

THE WORLD OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

WELCOME TO THE EARLY ROMAN PERIOD (63 BC–AD 180)

We have now entered the Early Roman period (see *Timeline*). No matter what direction you look, Rome dominates (see *Map 9.01*). The famed (infamous!) intertwining of Roman emperors and government officials with the Herodians and local Jewish leaders in Judea was, from the beginning, a political flashpoint. It was also a seething mire of immorality, intrigue, murder, and mayhem. But *the Light* shines brighter in the deepest night. Welcome to the New Testament era!

GEOGRAPHY

By the opening of the New Testament era with the birth of Christ in the final years of Herod the Great, the Roman Empire was in control of the entire Mediterranean world and beyond (see *Timeline* and *Map 9.01*). The Roman province of Judaea (or Judea) was

linked tightly to the household of Caesar via personal relationships with members of the Herodian family. The carving up of Herod's kingdom after his death was, as far as the Roman Empire was concerned, unofficial. These puppet kingdoms were tolerated as a means of maintaining peace in the area (see *Map 9.02*). Herod Archelaus was given Judea proper. Herod Antipas got Galilee and Perea. Herod Philip received Gaulanitis and territories to the north and east. After the death of Herod Philip, Herod Agrippa I and II, in turn, took over the lands that had been under his control.

CHRONOLOGY

Note that some of the following dates are approximations, while others are more precise. We have not delineated between them except by occasional question marks to represent a range of uncertainty.



EARLY ROMAN CHRONOLOGY	
Date	Events
63 BC	Annexation of Palestine by the Romans (see <i>Map 9.01</i>)
40 BC	Herod the Great appointed as king of Judea (see <i>Breakout 8.10</i>)
37 BC	Herod takes the throne in Jerusalem (see <i>Breakout 8.10</i> and <i>Map 9.02</i>)
28 BC	Julius Gaius Octavius Caesar becomes the first emperor of Rome, known in the New Testament as Caesar Augustus (see <i>Breakout 8.11</i>)
7–4 (?) BC	Birth of Jesus (see <i>Breakout 9.03</i>)
4 BC	Death of Herod the Great and succession of his three sons, Archelaus, Antipas, Philip (see <i>Breakout 9.02</i> and <i>Maps 9.03, 9.04</i>)
AD 14	Tiberius, adopted son of Caesar Augustus, becomes the second emperor of Rome
c. AD 29	Beginning of the ministry of John the Baptist, and soon after, the start of Jesus's ministry: Luke 3 says, "In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar...the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness...all the people were baptized, and...Jesus also had been baptized...Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of age" (verses 1-2, 21, 23).
AD 32–33 (?)	Crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus (this depends on the date chosen for his birth, the date selected for the interpretation of Luke 3, and the length of time assigned to his ministry) (see <i>Breakouts 9.13, 9.14</i>)
AD 35/36 (?)	Paul's conversion to Christianity (see <i>Breakout 9.15</i>)
AD 37	Caligula becomes the third Roman emperor
AD 35–69	Writing of the Gospels and the balance of the New Testament
AD 41	Claudius becomes the fourth emperor of Rome after Caligula's assassination
AD 48–49	Paul's first missionary journey (see <i>Map 9.05</i>)
AD 50–52	Paul's second missionary journey (see <i>Map 9.05</i>)
AD 53–57	Paul's third missionary journey (see <i>Map 9.05</i>)
AD 54	Nero becomes the fifth emperor of Rome
AD 59	Paul's trial before Festus and Agrippa II
AD 59–60	Paul's final voyage to Rome (see <i>Map 9.05</i>)
AD 64	Deaths of Peter and Paul (?)
AD 66	Beginning of the Jewish revolt against Rome (see <i>Breakout 9.16</i>)
AD 67	Arrival of the Roman army under General Vespasian (see <i>Breakout 9.16</i> and <i>Map 9.06</i>)
AD 68	Death of Paul (alternate date)
AD 68	Death of Nero
AD 69	Vespasian becomes the sixth Roman emperor (after three other generals attempted to take the throne in 68–69 following the death of Nero)
AD 70	Destruction of Jerusalem and second temple by the Romans in response to the First Jewish Revolt (see <i>Breakout 9.16</i> and <i>Map 9.06</i>).

HISTORY

Many of Jesus's teachings contain references to the people or events or social conditions of his time. To fully understand what he was saying, it is helpful to understand the political reality of the Holy Land (Southern Levant; Palestine) in that era.

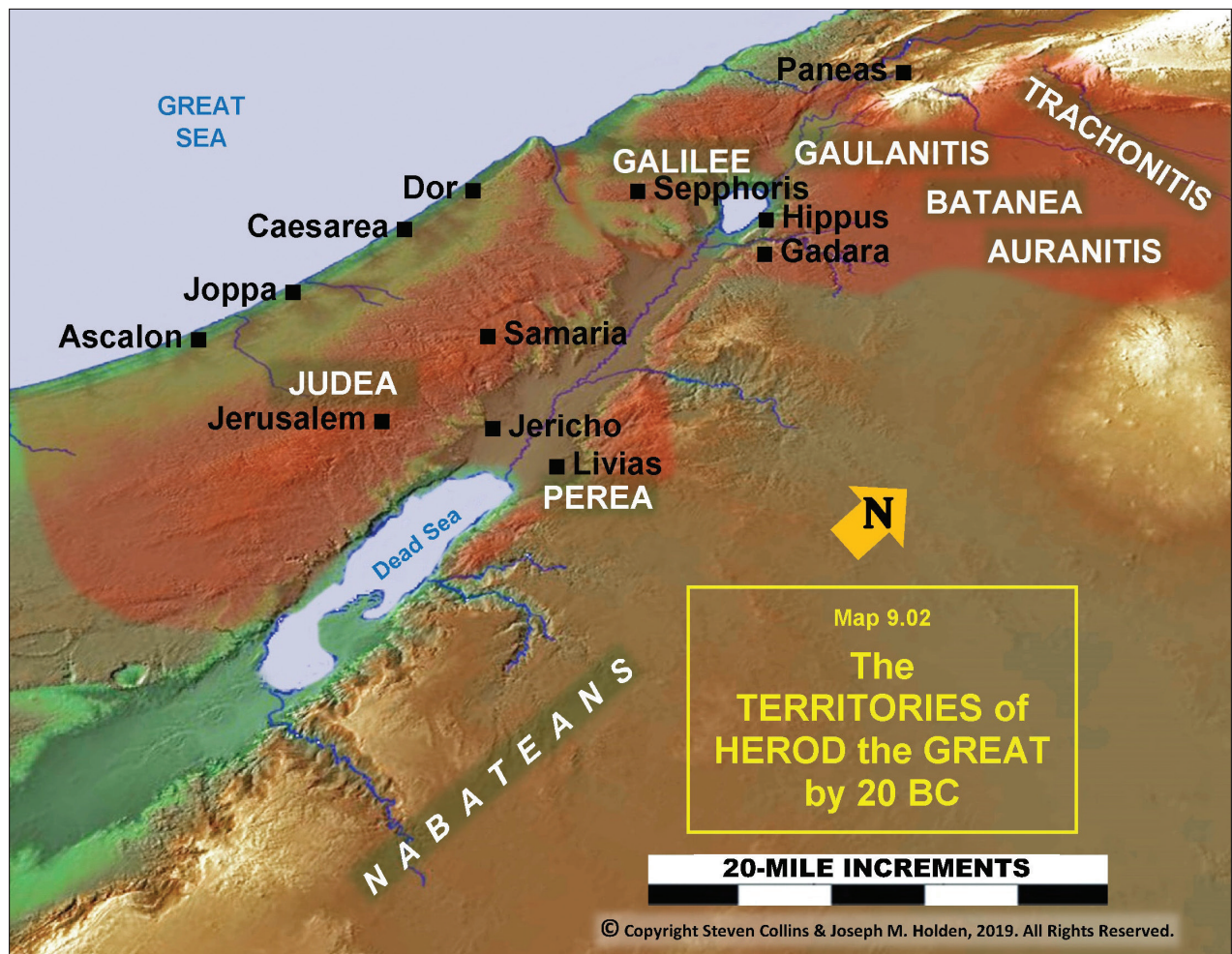
In the first century AD, the Western world was Roman. Roman soldiers kept highways and roads safe (see *Breakout 9.09*). Maritime commerce plied the seas, which were patrolled by Roman ships. Overland commerce and travelers coursed through lands protected by Roman legions. Everyone lived (or died) under the protection (or condemnation) of Roman law. And Herod, the local Roman appointee in Judea, was a Roman at heart through and through.

Herod was a ten-year-old of Idumean origin. He

was the son of Antipater, a man who was appointed governor of Judea by the Romans shortly after their arrival in the region (see *Breakout 8.10* and *Map 9.02*). This same Herod would go on to become vassal to, and close personal friend of, Mark Antony and eventually to Caesar Augustus himself (see *Breakouts 8.11, 9.01, 9.02*).

THE CAESARS AND HEROD THE GREAT

At the beginning of the New Testament era, the absolute ruler of the Roman Empire was the emperor in Rome (see *Breakout 9.01*). The first of these emperors was Gaius Julius Caesar Octavius (great-nephew and young heir of the assassinated Julius Caesar), recognized as emperor c. 28/27 BC. Remarkably, he became



a good friend and supporter of Herod the Great, having helped to arrange the appointment of Herod as the king of Judea in 40 BC. Gaius Julius Caesar Octavius ruled as the first emperor from 28 BC to AD 14 and was on the throne until Jesus was nearly 20 years old.

Upon his death, he was followed by his aging adopted son, Tiberius (see *Figure 9.01*), who ruled for the next 23 years (AD 14–37). Thus, Tiberius was emperor during Jesus’s ministry and crucifixion. And when Jesus taught his followers to “render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s” (Matthew 22:21), he was using the term *Caesar* to mean any secular government, a usage that came into favor after the death of Augustus.

The early years of the Christian movement, as reported in the book of Acts, were overseen by three different Roman emperors. Tiberius was followed by Caligula (see *Figure 9.02*), an insane monster who was the great-nephew of Tiberius. Caligula was

assassinated by his personal bodyguards after only four years (AD 37–41).

Claudius (see *Figure 9.03*), the elderly uncle of Caligula, succeeded him on the throne (AD 41–54) and ruled somewhat benignly until his death (possibly poisoned by his fourth wife to allow her young son, Nero, to ascend the throne at age 16).

Nero (see *Figure 9.04*), another arguably insane tyrant, took the throne after Claudius, and then committed suicide in AD 68—perhaps to prevent his arrest and execution by his enemies. Nero was the Caesar to whom Paul would make his appeal as stated in Acts 25:11.

The New Testament begins with the narrative of Jesus’s birth (see *Breakouts 9.03, 9.07*) shortly before the death of Herod, the local representative of Roman governance. In lands conquered by Rome, such local supervision and control was provided by Roman appointees of various titles, such as procurator, governor, ethnarch, tetrarch, and king. Normally these appointees served in their positions for a few years and then were replaced, much as modern ambassadors



Figure 9.01—Tiberius image (photo: Joseph Holden)



Figure 9.02—Caligula image (photo: David E. Graves)

serve in their posts. However, Herod had a special relationship with Rome (specifically with Mark Antony and then with Octavius, later to be called Caesar Augustus—Luke 2:1). He was not only designated as king in 40 BC, but also was rewarded by Augustus with the high honor of naming his successors (see *Breakout 9.02*). In other words, his kingship was hereditary (as long as Augustus or his successors permitted it!). Even as powerful as Herod was, he was still a Roman appointee ruling at the behest of the emperor and could be replaced at any time (see *Map 9.02* and *Breakout 8.10*).

While Herod could have been known as Herod the Horrible just as well as Herod the Great, he carried out amazing building ventures throughout his kingdom. They were massive, monumental projects made to impress not only his Roman sponsors but also visitors from around the empire and the local Jewish leaders (see *Map 9.02* and *Breakout 9.04*) and population (see *Breakouts 9.05, 9.06* and *Figures 9.05, 9.06*).

Herod's rule was fraught with challenges from both outside and within his realm. At the time of his death,

he was feared and despised by virtually his entire kingdom. Also, according to the historian Josephus, his last hours were spent in great pain and suffering from a multitude of physical ailments. Herod died shortly after the birth of Jesus, having had at least ten wives and numerous sons and daughters. He had executed several members of his family, including his three eldest sons, for real or imagined acts of treason. As a result, in the final of six wills penned just before his death, he designated his next three eldest sons as heirs, dividing his territories between them. These sons are the various and often confusing Herods who appear in the books of the New Testament (see *Breakout 9.02*).

HEROD: ARCHELAUS, ANTIPATER, PHILIP, AGRIPPA I, AND AGRIPPA II

At the time of his death, Herod controlled numerous provinces at the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea, including Idumea, Judea, Samaria (see *Breakout*



Figure 9.03—Claudius image (photo: David E. Graves)



Figure 9.04—Nero image (photo: David E. Graves)

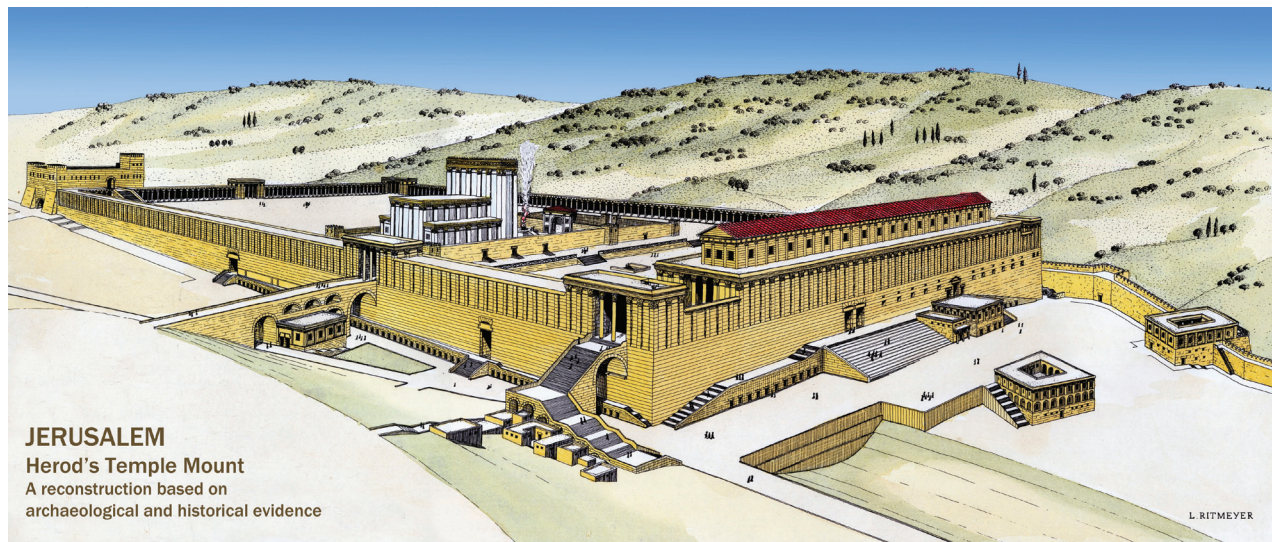


Figure 9.05—Herod's temple complex (drawing: Leen Ritmeyer)

9.08), Galilee, Perea, and areas in the Golan (see *Map 9.02*). These were divided among the three sons named in his will (see *Breakout 9.02* and *Map 9.03*).

The eldest of the three inheriting sons was the 19-year-old Archelaus, who was to rule over Judea and Samaria, a territory that included Jerusalem and Caesarea Maritima (the artificial harbor built by Herod). He was assigned the title of ethnarch, a lesser title than king, and was distressed by this designation. Caesar promised to give Archelaus the title of king if he were to prove himself worthy of such recognition. He didn't.

Archelaus (ruled 4 BC–AD 6) proved to be a tyrant,



Figure 9.06—Masada palaces of Herod the Great (drawing: Leen Ritmeyer)

very much his father's son. This is almost certainly the reason for the detour that Joseph took with his family on his return to Israel after the stay in Egypt. After the citizens of Judea and Samaria appealed to Caesar for relief from Archelaus, he was deposed and exiled by Caesar after nine years on the throne. Jesus was about 10 to 12 years old at the time.

The territories ruled by Archelaus were taken from the Herodian family, and from that time forward were supervised by a series of appointees called procurators. The fifth of these, appointed in the AD mid-20s shortly before the ministry of Jesus, was a man named Pontius Pilatus (Pilate; AD 26–36). It was Pilate who was in Jerusalem at the time of Jesus's arrest, and it was he who condemned Jesus to be executed, culminating in the events of Jesus's final days before his crucifixion (see *Breakouts 9.11, 9.13, 9.10*). Jesus's death didn't last (see *Breakout 9.14*).

The second son to inherit territory was 17-year-old Antipas (ruled 4 BC–AD 39), a full brother of Archelaus. He received Galilee and Perea, the region on the eastern side of the Jordan River in what is now modern Jordan (see *Map 9.03*). This was a desirable inheritance because these were fertile and productive regions. He was given the title of tetrarch over his holdings, a reference to the fact that he was governing a territory

that was about one quarter the size of the regions governed by his father.

Because Antipas ruled over Galilee, he had contact with Jesus's disciples and was the Herod who beheaded John the Baptist (Matthew 14). Antipas was celebrating the Passover in Jerusalem when Jesus was arrested, and it was this circumstance that caused Pontius Pilate to ask him for help in settling the legal questions surrounding the arrest and punishment of Jesus.

It should be noted that in the Bible, Antipas is not referred to by his given name but is always referred to as Herod or King Herod, which is confusing for some readers. A few years after the crucifixion of Jesus, Antipas was removed from the throne by Caligula, the new emperor at that time, and his territories were given to Agrippa, a grandson of Herod the Great.

The third inheritor of Herod the Great was his son Philip (ruled 4 BC–AD 33/34), the 16-year-old

BREAKOUT 9.01

THE ROMAN EMPERORS

The Roman Empire had its beginnings around 800 BC as a farming community on the Italian peninsula, which was governed by kings. Around 500 BC the people overthrew their corrupt rulers and organized as a republic, governed by a senate (essentially the wealthy aristocracy) and two elected leaders (consuls) who served one-year terms and could veto each other and the senate. This chaotic system was no longer able to govern its territories as they expanded. This brought to the fore a series of strong generals who, seeking absolute rule, clashed in bloody civil wars. These included such famous personalities as Julius Caesar vs. Pompey (c. 49 BC) and Mark Antony vs. Octavius (c. 30 BC).

After Octavius (great-nephew of Julius Caesar) defeated Mark Antony and his lover/ally Cleopatra of Egypt, he was finally able to accomplish what no one else had been able to do—assume absolute

power as emperor (28 BC). He ruled as the first emperor from 28 BC to AD 14. This means he was on the throne until Jesus was nearly 20 years old. And remarkably, he became a great friend and supporter of Herod the Great, to the point of helping to arrange the appointment of Herod as king of Judea in 40 BC.

Tiberius (AD 14–37), the adopted son of Octavius who followed him to the throne, was a disgusting and dissolute tyrant who ruled for 23 years, including during the time of Jesus's ministry. Thus, when Jesus taught his followers to “render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's” (Mark 12:17), he was using “Caesar” as a generic term for any ruling government.

Tiberius was followed by his great-nephew Caligula (AD 37–41), an insane monster who was assassinated by his personal bodyguards after only four years on the throne. During his brief reign, he nearly bankrupted the empire.

Claudius (AD 41–54), the elderly uncle of Caligula, succeeded Caligula on the throne and ruled during the early years of Christianity's spread through the Roman Empire.

Nero (AD 54–68), the adopted son of Claudius, followed Claudius to the throne at age 16. He was another arguably insane tyrant and was emperor when the apostle Paul traveled to Rome to appeal his conviction.

Governance of the Roman Empire would continue to deteriorate over the ensuing centuries with increasing numbers of inept, corrupt, and tyrannical rulers. The western half of the empire would succumb to barbarian tribes in the AD 400s, and the remaining eastern half of the empire would sink into impotence until the destruction of Constantinople in AD 1453, bringing the Roman Empire to an ignominious end.

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half-brother of Archelaus and Antipas (see *Breakout 9.02* and *Map 9.04*). He was given rule over much of the Golan, the region northeast of the Sea of Galilee, and like Antipas, was given the title of tetrarch.

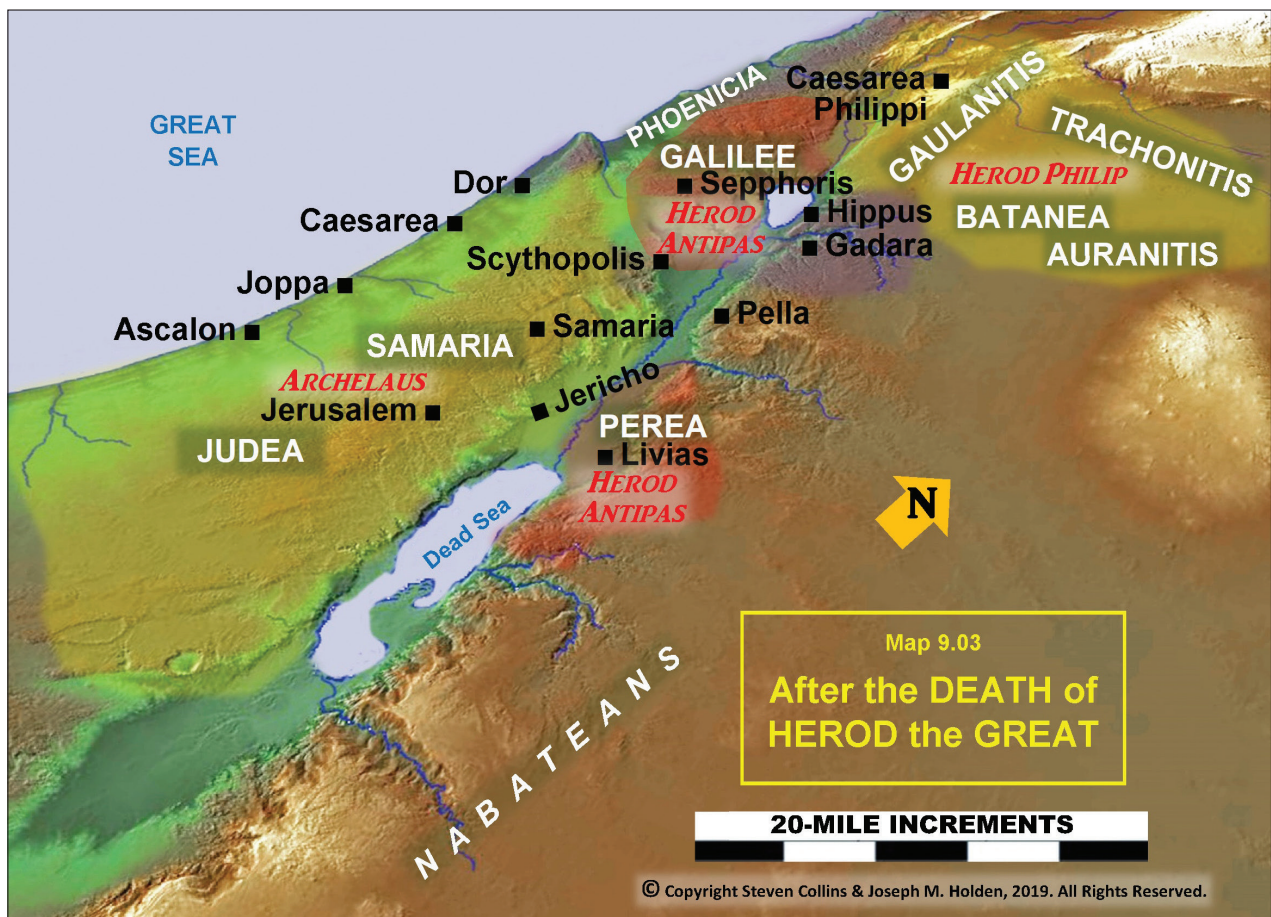
Philip was a decent, fair ruler who administered his territory well until he died in AD 34, about the time that Jesus was crucified (see *Breakouts 9.10, 9.13*). The two major cities in his tetrarchy were Caesarea Philippi and Bethsaida, both economically important to the region and both visited by Jesus. Philip is mentioned only once in the New Testament (Luke 3) in a list of key figures of that day.

Antipas was removed from office shortly after Jesus's crucifixion and resurrection (see *Breakouts 9.13, 9.14*). As the Christian movement began (see *Breakouts 9.11, 9.12*), as related in the book of Acts, the holdings of all three of Herod's sons were eventually granted to a grandson, Agrippa I (ruled AD 37–44). He had

been raised in Rome in the household of Augustus and was the personal friend of young Caligula, who became emperor upon the death of Tiberius. Caligula rewarded Agrippa for his loyalty by granting him rule over the territories of his half uncles, and he was also given the title of king.

This Agrippa, mentioned in the book of Acts, executed James the brother of John and imprisoned Peter. After a short reign, he collapsed and died while giving a speech in Caesarea (Acts 12:21-23). As was the case with Antipas, this grandson of Herod is not referred to by his name, Agrippa, but is called Herod in the New Testament.

After the death of Agrippa (see *Breakout 9.02*), several years passed before any territory was given to his son, also named Agrippa—Agrippa II (AD 53?). He received a rather modest inheritance, the territory in the Golan that had been ruled by Philip (see *Map 9.04*).



This Agrippa is referred to by his given name in the book of Acts and is the man who listened to the defense given by Paul in Caesarea before Paul was sent to Rome (Acts 26). This probably occurred around AD 59.

As the years progressed, Agrippa was a vigorous defender of Roman policies. He attempted to prevent

the local Jewish revolt staged in Palestine in the late AD 60s, but to no avail. When the Roman legions arrived to put down the revolt, Agrippa II supported them to the fullest. At that point, he disappeared from history (but there are some who argue that he survived into the AD 90s).

BREAKOUT 9.02

THE HERODS

Herod the Great, enabled by his friend Caesar Augustus, was absolute ruler of the Holy Land until his death c. 4 BC. His three sons, a grandson, and a great-grandson would continue to govern various parts of the region as Roman appointees for another 70 years during New Testament times. Herod the Great accomplished this posthumously by having willed the succession of three sons, not just one. Natural brothers Archelaus (19 years old) and Antipas (17 years old) were joined by 16-year-old Philip (half brother to the other two).

Archelaus, appointed as ethnarch of Judea, was certainly his father's son and a natural tyrant. Upon the vigorous complaints of his subjects, Archelaus was deposed by Caesar Augustus in AD 6 after fewer than ten years on the throne. Governance of the province was then provided by a series of procurators, one of whom was a man named Pontius Pilatus (Pilate). Archelaus is

mentioned a single time in the New Testament, in Matthew 2:22.

Philip, appointed as a tetrarch in the region of the Golan (Gaulanitis), ruled benignly until after the crucifixion of Jesus. His territory was then taken alternately by Roman-appointed procurators or other descendants of Herod. He is mentioned a single time in the New Testament, in Luke 3:1.

Antipas, who is not mentioned by that name in the New Testament, was appointed tetrarch of Galilee. He receives a lot of attention in the New Testament due to his connection to Jesus and his disciples, and the multiple mentions of Herod throughout the Gospels are mostly references to Antipas.

Shortly after the death and resurrection of Jesus, Antipas was deposed by Caligula, the emperor at that time, and replaced by Agrippa, a grandson of Herod the Great and Caligula's childhood friend. He is not called Agrippa in the New Testament, but is referred to as "Herod the king" (Acts 12:1).

For a short time until his death in AD 44, Agrippa ruled the entire territory that had been governed by his grandfather Herod the Great. The death of Agrippa is described in Acts 12.

After Agrippa died, procurators ruled the various provinces of Roman Palestine. Agrippa II, the son of Agrippa and great-grandson of Herod the Great, was given a small territory to rule, and is the King Agrippa who met with Paul in Acts 25.

There are several other Herodians mentioned in the Bible, including Herodias (half niece of Antipas), the daughter of Herodias (named Salome, a fact mentioned by Josephus), Philip (another half brother of Antipas) the ex-husband of Herodias, and two sisters of King Agrippa, Berenice and Drusilla.

After the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, the family of Herod disappeared from history.

J. Moore

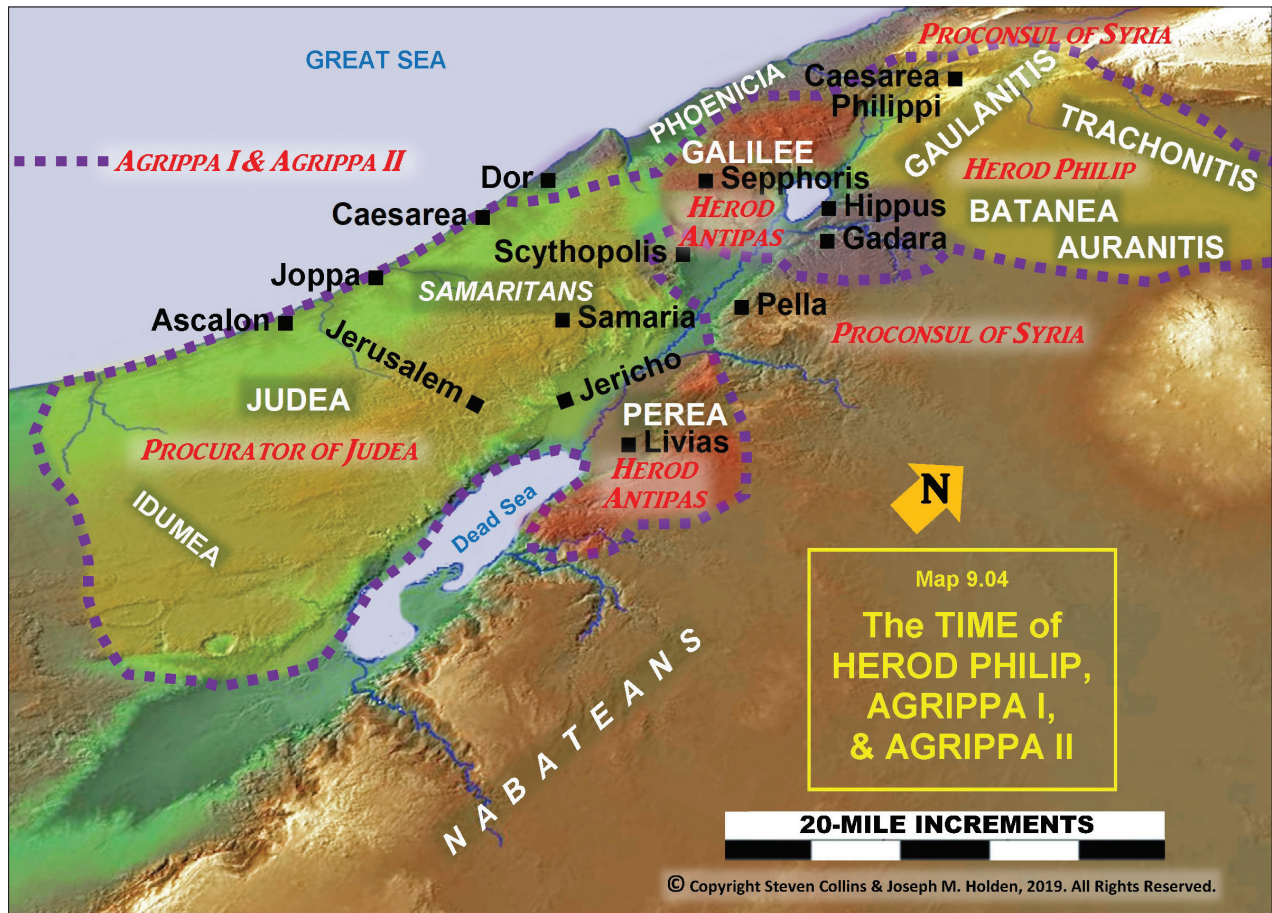


Figure 9.07—Model of city of Rome, first century AD (photo: Alexander Schick)

The historical details of the New Testament end with Paul's departure for Rome (see *Map 9.05* and *Breakout 9.15*). After a harrowing voyage that endured storms and a shipwreck on the island of Malta, Paul arrived in Rome, where he was imprisoned and eventually executed by Nero (although scholars differ on this conclusion, with some traditions suggesting that Paul proceeded on to Spain and continued his ministry there).

THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM

After Paul's journey to Rome (see *Figure 9.07*), the province of Judea descended into political chaos due to neglect of the region by Rome as well as the incompetence and corruption of the procurators assigned to the area. This reflects on a specific practice mentioned

in the New Testament: taxation. The *Pax Romana* (a world peace enforced by Roman power) was funded by taxation. These taxes were collected by local men who competed for the right to impose them. They paid a fixed amount to the state, so whatever they collected beyond that was theirs to keep. This encouraged confiscatory taxation (often collected by strong-arm techniques) and explains the contempt heaped upon tax collectors by local Jews, and the Jews' "righteous" astonishment at Jesus's willingness to associate with such people.

Various political groups such as the Zealots (see *Breakout 9.04*) agitated for rebellion against the Romans and violence increased (see *Breakout 9.16*). A subgroup of Zealots (called Sicarii) arose who were primarily political assassins. They directed their activities not only against the Romans, but also against Jews

who collaborated with the Romans. Assassinations were commonplace, along with looting, murder, and the burning and sacking of Jewish villages, as well as attacks against the Romans themselves.

Riots erupted between Jews and Gentiles in most of the major cities, and thousands of people were slaughtered in the streets. As the violence escalated, Agrippa II attempted to defuse tensions but was unsuccessful. When war arrived he sided completely with the Romans, providing troops and money to Vespasian, the Roman general in charge.

The Zealots conquered several fortresses, including Masada (see *Breakout 9.05*), and then were able to eject the Roman garrison from the Antonia Fortress in Jerusalem (see *Figure 9.08*). Some of the region was liberated and freed of Romans, at least for a while, yet violence broke out all over Judea between Greeks



and Jews. The ensuing atrocities were usually directed against whichever group was in the minority in a specific area. A Roman expedition sent from Syria to put down the rebellion lost thousands of men, and most of the army was annihilated. The first coins dated to the years of the war were minted at this time (see *Figure 9.09*).

The Sanhedrin (Jewish high court) began preparations for all-out war. They appointed Joseph ben Matthias, a Pharisee and scholar (see *Breakout 9.04*), to organize the Galilean defense. This is the man we know as Josephus Flavius, the Jewish historian (see *Breakout 9.17*).

Nero, the emperor at the time, was in Greece when the insurgency broke out. He sent Vespasian, his finest general (who would follow Nero to the throne in AD 69), to put down the rebellion. Vespasian arrived in Ptolemais (see *Map 9.06*) in AD 67 and began brutally conquering the lands surrounding Jerusalem in preparation for a siege of the city. He was ready to begin the siege in AD 68, but his plans were interrupted by the suicide-death of Nero. After a year of confusion during which three generals attempted to take the throne,

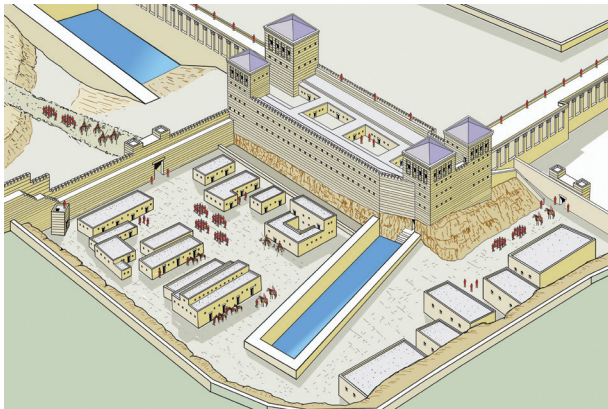


Figure 9.08—Antonia fortress (drawing: Leen Ritmeyer)



Figure 9.09—First Jewish Revolt coins (photo: Alexander Schick)

Vespasian's troops acclaimed him as emperor, and he departed for Rome. His son, Titus, a fine general in his own right, completed the conquest of Jerusalem in a terrible siege that lasted from early AD 70 until the city fell on September 8 of the same year (see *Breakout 9.16*).

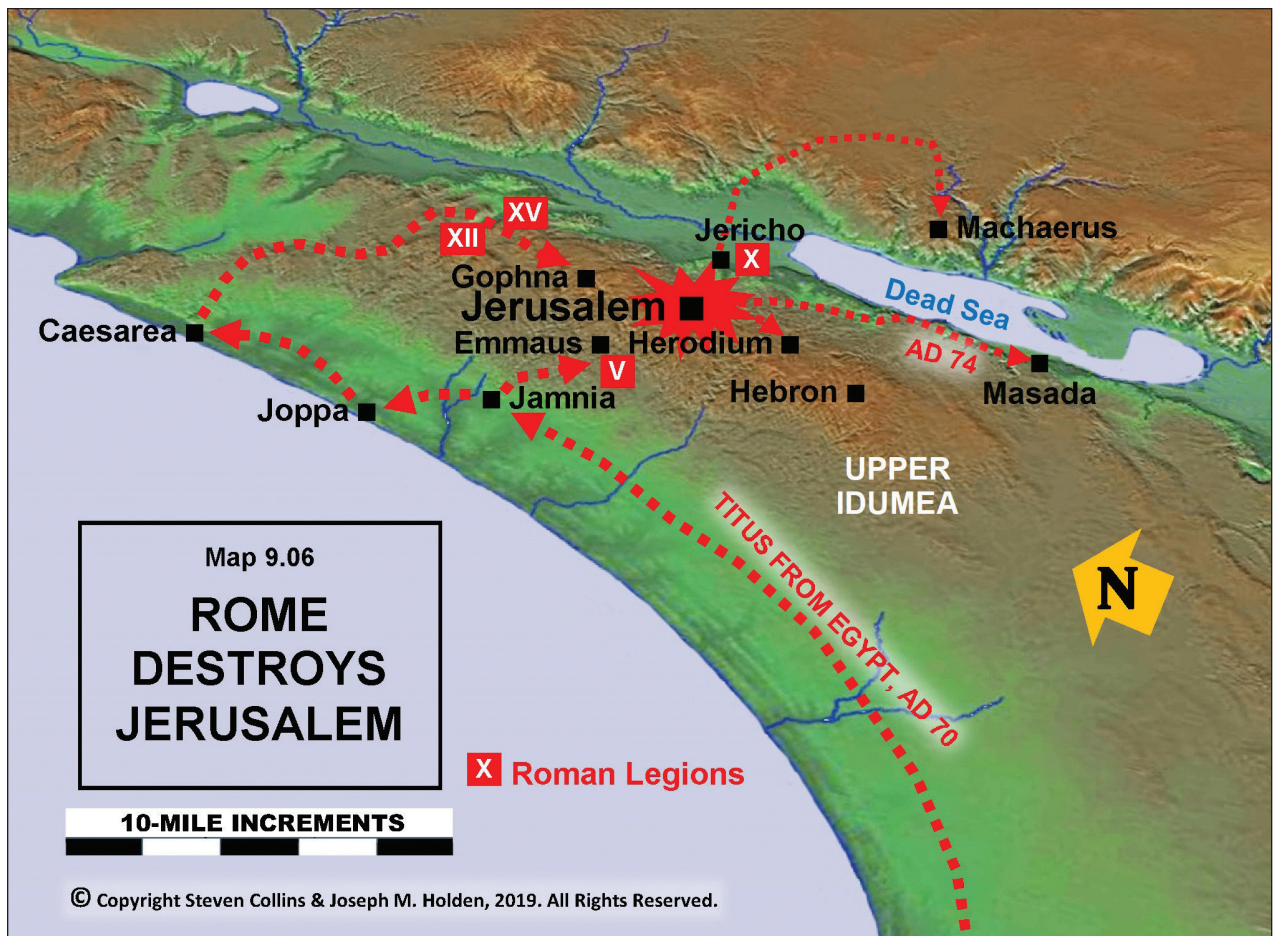
After the heavy hand of Rome had fallen, Judea became an independent Roman province with a fixed occupational army. In the aftermath, many cities and towns were destroyed and much of the country was depopulated. The once-great temple in Jerusalem lay in ruins (see *Figure 9.10* and *Breakout 9.16*). Finally, it is probable that the new emperor, Vespasian, used the looted temple treasures to help finance the building of the Coliseum in Rome.

PEOPLES AND KINGDOMS

ROMANS—Julius Caesar returned to Rome enriched by a long governorship in Farther Spain. He allied himself with the Roman aristocracy and became one-third of a powerful new triumvirate (three simultaneous rulers functioning jointly) together with Crassus and Pompey (see *Breakout 9.01*). Caesar became the powerful governor of Gaul. Crassus was



Figure 9.10—AD 70 Temple Mount destruction; giant architectural stones crashed onto the pavement below the temple platform, which is above (photos: John Witte Moore)



killed in battle, leaving two rivals, Julius Caesar and General Pompey. When Pompey marched into Jerusalem in 63 BC (see *Breakout 8.09*), this ended the brief self-rule of the Jews under the Hasmoneans (see *Breakout 8.08*). Julius Caesar and Pompey involved Rome in a personal civil war that ended when Pompey was murdered in Egypt by Ptolemy XIV, the husband of Cleopatra. Caesar then defeated Ptolemy with the help of Antipater, the Arab father of Herod the Great (see *Breakout 8.10*).

Jews—The Jews centered in old Judea ruled independently after the overthrow of the hated Seleucid (Syrian) rulers (see *Breakout 8.08*). But that came to an end when the Romans invaded Palestine/Judea in AD 63 (see *Breakout 8.09*). While under Roman-Herodian rule the Jews had relative peace, but there were tensions between various Jewish factions (see

Breakout 9.04). Synagogues and rabbis provided a powerful influence in local communities (see *Breakout 8.01*).

SAMARITANS—The Samaritans (see *Breakout 9.08*) were a despised mixed-ethnic group of Israelites and foreign peoples who had been part of the northern kingdom of Israel. They had been at odds with the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity. The Samaritans built their own temple atop Mount Gerizim around 400 BC. It was completely destroyed by the Maccabees under the leadership of John Hyrcanus c. 100 BC (see *Breakout 8.08*). The Samaritans rejected all the biblical books except for the Torah and bitterly fought with the Hasmonean kingdom that had destroyed their temple. During New Testament times, they were still hated by the “proper” Jews of Judea.

BREAKOUT 9.03

AWAY IN A MANGER, BUT NOT IN A BARN

Joseph, a descendant of King David, journeyed to Bethlehem, his ancestral home, with espoused wife Mary to participate in a mandatory census (Luke 2:1-3). In the ancient Near East, a family's historic ties to their hometown were of utmost importance. Because Joseph was of the royal line of David, space would have been found for Joseph and family upon arrival in the city. Even in the Roman period, the Davidic connection to Bethlehem was so strong that Bethlehem was still known as the "city of David" (2:4, 11).

Again, the expectation of accommodations for a direct descendant within the Davidic ancestral home was not unreasonable. Furthermore, as Luke noted earlier, Mary had relatives nearby in the "hill country" of Judea (1:39). With Jesus being born "while they were there" (2:6), it seems possible

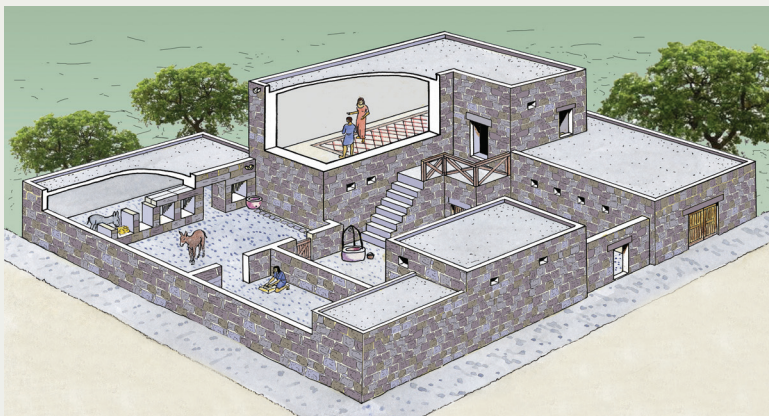
that there may have been time for such alternate arrangements.

Although no barn is mentioned in the text, the "manger" (Greek, *phatna*) is prominent (Luke 2:7, 12, 16). Stone-carved and plastered mangers are known on the ground floor of domestic structures in Israel throughout biblical times (Judges 11:31; 1 Samuel 28:24). Historians and anthropologists have noted the practice of keeping animals in the house down through history. While flocks were kept in sheepfolds out in the fields (Luke 2:8), valuable or vulnerable animals—oxen, donkeys, sick or pregnant sheep and goats—would be brought into the house's ground floor domestic stable. Such was the place where the infant Jesus would have been laid in a manger.

Luke records that "there was no place for them in the inn" (Luke

2:7—"inn" is the Greek term *kataluma*). The only other New Testament mention of a *kataluma* is as the upper chamber "guest room" of a house in Jerusalem where the Last Supper was held (Luke 22:11 and its parallel Mark 14:14). There is no reason why Luke's use of the term in 22:11 ("guest room") on the last night of Jesus's life should be different from his use of the same term in 2:7 ("inn") on the first night of Jesus's life. His statement "no place for them in the inn" indicates that the "guest room" of the house where Mary and Joseph were staying was already full. The NIV's 2011 revision acknowledges this fact, changing "inn" to "guest room" (2:7).

Luke knew what a public inn was, using that term in the account of the Good Samaritan at an "inn" (10:34—Greek, *pandocheion*) with an "innkeeper" (verse 35—*pandocheus*). Luke's use of *kataluma* indicates an altogether different kind of space—the "guest room" of a family home. Thus, Luke's nativity account had no barn (or lean-to) in mind, no statement by an innkeeper, nor even the presence of an innkeeper! Instead, on that first Christmas, baby Jesus was placed in a manger on the ground floor of a Bethlehem house—likely among family—because the upstairs "guest room" was already full.



Family home, first century AD (drawing: Leen Ritmeyer)

G. Byers

BREAKOUT 9.04

THE JEWISH SECTS

During the intertestamental period, the Greco-political successors of Alexander the Great lorded over the Jews, their temple, and at times their right to worship Yahweh their God (see *Breakouts 8.04* and *8.06*). If the Jewish people were to avoid physical, cultural, and spiritual extermination, it was imperative that something be done. The Jewish Revolt ensued (see *Breakout 8.08*), and Judah suffered through peace and war for generations. When Rome gobbled up the region in AD 63 (see *Breakouts 8.09* and *9.01*), Jewish semi-autonomy came to an end.

Jewish rabbis and scholars began to rethink how they understood the Torah and worshipped God. Different philosophical schools divided the Jews into factious denominations—Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, and Zealots—and there were significant theological and political distinctions between them.

The *Sadducees* (“Righteous Ones”) claimed legitimacy through their connection to the Old Testament priest Zadok. Despite their theological differences (rejecting the resurrection—Matthew 22:23-34; Luke 20:27-40), by the time of Jesus, the Sadducees had become aristocratic and elitist. Many of them lived in lavish mansions funded, at least in part,

by taking advantage of their fellow countrymen in the operation of a profiteering currency-exchange enterprise. The masses entering the temple precinct paid a premium to purchase the Tyrian silver coins required to pay the temple tax.

The *Pharisees* (“Separated Ones”) were less interested in personal prosperity and temple matters. Instead, they promoted themselves as scribes and teachers of the law within the network of synagogues (see *Breakout 8.01*).

The *Essenes* were the copyists and librarians of the Dead Sea Scrolls (see *Breakout 8.13*). They referred to themselves as “The Sons of Light” and everyone else as “The Sons of Darkness.” Their daily lives were hyper-focused on purity in all forms, particularly through ritual immersion in water. It appears that they considered the operation of the Jerusalem temple illegitimate. As separatists, they participated in a number of temple-like rituals that, in effect, made their Dead Sea community (Qumran) a kind of proxy temple replacing what they viewed as a heretical counterpart in Jerusalem.

Whether or not the *Zealots* were an actual religious sect is debated. They were, however, a notable politicoreligious presence in first-century AD Judea. A subset of the Zealots, the *Sicarri*, were militant

extremists who shrouded themselves in a veil of intrigue and whose terroristic manifesto advanced their aims through violence.

These sects were of human, not scriptural, origin. To be realistic (and ironic!), each believed they could achieve Jewish political sovereignty and righteousness before God through political maneuvering, deception, human works, precise ritual formulas, and by violence if necessary. In stark contrast, John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth demanded repentance—changed minds, hearts, and actions.

Preparing the way for Messiah Jesus, John the Baptizer (see *Breakout 9.12*) declared, “Bear fruit in keeping with repentance” (Matthew 3:8). Immediately after John was imprisoned by Herod Antipas, “Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel’” (Mark 1:14-15).

John and Jesus preached repentance, not rebellion. They emphasized the necessity of simple belief over prescribed behaviors and proclaimed that faith in the true Messiah trumped human goodness. For the spiritually famished Judeans of the first century, this was very good news indeed!

J. Barber, J. Holden

BREAKOUT 9.05

HERODIAN FORTRESSES

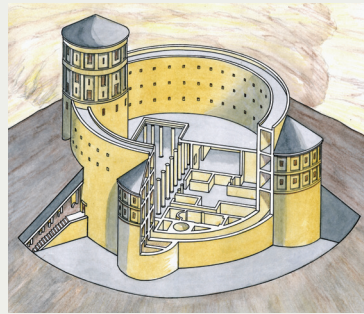
Although Herod the Great is remembered by many for his brutality and paranoia, he is also regarded as a master builder who could accomplish seemingly impossible projects. Herod was involved in 20 or more sites in Israel and at least 13 beyond its borders. Some of Herod's greatest achievements were his many fortresses, especially his palace fortresses. These, along with their accompanying defenses, help us gain insight into the man and his times.

Several factors contributed to Herod's palace-fortress concept. He enjoyed the finer things and extreme comforts of life even in hostile conditions. He needed a defensive perimeter against his enemies in the east. He was afraid of revolt from the Jews and even his own family. He wanted to demonstrate to Rome his capabilities of building and governing. And build he did!

Herod built three different winter palaces at Jericho, the third being the most extravagant and luxurious. Protection for Jericho was provided by Cypros, a former Hasmonean fortress that overlooked the Wadi Qelt above Jericho. According to Josephus, Cypros was named after Herod's mother.

The Herodium, a volcano-

shaped fortress standing seven miles south of Jerusalem and three miles southeast of Bethlehem, rose to a height of nearly 200 feet. The palace was the largest in the Mediterranean world. Relatively well preserved, it contains circular walls, towers, storerooms, extravagant living quarters, gardens, a large bathhouse, and an artificial lake. This structure served not only as Herod's fortress, but also his burial place.



The Herodium near Bethlehem; fortress of Herod the Great (drawing: Leen Ritmeyer)

Herod's Jerusalem projects were among his most important. There was the colossal reconstruction of the temple, which ended up taking decades to complete (John 2:20), as well as two palace-fortresses. Herod's chief residence was a large palace complex on the west side of Jerusalem. A strong fortress with three large towers was built just north of the palace.

The palace-fortress of Machaerus was about five miles east of the Dead Sea at 2,300 feet above sea level in what is now Jordan. Josephus gave the most extensive description of this former Hasmonean fortress, describing towers that were "sixty cubits high" at the four corners of massive walls. He wrote of a palace within that had spacious apartments and numerous cisterns. He also reported that Machaerus was the location where John the Baptist was executed during the time of Herod Antipas.

At Masada, just west of the south end of the Dead Sea, Herod built a large palace-fortress on the ruins of an earlier Hasmonean stronghold. Sheer-faced cliffs that rise hundreds of feet high with access limited to a single "snake" path made this location seem impregnable. Comfort was not neglected. There were two palaces at Masada, one having three terraces. The site had several large cisterns and storerooms that would enable the occupants to withstand an extended siege. This was what the Jewish Zealots had in mind when they withstood a Roman attack in AD 70–73, although ultimately, they were defeated.

C. Morgan

BREAKOUT 9.06

THE HERODIAN TEMPLE

The center of Jewish faith and life, the Jerusalem temple, was built on Mount Moriah, facing the rising sun and overlooking the Kidron Valley toward the Mount of Olives. The second temple—better identified as the third temple—was an expansion of Zerubbabel’s version from c. 515 BC. This final temple project was started under Herod the Great in the first century BC. According to Josephus, the massive remodel was initiated at least in part because of the unstable foundations of the previous iteration.

Herod employed 10,000 masons and other craftsmen, along with 1,000 special Levites, to work without disturbing the temple services. Herod’s enlarged temple was made of white limestone that was quarried locally. Some of the foundation stones for this massive undertaking

weighed up to 50 tons. The platform-retaining walls surrounding the temple complex were at least 15 feet thick, and the western wall was 1,590 feet long. This platform wall had four gates: from north to south they are Warren’s Gate, Wilson’s Arch, Barclay’s Gate, and Robinson’s Arch (names of nineteenth-century explorer-scholars who identified them). There were eight gates leading into the temple precincts, and a ninth gate, called the East Gate (Shushan Gate), was said to have been the most magnificent of all. It was the principle gate used by worshippers once they were inside the complex.

Herod extended the temple platform in three directions: north, west, and south. He added the Antonia Fortress at the northwest corner, and a royal stoa (large columned hall) on the south end. The entire complex was one of the

largest in the ancient world, occupying about 145 acres. Work on the Jerusalem temple structures was completed 46 years after it began (John 2:20), with some additional work continuing to c. AD 64.

The First Jewish Revolt (AD 66–70) was the culmination of years of skirmishes, and the Jews expelled the Roman forces for a time. But Rome sent Vespasian and Titus to crush the rebellion. The two leaders entered the city with 60,000 troops. These soldiers destroyed the temple by fire and manual demolition when Jerusalem fell in AD 70. They chopped down the olive trees on the Mount of Olives and used them, along with other combustible materials, to create an explosive conflagration in the cisterns next to the temple, blowing the structures’ stones apart. The destruction was total.

B. Maggard, S. Collins

BREAKOUT 9.07

THE MAGI

In Matthew chapter 2, we read of magi who came from the east, seeking after one “who has been born king of the Jews” (verse 2). Magi were wise men in eastern

cultures, and despite what is proclaimed in many Christmas songs and seen in nativity scenes, they were not kings. They probably did not ride on camels, and most

likely there were more than three of them. Early in the magi tradition there were 12, then the number was reduced to 3. The actual number is unknown. Tradition

gives them the names Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar.

Historically, the magi were wise counselors, mainly from Persia and Arabia. They were held in high esteem in the Persian court, were admitted as consultants, and gave advice to kings in times of war and peace. They were Gentiles, a tribe of priests, similar to the Levites in Israel. The magi served as the teachers and instructors of the Persian kings. No sacrifice could be offered unless one of the magi was present. They were men of piety and wisdom, skilled in the philosophy, religion, divining, medicine, and science of their day.

In the book of Daniel, we see that Daniel and his friends Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were recruited to be magi in the court

of Nebuchadnezzar, with Daniel in charge of all the magi. Daniel and his friends certainly influenced the magi, and we can be certain that they taught them about the one true God, Yahweh, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The teachings of Daniel surely influenced the magi for generations, and Matthew's Gospel seems to indicate that they still remembered Daniel's teaching about the Messiah, the one who was to come, the King of all kings. They were looking for him—likely because of the Messianic math in Daniel 9—and they knew the time had come when they saw his “star” in the heavens. The appearance of a new heavenly object—be it an alignment of planets, a comet, or a supernova

explosion—was regarded as an indication that a remarkable event was occurring or about to occur.

The magi probably came to Jerusalem mounted on Persian steeds (horses famous throughout the ancient known world), and likely with troops to guard them as they traveled. Such an official entourage looking for the one “who has been born king of the Jews” made Herod nervous—disturbed, no doubt—playing on his oft-demonstrated paranoia. Herod was not born a king. He was appointed. A rival hereditary king of royal blood—now *that* was a threat Herod might kill for. *And he did.*

W. Attaway

SOCIETY AND CULTURE

ROMAN CULTURE—By the time the Romans arrived in the Levant c. 64–63 BC (see *Breakout 8.09*), the Jewish world had long endured the cultural shock of Hellenism (see *Breakout 8.03*) with its challenges to conservative Jewish beliefs. The Romans further challenged the Jews with the multicultural approach of their conquests. They were polytheistic and willingly enlarged the number of permissible religions so long as they presented no challenge to the Roman State. Roman society was divided between a very wealthy upper class, a thriving middle class of merchants, and a lower class of servants (simply, those who had to work for someone else). There was also a vast multitude of slaves (mostly battle captives). An extensive set of laws governed all aspects of daily life, and the enforcement of those laws was swift and harsh.

JEWISH CULTURE—The Jewish culture of the

New Testament era was the result of major changes that occurred during the Babylonian exile (see *Breakouts 7.01, 8.01*). These refinements and reorganizations of Mosaic Yahwism were reintroduced to the Jewish inhabitants of Judea by the return of Ezra in c. 450 BC (see *Breakout 7.08*). Jews lived according to very strict laws derived and interpreted from the Torah, laws that governed every aspect of their lives. They made constant effort to observe rules of hygiene, dietary restrictions, community activities, and religious celebrations. In the face of enormous challenges by the Hellenistic and Roman cultures, Jewish communities often isolated themselves from non-Jewish societies, such as the Gentiles of the Decapolis and the Samaritans (see *Maps 9.02, 9.03*), as well as their Roman overlords. The region of Lower Galilee was an economic center of the time, and it is from this region that Jesus and his disciples first spread their message.

BREAKOUT 9.08

THE SAMARITANS

After King Solomon's death, the kingdom of Israel was divided (see *Timeline* and *Map 6.01*). Jeroboam, representing the northern tribes, rebelled against Solomon's son Rehoboam and set out to rule a separate kingdom. This civil war—mostly of words—caused a division resulting in a kingdom of Israel in the north and a kingdom of Judah in the south. The split was permanent. The Samaria of the New Testament era was a carryover from the days of the divided monarchy when Samaria became the capital of Israel, a name that was often applied to the entire northern kingdom itself. The royal line of David remained in its ancestral territory, with Jerusalem as the capital of the southern kingdom of Judah.

As successive generations ruled, Yahweh sent prophets to both nations. In Israel, the house of Omri (885–874 BC) was established after the suicide of Zimri. Lengthy infighting ensued, focused at the new and well-fortified capital of the north, Samaria (1 Kings 16). The son of Omri, King Ahab, attempted to strengthen the northern kingdom against the Syrian threat and looming invasion. Subsequent kings of Israel obtained the throne mostly through political intrigue, skirmishes, coups, and assassinations. Jehu's Dynasty

was the longest (90 years; 2 Kings 10:30; see also 1 Kings 21).

The northern kingdom finally attempted to make peace with its neighbors, including Judah, but was overtaken by Assyria under the reign of King Sargon II in 721/22 BC (2 Kings 17:5-24). The primary post-conquest tactic of Assyria was forced resettlement. In the case of Israel, peoples from other conquered nations were relocated to the region of Samaria, and the Israelites were moved to distant territories. In this way, ethnic boundaries were blurred through intermarriage and tribal identities were diluted. The mixed population of Israel/Samaria would eventually become the Samaritans of the New Testament era. Nebuchadnezzar came into possession of the former territory of Israel/Samaria (c. 612 BC) after defeating the Egyptians, who had wrested control of these same lands from Assyria.

After the post-exilic return of the Babylonian captivity Jews to the territory of Judah, some Samaritans sought to aid in rebuilding the Jerusalem temple but were turned away. In response, Sanballat, the governor of Samaria (Nehemiah 13:28), tried to obstruct the project (Ezra 4:1-4). The Samaritans built their own temple around 400 BC on Mount Gerizim, just above ancient Shechem.

The Maccabees destroyed the

Samaritan temple under the leadership of John Hyrcanus in the late second century BC. One possible reason for this may have been because of the defiling of the Samaritan temple at about the same time that Antiochus IV Epiphanes despoiled the Jerusalem temple (167 BC; 2 Maccabees 6:2; see *Breakouts 8.06* and *8.08*). The “pedigreed” Jewish people thought of Samaritans as tainted and less than Jewish.

Josephus related an episode that further increased Jewish hostility toward Samaritans: A group of Samaritan men entered the temple precinct in Jerusalem at night and defiled it by spreading the ground-up bones of dead people across the temple courtyards. This hostility between Jews and Samaritans is demonstrated in the New Testament in John 4:9, where John included this note concerning the relations between the two during the time of Christ: “Jews have no dealings with Samaritans” (John 4:9).

The first-century AD region of Samaria was loosely a swath from the Mediterranean Sea on the west, as far as the Jordan River to the east, with some southern territory included, encompassing cities such as Sychem (Shechem), Sabaste (Samaria), and Caesarea Maritima (see *Map 9.02*).

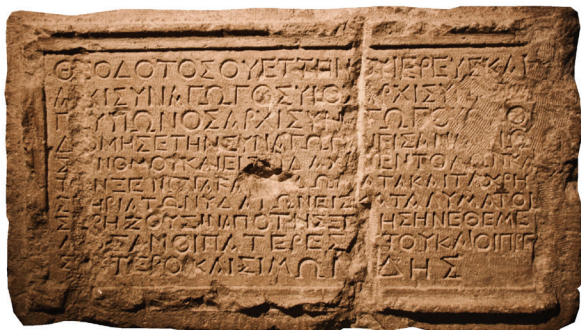
B. Maggard, S. Collins

POLITICAL CLIMATE—In the region of and around first-century AD Palestine, the best descriptor of the political situation is *tension*. The collective Jewish memory of their persecution at the hands of the Seleucids (see *Breakouts 8.06, 8.08*) was still raw and memorialized (Hanukkah). So-called Jewish Zealots resisted the idea of any foreign power ruling over what they saw as their Promised Land. The Roman control of Judea/Palestine (see *Breakout 8.09*) stuck in their craw, and they were always looking for an opportunity to foment rebellion locally or on a larger scale if possible.

The Jews themselves were carved up into religious sectarian groups—Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes—with no love lost between them (see *Breakout 9.04*). The Essenes were mostly separatists (the Qumran community; see *Breakout 8.13*), and the Pharisees and Sadducees (see *Breakout 9.04*) wielded significant political influence in the face of Rome’s desire to appease local populations as much as possible. The Herodians (see *Breakouts 8.10, 9.02*), although ruling over Palestinian Jews at the behest of Rome, were not looked upon with favor by the purest Jewish factions. Roman officials, backed by a powerful Roman military presence, kept a close eye on everything. Throughout the Early Roman period (see *Timeline*), Palestine was a powder keg filled with torch-brandishing political opponents.

LANGUAGE AND WRITING

GREEK—Alexander and his Hellenistic posterity had spread the Koine (common) version of the Greek



language across the entire stage of his empire. The Romans were keen to keep and even expand it as the *lingua franca* of their empire. Greek remained the principle language of international commerce for the next 600 years (see *Figure 9.11*), and Koine Greek became the language of choice for the writers of the New Testament.

LATIN—Latin was the official language of Roman government (although Greek was used when advantageous). Latin inscriptions were common throughout the Roman Empire, including Palestine (see *Figure 9.12*).

ARAMAIC/HEBREW—The Aramaic adopted by the Jews living in Babylonia and brought back to Palestine during their return from captivity became mixed with Hebrew to create a mongrel language spoken by Jews across the region. Some call it Aramaicized Hebrew, while others describe it as Hebraicized Aramaic. Both languages are very similar, belonging to the Northwest Semitic language group. Both Aramaic and Hebrew inscriptions are known from Roman Palestine (see *Figure 9.13*).

BELIEF AND RELIGION

JUDAISM—In the first century AD, while Judaism was certainly monotheistic, it was certainly not monolithic. The named Jewish sects are well known—Pharisees, Sadducees, Zealots, Essenes (see *Breakout 9.04*). There were many other splinter groups based on



Figure 9.12—Latin inscription, first century AD (photo: Alexander Schick)

either religious or political leanings, or both. Each faction followed one or more central leader-figures, often hailed as messiahs. Some of the messianic fervor was political, some religious. On the religious side, rabbis dominated local communities and synagogues (see *Breakout 8.01*), while some were itinerant. Rabbinic Judaism often departed from or added to the Mosaic Law, seeking definitions and details for righteous living.

ROMAN RELIGION—Borrowing and renaming the gods of the Greek pantheon—Zeus to Jupiter, Athena to Minerva, Aphrodite to Venus, Phoebus Apollo to Apollo, Poseidon to Neptune, and so forth—Roman religion was a syncretistic amalgam of older traditional gods mixed with deities and demons from cultures subsumed by the Roman Empire. Notable among their adopted mystery (for initiates only) religions was Mithraism (originating in India). Other mystery cults followed deities (like Dionysus), famous thinkers (like Pythagoras and Plato), or localized beliefs (like the Eleusinians).

EMPEROR WORSHIP—Emperor worship (also referred to as the Imperial cult) was instituted in Rome after the reign of Caesar Augustus. Other ancient cultures had engaged in the deification of important individuals, so this was simply a continuation of ancient practice. A deceased emperor or family member could be deified as an honor. When this was done, temples were sometimes built to honor the newly deified individual and cults of worship might form. Whether the Roman world truly believed that these individuals had become gods is a matter of some dispute, but the practice persisted until Emperor Theodosius I declared Christianity to be the official religion of the empire in the late AD 300s.

ARCHITECTURE AND INFRASTRUCTURE

ROMAN CITIES—The Romans took Greek city planning and structure to a whole new level and scale. The central crossing streets (north-south *cardo* and east-west *decumanus*) remained fundamental. Cities always included market plazas, commercial streets,



Figure 9.13—Aramaic and Hebrew ostraca from Masada, first century AD (photo: Alexander Schick)



Figure 9.14—Roman Appian Way (photo: David E. Graves)

temples, residential areas, palaces, administrative buildings, theaters or amphitheaters, and the obligatory hippodrome for horse racing, chariot competitions, gladiatorial games, and other blood sports. While in the more ancient world of the Bronze and Iron Ages the main criteria for locating a city or town were (1) defensible high ground, (2) arable land, and (3) adequate water resources, the Romans had no such constraints. With aqueducts they could bring water to any location from 100 miles or more, if needed. Food could be easily imported, as required. The Romans

BREAKOUT 9.09

ROMAN ROADS

During the early Roman period, cities were linked by a network of well-built and maintained public roads (Latin, *viae publicae*) that also promoted security (*via militaris*), communication, and trade. These same roads would enable Christians to spread the gospel of Jesus quickly and efficiently over long distances. Rome was the center of the Roman Empire and, literally, the phrase “all roads lead to Rome” was true.

These were among the best-known major roadways leading to and from Rome: the *Via Appia* (Appian Way) to Apulia; the *Via Aurelia* to France; the *Via Cassia* to Tuscany; the *Via Maris* connecting the major trade routes between Egypt, the Levant, Anatolia, and Mesopotamia; and the *Via Traiana Nova*, which passed through the Levant. An estimated 29 major roads went out from Rome to connect with approximately 375 smaller roads in the provinces. The Romans had 56,000 miles of paved highways and 186,400 miles of secondary roads—some paved, some covered with gravel. An example is the road from Heshbon (Latin, *Esebus*, near Mount Nebo) to Livias, then across the Jordan River to Jericho, then up to Jerusalem. This particular Roman road was



Roman bridge/aqueduct (photo: David E. Graves)

surveyed for the first time in February 2010 (Graves and Stripling, “Re-Examination of the Location for the Ancient City of Livias,” in *Levant* 43, no. 2 (2011)).

There were three different methods used to construct Roman roads: leveled and packed earth (Latin *viae terrena*); packed earth with a gravel surface (*viae glareata*); and a substantial prepared base paved with cut limestone or basalt blocks (pavers), sometimes with mosaic tiles (*tesera*) or marble (*via munita*). All the roadways were able to be travelled on by foot, horse, cart, or wagon. According to Roman law, roads had to be at least eight feet wide for straight sections and

sixteen feet wide for corners to allow easy passage.

In Italy, during the Imperial period (27 BC–AD 284), construction costs of roads were funded from the public purse (Latin, *aerarium*), while in the provinces they were funded by the local landowners or communities. There were political connections to the building of roads; those who spent a lot of their own money on repairing the roads (*curator*) were often elected to political posts.

Because common travellers did not have the privilege of military escorts, roadhouses (Latin, *mansio*) were located about every 20 miles (a day’s journey) as rest stops

to provide food and protection for Roman citizens on official business. Roman forts were commonly built close to the roadhouses, and less-reliable inns were situated nearby for noncitizen travellers in need of rest and refreshment. In addition, between the way stations, at

intervals of about nine miles, there were horse-changing stations (*mutationes*) with workshops and accommodations.

To indicate the distance between cities, milestone pillars (Latin, *miliarium*; eight feet high by two feet wide) were erected

along public roads, bearing inscriptions indicating the distance to the next major destination. The Roman government often included inscriptions identifying who the curator of the road was and when the work was carried out.

D. Graves



Figure 9.15—Roman latrines; Ephesus (L), Scythopolis (Beth Shan) (R) (photos: David E. Graves, John Witte Moore)

were offensively minded and not worried about having elevated cities for defensive purposes. Interestingly, the number one criterion for those involved in the planning and building of cities was good air! Smoke pollution was a perennial problem, and consistent breezes were a necessity for clearing the air.

ROADS—The enormous Roman road network connected every corner of the empire with well-engineered roads that were designed to last. Connected by watchtowers, police posts, and inns, they provided safety and comfort for travelers. Local industry could now be marketed in the farthest reaches of the empire. Most importantly, the roadways allowed for the rapid movement of armies and their materiel, which were the foundation of the Roman Empire (see *Figure 9.14*).

AQUEDUCTS—Improved hygiene in the cities

resulted from the flowing water brought in by aqueducts. This provided clean water for drinking, for fountains, and to flush effluent from the public latrines (see *Figure 9.15*). Hygiene was unchanged in the countryside, however, and people continued to suffer from a high infant mortality rate and a wide range of parasites and diseases.

BRIDGES—Well-designed bridges, like the roads, were essential to travel throughout the empire, and the Romans excelled at building them. Arched bridges that spanned valleys could also serve as part of an aqueduct system (see *Figure 9.16*).

SEWAGE SYSTEMS—Sewer systems were common in large Roman cities. They carried off rainwater as well as the waste and runoff from public baths and latrines. In spite of the use of such sewers, the cities

were still largely filthy and unsanitary due to the fact that most of the lower-income housing had no access to the city sewers.

HARBORS—The Romans utilized harbors throughout the Mediterranean world and even constructed a remarkable artificial harbor at Caesarea on the coast of Palestine. The harbor at Caesarea Maritima (see *Figure*



Figure 9.16—Arched Roman bridge/aqueduct; Roman architects could span deep valleys with arched structures (photo: David E. Graves)



Figure 9.17—Caesarea Maritima harbor, top L of photo (photo: David E. Graves)

9.17) ranks as one of the great engineering accomplishments of the age and, at its height, was a major center of commerce and the equal of the Egyptian harbor at Alexandria.

WEAPONS AND WARFARE

ROMAN LEGIONS—The Roman army was traditionally composed of groups of men called legions. These were of various sizes through the centuries, but usually came to around 5,000 soldiers. The actual number of fighting men marching into battle, however, varied from conflict to conflict. The largest recorded Roman army was nearly 90,000 strong in the Battle of Cannae against Hannibal in 216 BC (which they lost). On the battlefield,



Figure 9.18—Roman soldier (photo: David E. Graves)

the Romans were effective in their use of the phalanx formation, which they borrowed from the Greeks. The phalanx was used in conjunction with hand-to-hand infantry, artillery (archers and ballistae), chariots, and cavalry.

ARMOR—Roman legionnaires wore torso armor that came in a variety of styles, such as mail shirts and scale armor, greaves to protect the lower legs, helmets, and shields (see *Figure 9.18*). They carried a number of offensive weapons depending upon their duties.

WEAPONRY—The weaponry of Roman legionnaires depended upon their task in the legion. Their shields were long and heavy. They carried one or more of a variety of swords of different sizes. There were bowmen, men with darts, men with slings, and masters of javelins and spears. And behind all these men were those who manned devices that hurled huge arrows, iron rods, and stone balls (ballistae) against the enemy (see *Figure 9.19*).

SIEGE WARFARE—The Romans were superb fighters and this extended to siege techniques. This was gruesomely displayed by their siege of Jerusalem in AD 70, an efficient action that was completed in several months and resulted in the complete destruction of the heavily fortified city. Siege machinery—which included siege towers, battering rams, and catapults for heaving stones and fire-bombs—coupled with a steely and lethal patience, enhanced the ability of the Romans to take almost any target.

INDUSTRY AND OBJECTS

AGRICULTURE—It is estimated that up to 80 percent of the Roman Empire’s population consisted of slaves. A significant number of those slaves served the agricultural industry. Food production was paramount for sustaining large city and town populations, as well as feeding the vast Roman military complex. Practically every kind of crop—grains, fruit, vegetables, nuts—grown in the Mesopotamian Basin and contiguous regions was available in city markets throughout the Empire. Flax fields supported the textile industry. Poultry production expanded exponentially during the Early Roman period, providing a whole new repertoire of cuisine.



Figure 9.19—Roman military gear (photos: Alexander Schick, Steven Collins)



Figure 9.20—Roman leather goods

HERDING—Wool remained a prized fiber for making cloth and rugs. Thus, shepherds and their products were always in demand. Lamb was a prized meat, along with beef and pork. Milk, yogurt, and cheese were common on Roman dining tables. Animal skins provided leather (see *Figure 9.20*) for a wide range of footwear, clothing items, straps and chords, armor elements, wineskins, waterskins, and parchment (for important documents).

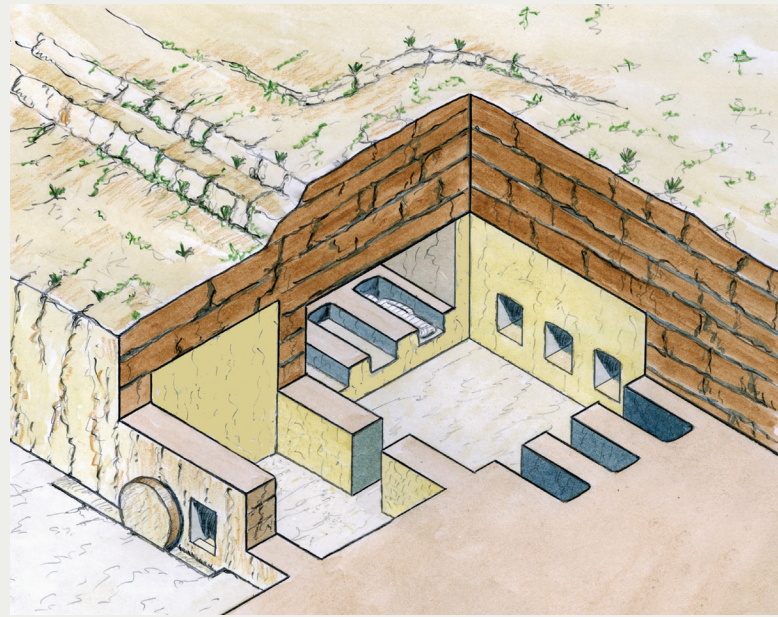
FISHING—With the Mediterranean Sea as a “Roman lake,” all manner of seafood was on the menu. One of the most important fish products (or byproducts) was *garum*, a pungent fish sauce used daily across the empire from the modest home hearth to the most

BREAKOUT 9.10

BURIAL PRACTICES

While the Egyptians embalmed their dead and the Romans and Greeks cremated theirs, during the late second temple period (between 30 BC and AD 70) Jewish burial practices were different and carried out in two stages. First, the body was placed in a cave for a period of about a year, where the flesh would decompose and fall off the bones (Latin, *ossilegium*). Following decomposition, the bones were collected and placed in either ossuaries (bone boxes, which were made of stone during this period), communal graves, or wooden coffins inserted into niches (*loculi*) in cave-tombs or funerary monuments. Ossuaries and coffins often bore the name of the deceased. This two-stage practice was popular during the late Hellenistic and early Roman periods.

In preparation for the two-stage Jewish burial, the body was washed and wrapped in a clean cloth (shroud; Matthew 27:57-60; Mark 15:42-46; Luke 23:52-54). In the Mediterranean climate, bodies decomposed quickly, so spices and perfumes (Greek, *aromata*) were applied to the body and wrappings to mask the odor of decay (John 19:38-42). Lazarus, who was raised back to life, and Jesus, who was resurrected

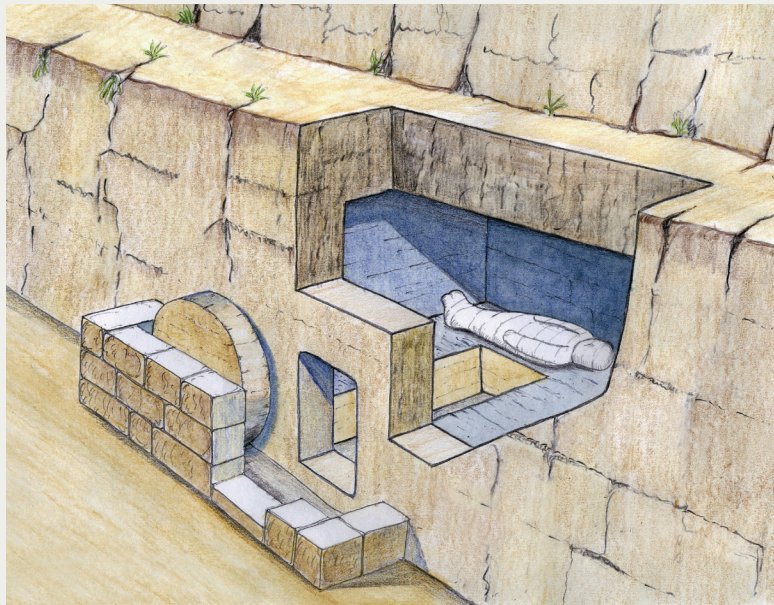


Kokhim tomb of a wealthy family (drawing: Leen Ritmeyer)

from the dead, were in this first stage of burial when they experienced bodily resurrection (John 11:1-44; Luke 24). Even the body of a crucified criminal was buried properly, but not in a place of honor, such as a family tomb. Also, there was to be no mourning for the executed criminal.

There were two types of interiors for first-century rock-cut tombs. The first was a long narrow niche (Latin, *loculus*; Hebrew, *kokh*, pl. *kokhim*) cut at right angles to a central chamber. The second was a low bench cut parallel to the wall and into the chamber wall, creating a canopy (Latin, *arcosolium*, pl.

arcosolia). The latter type of tomb was reserved for the wealthy and people of high standing in society and was likely the kind in which Jesus's body was placed. His was the tomb of a wealthy individual (Matthew 27:57-60; Isaiah 53:9). The so-called Garden Tomb dates to the eighth century BC and has none of the features of a first-century AD tomb. The tomb inside the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, although eroded from centuries of abuse by clerics and pilgrims, is definitely an *arcosolium*. Excellent examples of first-century "rolling stone" *arcosolia* also exist in abundance in a garden tomb area atop



A modest rolling-stone tomb, Jerusalem (drawing: Leen Ritmeyer)

the Mount of Olives, although they are not accessible to the public.

Around Jerusalem there are many surviving first-century tombs—hewn into the natural bedrock—that were used for secondary burials. Often in front

of larger tombs was a courtyard with an inscribed and decorated cut stone (Latin, *nefesh*) above or next to it, preserving the memory of the interred. Entrances to the more elaborate tombs often

resembled a temple or palace, with rectangular or circular stone doors to the chamber.

In 1980, ten ossuaries were discovered in a Talpith (or Talpiyot) tomb near the Old City of Jerusalem (Nos. 701-709). The names on six ossuaries read *Mariamenu [e] Mara* (“Mary, who is...”), *Yhwdb br Yshw’* (“Judah/Jude, son of Jesus”), *Mtyh* (“Matanyahu” or “Matthew”), *Yshw’ br Yhwsp* (“Jesus, son of Joseph”), and *Mryh* (“Mary”). While these names are familiar to any reader of the New Testament and we can easily assume they refer to the biblical figures, these names were very common in the first century, so any connection to the biblical persons is doubtful. Not to mention that the family tomb of the biblical Joseph and Mary would likely have been near Nazareth, not Jerusalem.

D. Graves

lavish palace kitchens. Making garum started by filling vats with small fish and fish guts gleaned from processing anchovies, tuna, mackerel, and other species. They were alternately layered with just the right amounts of salt and aromatic herbs, then lidded and placed in a sunny location for several months until the mixture attained the perfect malodorous aroma. When the concoction was fully fermented, it was then strained. The thick, amber-colored oily liquid was the precious and potent garum, which was then barreled and bottled for distribution across the Roman world (see *Figure 9.21*). The thick paste left over from the straining process was *allec*. While not prized or priced like garum, *allec* was still widely traded.

KITCHENS AND COOKING—Nonskid ceramic

cookware was all the rage during the Roman era (see *Figure 9.22*). Iron and bronze pots, pans, and utensils were also common, but expensive. Kitchens were typically in outdoor courtyards and had food-preparation tables, open and covered hearths with spits, baking ovens of brick or stone, and a pantry for keeping ingredients safe from vermin. Water was carried from local sources and stored in large jars. Cooler underground storage was common for olive oil and wine and usually accessible from the courtyard. In principle, Roman cooking was little different from modern cooking, with virtually every imaginable grain, vegetable, fruit, nut, fish, and meat from wide-ranging geographical regions. Garum sauce (see above) was widely used to flavor everything from cabbage to meats to wines. Garum, which has high



Figure 9.21—Chicken motif garum container, Early Roman period (photo: Daniel Galassini, courtesy of Museum of Archaeology, Trinity Southwest University)



Figure 9.22—Non-skid cooking pot, Early Roman period (photo: Daniel Galassini, courtesy of Museum of Archaeology, Trinity Southwest University)

levels of monosodium glutamate (MSG), is also used as a flavor enhancer in the modern food industry. The following recipe is from the *Roman Cookbook* by Apicius (but no garum!) written c. AD 14–37.

Roman Custard

(makes about 1 cupcake pan; see Figure 9.23)

This is a common Roman recipe from the first century AD.

Ingredients

4 cups milk
 ½ cup honey
 6 eggs
 ½ tsp nutmeg, plus some for garnish
 Berries (or other fruits) for garnish

Instructions

Preheat oven to 325°. Gather all ingredients together. Pour milk into a bowl and mix with honey until blended (a flat plastic spatula works well for this). Whisk egg yolks in a separate bowl; set aside. Pour milk/honey mixture into a small saucepan and heat briefly for around 1-5 minutes, just enough for the milk and honey to combine. Take milk/honey mixture off the stove and let cool for a few minutes.

Once cool, add the well-beaten egg yolks. Add nutmeg and stir thoroughly (it's fine to keep using the whisk here). Pour custard into a baking dish. We suggest using a cupcake pan, as this will allow the custard to cook more evenly. (If you choose to use a large baking dish, you should also increase your baking time. However, in a large dish, the custard might not cook completely and instead may turn out a bit like mush, as happened on one of our failed attempts to recreate this recipe.) Bake fifteen to twenty minutes, or until custard is golden brown. Remove and let sit for about one hour at room temperature. Garnish with berries of your choice and enjoy!



Figure 9.23—Roman custard; modern pan! (photo: Wes Husted)

BREAKOUT 9.11

FROM PASSOVER TO THE LORD'S SUPPER

What is often called the Last Supper should be called the Last Passover, since that is what Jesus was observing when he inaugurated the ceremony of the bread and the cup to be observed by the body of the Messiah (the church) until he returns. In *Breakout 3.03* on the Passover, a number of details were described that have Messianic implications (you should read that *Breakout* in order to fully understand this one). What this Breakout does is correlate New Testament references to certain facets of the Jewish observance with Jesus's own Last Passover, concluding with how the church has inherited the ceremony of the bread and the cup, thus observing a mini-Passover.

Matthew 26:20-23. During his Passover, Messiah Jesus announced that one of the 12 men reclining at the table would betray him. Eleven of the disciples wanted to know who it would be, but Jesus named no one. Instead, he gave a clue: the one "who has dipped his hand in the dish with me" will do this (verse 23). This refers to the *karpas* ceremony. With a large number of participants, as was the case here, there would be several saltwater dishes spread across the table, so each dish would be within easy reach

of three to four men. At the point when Jesus dipped his vegetable into the saltwater dish, Judas did the same. However, the others did not catch the clue.

Matthew 26:30. This verse notes that the disciples concluded by singing a hymn. The Greek text more literally reads "they hymned." This refers to the *Hallel* psalms, which includes Psalm 118, a Messianic psalm.

John 13:21-30. Two things should be noted here. First, for the second time, Jesus announced that one of his disciples would betray him. Again, they wanted to know who it was, and again he named no one. But then he gave another clue: "he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it" (verse 26). This refers to the *koreich* ceremony, in which small sandwiches are made of unleavened bread filled with the horseradish and *charoset*. The one who officiates makes the sandwiches for the others and, in this case, it was Jesus. His response was that the one to whom he would give the "morsel of bread" (the first one) was the betrayer. It was given to Judas, at which point Judas left the room. The purpose of the horseradish is to bring tears to the eyes. No doubt this ceremony brought tears to the eyes

of the Messiah because one of his own was about to betray him. The second item to note is the reference to reclining, and one of the times that reclining is practiced is during this very ceremony.

Luke 22:14-20. That this was a Passover service is clearly stated (verses 14-16), as well as the fact this Passover would be the Passover of fulfillment. As Jesus began the service, Luke mentions a cup, which refers to the fourth cup (Cup of Thanksgiving), and so he gave thanks. Then the ceremony began (verses 17-18). Verse 19 refers to the *yachatz* ceremony, which has to do with the middle of the three pieces of bread used for Passover. When Jesus said, "This is my body," such was only true of the Jewish unleavened bread. Three things had to be true of this bread for it to qualify for the Passover. According to the Mosaic Law it had to be unleavened, because symbolically, leaven represented sin. The body of the Messiah was unleavened, or sinless, and he proved to be the only Jew who could keep the Mosaic Law perfectly down to every jot and tittle. Rabbinic law added two more requirements: The bread had to be both striped and pierced in order to reduce the danger of leavening. The body of the Messiah was

also striped by Roman whips during his scourging, and it was also pierced—by the nails of crucifixion and the spear in his side. Verse 20 focuses on the cup. This was the third cup, the Cup of Redemption. Luke specifies that it was “the cup after supper,” which

is the third cup. In Judaism this is a symbol of a physical redemption, but for us it symbolizes the spiritual redemption that was provided by means of Jesus’s blood.

Thus, when the church celebrates communion, it is an abridged Passover. The bread the

church partakes of is the middle of the three loaves, and the cup the church partakes of is the third (Cup of Redemption) of the four cups of wine.

A. Fruchtenbaum

METALLURGY—One of the worst jobs for a slave was working in the iron or copper mines. Essentially this was a death sentence. Slaves, mostly war captives and criminals, were the expendable human machinery that drove the mining economy. The Roman Empire’s need for metals of all kinds was insatiable. Iron, copper and tin (to make bronze), silver, and gold were the “big four.” And the Romans controlled all the territories where these metals were found (see *Map 1.06*). Being a metalsmith was hard work but a worthy profession, and a necessity! Skilled smiths were in great demand and could lead a decent middle-class life. That is, until they died from inhaling the charcoal smoke, cinders, and chemical fumes associated with their profession.

STONE—Slavery fueled the stone-quarrying industry. Working in a quarry was meant as a death sentence for war captives, convicted criminals, and, sometimes political enemies of the Roman State. But Roman

builders needed finely cut stone, and lots of it. Foundations, columns (bases, capitals, and drums), pediments, fountains, aqueducts, streets—were all made with stone. Cutters, finishers, and carvers were often skilled paid laborers, although well-cared-for slaves also worked in the stone trades. Small-town stone workers built houses of unworked or partially worked fieldstones. In locations where the type of stone (like the basalt of the Galilee and Golan regions) allowed the creation of stone “beams” (usually no more than six feet long), the use of expensive timbers could be avoided (see *Figure 9.24*).

CARPENTRY—When we think of Joseph and Jesus, the carpentry trade comes immediately to mind. But wood was scarce in the area around tiny Nazareth and the nearby bustling city of Sepphoris, where they likely



Figure 9.24—Basalt beams, Chorazin (photos: John Witte Moore)

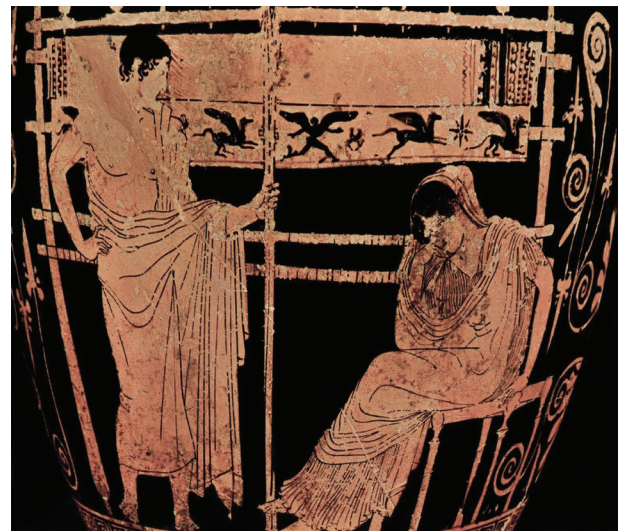


Figure 9.25—Chiusi Vase loom (photo: Steven Collins)

plied their trade as *tektonoi* (craftsmen). Therefore, it is possible that the family business, Joseph and Sons, worked as much in stone as with wood. Perhaps they built houses and made the furniture as well!

FLINT—For thousands of years, flint had provided the sharpest cutting edge for everything from skinning animals to performing delicate surgical procedures. For many tasks, a freshly knapped flint blade was still the tool of choice.

TEXTILES—While cottage-level spinning and weaving was widely practiced in small towns and rural areas, the large quantity of yarn and thread needed to create raw cloth, clothing, draperies, tapestries, and rugs demanded by the world's largest and wealthiest empire could only be met by large-scale production facilities. The type of loom used by Roman period weavers had been in service since the Neolithic period. It was the upright, or warp-weighted, loom (as depicted on the famous Chiusi vase; see *Figure 9.25*). Warp-weighted looms keep the warp threads taut by using weights (modern looms do this with the beam). The threads were hung from a rectangular wooden frame supported by wooden poles. The poles could either be set into the ground or leaned against a wall. A shuttle carried the weft threads between the warp threads by moving a heddle (a stick) to which alternating warp threads were tied. After each shuttle pass, the weft threads were “beaten” with a reed, joining them with the completed portion of fabric.

GLASS—True glass production began as early as the third millennium BC in Egypt. But while glass items were prized during the Bronze and Iron Ages, they were costly and rare. In the Hellenistic period, glass production accelerated. In the Roman world, glass technology took off like a rocket. Glass vessels of every imaginable level of quality and artistry graced the homes and palaces of the elite, and simple glass vessels were used by common people as well (see *Figure 9.26*).

POTTERY—Late Hellenistic and Early Roman wares are virtually indistinguishable, except that pottery produced in the Roman period tended to be pinkish to reddish and had the look of what we today would call terra cotta (see *Figure 9.26*). Early Roman period



Figure 9.26—Early Roman pottery and glass (photos: Daniel Galassini, Steven Collins, David E. Graves, courtesy of Museum of Archaeology, Trinity Southwest University)

pottery was often produced with horizontal grooving or ribbing—thus the designation ribbed ware—which gave it a very practical nonskid surface. The Romans also produced a very expensive red sintered ware called terra sigillata (meaning clay with impressed designs).

TRADE—In Roman times, both maritime and overland commercial trade thrived. High demand for common and exotic materials and goods created shipping companies, broker/middlemen, port labor jobs, and haulers using the sea lanes and caravan routes. Ship builders and camel suppliers prospered as well. Insurance companies covered cargo shipments that were subject to storms and piracy on the seas and bands of thieves by land. But the Romans did their best to police the seas and road systems within their realm, all part of the *Pax Romana*. But materials and goods were not the only cargo to traverse the commercial routes of the empire. Ideas flowed freely from Spain to Persia, from Palestine to Rome. The Christian gospel was such a “cargo” (see *Breakout 9.15* and *Map 9.05*).

THE SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY

Since the resurrection of Christ, the followers of Jesus (mostly Jews, slaves, and military initially) began to spread the gospel message in the same cities, towns, and villages in which they lived, and

eventually (according to the book of Acts) this message spread throughout much of the Near East and Europe. These new followers would gather together in house-churches regularly on Sunday to engage in the learning of doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread (communion), and prayers (Acts 2:42). That churches sprang up early in the Levant is attested by early twentieth-century exploration. While excavating at Dura-Europos (also Dura-Europus), situated in modern Syria on the banks of the Euphrates River, French and American teams unearthed the earliest known house-church, which dated to the early to mid-third century AD. Early structural renderings by the late Clark Hopkins (see *The Discovery of Dura-Europos*

and *MacMillan Bible Atlas*) reveal the church's structure complete with early Christian art (currently held at the Yale University Art Gallery), eucharistic documents, and baptistry.

With the spread of the message of Christ as King and a physical resurrection from the dead came persecution—sometimes from the Roman government, which viewed Christianity as a threat to the sovereign rule of the emperor (emperor worship), or from those holding the popular Platonist notion that the resurrection of a physical body was repugnant (Acts 17). While other theological assaults emerged from the Jewish religious leaders, these challenges would often lead to persecution, which did not end until the early



BREAKOUT 9.12

CIRCUMCISION AND BAPTISM

Not every covenant has a sign or token connected with it, but some do. *Circumcision* was the sign or token of the Abrahamic covenant. It was to be performed only on males on the eighth day of life. This distinguished Hebrew circumcision from all other circumcisions practiced in ancient times. It also served as a reminder that this covenant was a blood covenant, and a sign of their unique identity as the chosen people of Yahweh. Failure to circumcise meant that the father would face the divine judgment of being cut off or executed. For this reason, Moses almost died for failing to circumcise his second son, and only when this act was completed was Moses's life spared (Exodus 4:24-26).

Circumcision was also prescribed by the Mosaic covenant (Leviticus 12:3), but the significance was not the same. Under the Abrahamic covenant it was mandatory for Hebrews only (and Gentiles living in a Hebrew or Israelite household) and was a sign of their unique identity as the people of Yahweh. Under the Law of Moses it was mandatory for all Israelites and for those Gentiles who converted to "the way of Yahweh" and wished to partake of the spiritual blessings

of his covenants with Israel. Circumcision was the means of submission to the Mosaic Law, and it obligated one to keep the whole law (Galatians 5:3).

Galatians 3:15–4:7 points out that with the death of the Messiah the rule of the Law of Moses came to an end, and so in the present age there is no basis for circumcising Jews or Gentiles. However, the Abrahamic covenant is an ongoing covenant that includes the circumcision of Abraham's descendants, the Jewish people, and even Messianic Jews are still required to circumcise their sons. This explains why Paul refused to allow Titus to be circumcised yet initiated the circumcision of Timothy. Titus had no Jewish ancestry, while Timothy did (Acts 16:1-3; 21:17-26).

Already in the Hebrew Scriptures, the antitype of "circumcision of the flesh" was "circumcision of the heart," and this did not change in the New Testament.

Baptism was already a common Jewish practice long before it became a church practice. The key Hebrew word is *twilah*, which means "immersion," and that was the only kind of baptism that was, and is, practiced in Judaism. The basic meaning was the concept of

identification: to identify with a person or message or group. When a Gentile converted to Judaism he would undergo immersion, identifying with the God of Israel and the Jewish people. A new identity also meant a break from the old—namely, a break from polytheism and paganism.

Moving from Hebrew to Greek, two key words need to be noted. First, *bapto*, which means "to dip" or "to dye." This was the action of dipping a cloth into dye and thus changing its color—therefore, changing its identification. The second word is *baptizo*, which means "to immerse" and corresponds to the Hebrew *twilah*. The meaning of the act is identification; the meaning of the term is immersion.

Is baptism the antitype to circumcision and does baptism replace circumcision? The answer is no. Circumcision shows the faith and obedience of the parents and not the child. Baptism shows the faith and obedience of the person undergoing the immersion, not the parents. There was no practice of infant baptism in the Hebrew Bible or in Judaism, nor is it found anywhere in the New Testament.

A. Fruchtenbaum

BREAKOUT 9.13

CRUCIFIXION

Jesus of Nazareth was tried, flogged, and crucified, suffering a terrible death that is almost beyond imagination. The Romans had perfected a form of execution used by Alexander the Great, perhaps originally introduced by the Persians. The practice was designed to produce a slow death with maximum pain and suffering.

Originally, the condemned was tied to a tree on the ground, naked and exposed to passers-by and wild animals. This was changed to the use of raised crosses in various configurations. It was customary for the

condemned to carry the crossbar—which could weigh up to 125 pounds—to the execution site. Crucifixion was usually preceded by flogging, a form of scourging with either a small, multitailed *flagellum* (whip), or perhaps the much larger *flagrum*. The leather strips of the whip were embedded with pieces of bone or small lead weights that would tear the flesh on contact, causing tremendous pain as the condemned writhed against the rough wood of the cross.

The feet and hands were secured to the cross either by ropes or nails. The Romans seemed to

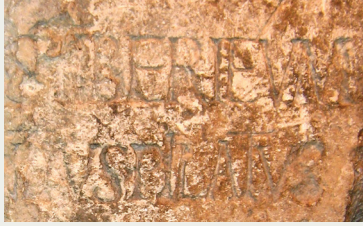
prefer using nails. Church tradition has taught that the nails were inserted through the palms of Jesus' hands, but recent scholarship has shown that the nails were probably driven through the wrists (considered as part of the hand), a practice that would allow the arms to support the weight of a victim hanging on the cross. When the condemned slumped downward, body weight pulling against the nails caused excruciating pain.

Death would finally occur from asphyxia or shock. The crucified person, hanging from the arms, would experience increasing difficulty with breathing, and eventually would pass into unconsciousness and death. To prolong the ordeal, the Romans often provided a small "bench" upon which the condemned would sit, or a small platform for the feet. This would allow the individual to push upward each time he wanted to take a breath and thus survive a while longer.

The agonizing descent toward death often lasted for two or three days, but Jesus yielded up his spirit to the Father within hours. In fact, Pontius Pilate was surprised when, the very afternoon of the crucifixion, he was approached for permission to allow Jesus's dead body to be taken down (Mark 15:44).



Heel bone of a crucified man with nail intact, Israel Museum reproduction; crucifixion nails/spikes (photos: Daniel Galassini, courtesy of Museum of Archaeology, Trinity Southwest University)



Latin inscription with the name of "Pontius Pilatus," prefect of Judea, who presided over Jesus's crucifixion during the reign of Tiberium (photo: Joseph Holden)

To assure that the condemned had indeed died on the cross, the soldiers would sometimes break the lower legs of the crucified. Without the support of the legs, the person would hang from severely weakened arms and suffocate within minutes. However, we are told that a spear was thrust into Jesus's side instead, and blood and

fluids from the lungs flowed out, signaling that he was already dead.

Crucifixion was designed to inflict intense suffering for a prolonged period of time. It was an excruciating way to die. As an aside, our word *excruciating* derives from a Latin word that means "out of the cross."

J. Moore

fourth century AD with the Edict of Toleration and the Edict of Milan.

As the church spread throughout Asia Minor (Turkey) and Europe, it came into contact with rival religious belief systems such as emperor worship, the Roman mystery cults, polytheism, and the cult of Artemis along with their magical incantation formulas know as the *Ephesia Grammata* (Acts 19:28). Christians were pressed to defend the faith and develop an apologetic response that could both clearly distinguish Christianity from the cults and also withstand severe counterargument. Among these early apologists were the apostle Paul (Philippians 1:7, 17), Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and eventually, Augustine.

However, as Christianity grew over the next few centuries, at the same time that its leaders clarified its doctrines, it was challenged by sophisticated philosophical and theological ideas emerging from Gnosticism (believed the creator god of the Old Testament is evil, matter is impure, and wrote false gospels of Christ), Arianism (Jesus did not have a divine nature), and from other heretics on the fringes of the church (for example, the teachings of Cerinthus, Valentinus, Arius, Eutychius, and Nestorius). Because Christianity grew up in this intellectually challenging environment of Hellenistic philosophy and Roman religious practice, believers understood the need to defend, clarify, and present the gospel in terms appropriate for the Greco-Roman age.