Maccabees and let 'em roar!" / Judah and his Maccabees, Judah brought Antiochus to his knees, Yeah, Judah and his Maccabees, oh, Judah brought Antiochus to his knees. / It was the buzz around town that Antiochus fled, When Judah and his posse came to sting 'em dead! / ... / It was B. C. E. one sixty five, Somebody went and stirred up the hive, With one drop of oil to get 'em through the night, Eight days later they still saw the light! <sup>2</sup>
- 5) During the Maccabean period<sup>3</sup> people [170 years before Jesus] began to question who was “true Israel.” There were various assessments about who was a true Jew: was it enough to be a circumcised descendant of Abraham or were their minimum Torah duties that were required?
- 6) During the Maccabean period the identity of the “true” High Priest became an issue and, with that, concerns developed around the status of the Temple and the validity of the sacrifices.
- 7) The Maccabean period, and the subsequent domination by the Romans, highlighted questions about God’s current relationship with Israel.

### Hasmonean Dynasty (143-63 B.C.E.). Golden age of Jewish nationalism

- 1) Independence from Syria was finally declared by Simon (a brother of Judas Maccabees) in 143/142 BCE the Hasmonean Dynasty was established. Finally, Jews were in control of Israel again!
- 2) “The ambiguity of the subsequent years, in which the heirs of the successful revolutionaries ruled as priest-kings, did not dim the sense of victory of their god, but created the same sort of puzzle that was left after the so-called ‘return from exile’: a great vindication had occurred, but it now seems as though there must be yet another one to come.” (Wright, *NTPG*, 159)
- 3) John Hyrcanus, High Priest and “king” [a corruption], 134-104 bce, expanded Israel’s borders through the forced conversion of the Idumeans. He also destroyed the Samaritan temple, which was a rival to the temple in Jerusalem.
- 4) Aristobulus I (104-103 BCE)
- 5) Alexander Jannaeus (103-76 BCE)
- 6) Queen Shelamzion Alexandra (76-67 BCE, eldest son Hyrcanus II high priest )
- 7) Aristobulus II (67-63 BCE, younger brother)
- 8) Hyrcanus II (63-40 BCE, with the help of Antipater)
- 9) Antigonus (40-37 BCE)
- 10) King Herod the Great (37-4 BCE)

### Return to Foreign Domination, Rome and Pompey (63 B.C.E.)

- 1) Fall of Jerusalem to Pompey, 63 BCE, who walked into the Holy of Holies!
- 2) Herod the Great, 37-4 BCE, a Roman Client King and not a real King of the Jews
  - i) Idumean (a half-Jew), married into the Hasmonean line in an attempt to gain legitimacy.
  - ii) Rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem making it one of the great temples of the world (20BCE – c.60CE)
  - iii) Died 4 BCE, which suggests that Jesus was born in 6 BCE.

---

<sup>2</sup> [Judah and His Maccabees - Karen Hart Music](#). A Hanukkah Gospel Story

<sup>3</sup> You can read about this in the OT Apocrypha; especially 1-2 Maccabees.

3) A time of unfilled desires among many of the Jews

The Prophet Zephaniah

*Sing aloud, O daughter Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter Jerusalem! The LORD has taken away the judgments against you, he has turned away your enemies. The king of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; you shall fear disaster no more. On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: Do not fear, O Zion; do not let your hands grow weak. The LORD, your God, is in your midst, a warrior who gives victory; he will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you in his love; he will exult over you with loud singing as on a day of festival. I will remove disaster from you, so that you will not bear reproach for it. I will deal with all your oppressors at that time. And I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth. At that time I will bring you home, at the time when I gather you; for I will make you renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes, says the LORD. (Zep 3:14-20)*

Mary the Mother of Jesus

*“The Lord has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever” (Lk 1:51-55).*

John the Baptizer’s Father

*“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them. He has raised up a mighty savior for us in the house of his servant David, as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us. Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors, and has remembered his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham, to grant us that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days” (Luke 1:68-75)*

4) **The Time of Jesus.** After Herod, his kingdom was divided among his surviving sons: Herod Antipas, Phillip the Tetrarch, Archelaus,

i) Herod Antipas – Galilee and Perea from 4 BCE to 39 CE.

Judas the Galilean (note: where Jesus grew up) led a revolt against the Romans when they tried to organise a census in 6 CE (referred to in Acts 5:37). The Romans used censuses to tax and control a local population. Judas is considered to be a Pharisee who had “zealot” tendencies. He declared “No King but God” for he recognised only God as ruler and Lord of Israel, not Caesar.

ii) Phillip the Tetrarch – North-eastern realms (mainly non-Jewish) from 4 BCE to 34 CE.

iii) Archelaus 4, BCE – 6 CE, was a failed leaders leading to the Romans to make Idumea, Judaea and Samaria into an imperial province under the rule of a Roman prefect who’s HQ was Caesarea.

5) Pontius Pilate, 26-36/37CE, was one of those prefects who had a difficult time understanding the religious sensitivities of the Jews and often exercised poor judgment. He was ruler of Judea during the time of Jesus’ ministry (probably 27-30CE; possibly 30-34CE)

(1) The Standards Scandal [*Ant.* 18.55-59]

(2) The Aqueduct Scandal [*Ant.* 18.60-62]



## POST-JESUS: THE TIME OF THE EARLY CHURCH.

### Before the Jewish War

- 1) Herod Agrippa (37-44 CE), ruled all Israel from 41-44 CE. Brief reassertion of his grandfather's kingdom.
- 2) Followed by resumption of direct Roman Rule which was accompanied by increasing unrest and violence.
- 3) The Temple was finished and unemployment increased.

### Jewish War of 66-70 CE

- 1) The great Jewish War was touched off by a riot between Greeks and Jews at Caesarea in the spring of 66. Due to the criminal folly of the Roman procurator Gessius Florus, Zealot elements in the Jerusalem populace were able to escalate hostilities into a major rebellion against Rome. To meet this challenge, Nero dispatched Flavius Vespasian with three Roman legions, and he conquered Galilee and Samaria by 69, leaving his son Titus to conquer Jerusalem and end the war. After an excruciating siege, the temple was torched on August 30, A.D. 70, and Jerusalem itself was destroyed by September 26. When Herod's great fortress at Masada fell three years later on May 2, the last Jewish resistance was crushed. Considerable precision in dates and details are provided by an eyewitness and participant in the struggle, Flavius Josephus (see 2.2.4 below). After Jerusalem's destruction, Jamnia became the home of the Great Sanhedrin. (DLNT)
- 2) Jerusalem was captured by the Romans who destroyed it and the [Second] Temple on 30 August 70. This had a major effect upon the religion and practices of the Jews.
- 3) Massada, 2 May 73, was a place where Jews patriots who had held out against the Romans committed mass suicide rather than surrender.

### Rise to Prominence of Rabbinic Judaism

- 1) Rabbi Johanan Ben-Zakkai was the most important expounder of Jewish law in the A.D. 60s. He is supposed to have spent forty years in business, forty in study and forty in teaching (Sanh. 41a), a 120-year life span that too closely mirrors that of Moses for full credibility. In 68, during the first Jewish War with Rome, he outwitted the extremists and made his way to Vespasian's camp, where he successfully asked the Roman general to spare Jamnia and its sages. There he founded the famous Jewish academy, served as its first president and worked for the continuation of a Torah-centred Judaism. He died in the 80s. (DLNT)

### Bar Kokhba Revolt of 132-135 CE

- 1) Zealots – Jewish nationalists who used violence to try and reassert God's rule over Israel – responded to the Roman Emperor's (Hadrian) plan to rebuild the desolate site of Jerusalem as a Gentile Roman colony to be called Aelia Capitolina with another rebellion.
- 2) Having been proclaimed Messiah by Rabbi Akiba, Simeon bar Kosiba led the revolt under the name **Simon bar Kokhba** (a messianic title = "son of the morning star"). Many believed that bar Kokhba was the Messiah and that God would act to vindicate his people. Simon even minted coins that declared that this was year 1 of God's new kingdom. When he was killed this caused a major rethink among the Rabbis who moved away from any nationalist messianism after that.



Agricultural symbols associated with the harvest festival of Succoth - appear on the reverse, surrounded by a Hebrew inscription: "Year One of the Redemption of Israel," "Year Two of the Freedom of Israel," or "For the Freedom of Jerusalem," respectively in the three years of the revolt.

- 3) After savage guerrilla warfare, Palestine was ruined and Jews were excluded from Jerusalem, which became a Gentile city for the next two centuries. (DLNT).