

Life and Ministry of Jesus Christ

Context

The context of the entire Bible: Jesus Christ (Seed of Woman, Messiah, SoD, HOoI, etc)

- coming
- revealing
- suffering
- dying
- rising
- ascending
- returning
- reigning

Setting the stage: the historical and cultural background (context) leading up to the coming of the Messiah...

- the connection of the end of 2 Kings to the Gospels
- and sets the context for our days

What happened after

- the destruction of Solomon's Temple?
- the destruction of Jerusalem?
- Judah being led captive in Babylon (586 BC)?

“The times of the Gentiles”

- during which time the Messiah
 - comes
 - reveals
 - suffers
 - dies
 - rises
 - ascends
- after which time the Messiah
 - returns
 - reigns

Luke 21:24 And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

The “times of the Gentiles” (Gentile kings lording over Israel) was revealed to

- God's servant
- God's prophet

Dan 2:24-45

God's foretelling of the times of the Gentiles

- to His servant (Neb)
- interpreted by His prophet (Daniel)
- kingdoms to lord over Israel
 - Babylon
 - Medo-Persia
 - Greece
 - Rome
- ending with the kingdom of God on earth ruled by His King (Ps 2)

Babylon (586 BC) [map]

Daniel and Ezekiel were taken captive and were God's prophets

Judah was in captivity for 70 years (one for each Sabbath year "stolen" from the Lord)

As foretold by the Lord thru Jeremiah (Jer 25:8-14 and Jer 29:10-14)

For their good (Jer 24:5-7) to

- break their stubborn hearts of idolatry
- learn obedience
- trust/worship the OTL God with their whole heart

During that time of dispersion: a time of reflection and study/scholarship leading to changes to Judaism

- Place of worship: Synagogues vs the Temple (destroyed)
- Spiritual leadership: Rabbis (teachers) vs Aaronic priesthood (no Temple)
- Writings: Judaism (Israel's relationship with the Lord, got "weird")
 - *Targum*: paraphrase of Scripture
 - *Mishna*: explain/supplement the Law of Moses, traditions, oral law
 - *Talmud* and *Midrash*: commentaries of the rabbis
 - *Halakhah*: explained the OT and was given greater authority than Scripture
 - *Haggadah*: teaching of individual rabbis, as "powerful" as the teacher

At the time of Jesus,

- Babylon was still the largest settlement of Jews outside of Israel
- Judaism with traditions, leadership, thoughts that had been formed in Babylon

Times of the Gentiles under Babylon started in 2 Kings 25:21 and ended in Dan 5... hand writing on the wall, Babylon fell that very night to Medo-Persia

Daniel must have read to Cyrus Is 44:24 – 45:6

Cyrus "called out" by God approx 200 years before the event and how he would capture Babylon foretold (before Babylon was!).

Medo-Persia (516 BC) [map] (modern day Kurds and Iran)

Ezra 1:1-7

The command to re-build the Temple

Ezra 2:64-65

Of the millions living in Babylon, only 49,897 went home to rebuild the Temple

Ezra 3:8-13

Temple foundation is laid in the face of great resistance

Zerrubbabel's Temple was a "far cry" from Solomon's Temple

Ezra 6:14-22

After great resistance and much discouragement, the Temple is finished

The prophets Haggai and Zechariah were sent to encourage the work

The 2nd Temple is finished and dedicated and the people are holy

Esther

a Divinely-thwarted attempt to exterminate the Jews

Neh 1:1-4

Neh 2:1-6

The command to rebuild the City

March 14, 445 BC (log for Luke 19, Jesus' final week)

Also great resistance

Neh 6:15-16

Jerusalem the City is rebuilt

Neh 13

Conditions in Jerusalem at the end of Nehemiah's ministry:

- 2nd Temple was defiled by the High Priest
- Priesthood was defiled
- Levites were neglected (tithes and offerings were God's way to provide for them) so they left the service in the Temple to work their own fields in order to eat
- Sabbath was profaned (again!)
- took strange wives – failure of diligence to be holy/separate... annihilation by assimilation vs extermination

Malachi

"Where is My honor?"

"Why have you despised My name?"

"Why do you offer Me your rejects and your leftovers instead of your first and your best? Go ahead...test Me."

"I have no pleasure in you."

Mal 3:1

Mal 4:2, 5-6

Then...400 years of silence from God – the Lord “goes dark”

Greece (330 BC) [map]

Alex the Great finished what his father Philip of Macedon started and conquered Persia

Goal: “Hellenization” – the entire world having

- Greek as its language
- Greek culture

Jews embroiled in a cultural war with Hellenization

- external, physical beauty of man vs internal, spiritual beauty of God of Israel
 - human body (gymnasiums)
 - buildings/architecture as man’s accomplishments/glory
 - philosophy vs Word of God
- “universal” language...common Jews knew Greek but not Hebrew
 - robust
 - “suitable” for the Word of God (per rabbis)
- Scripture translated into Greek: Septuagint
 - 70 translators
 - 70 nations

The Jews respected/feared Alex (opted not to fight him) so he left them alone

Alex died...leaving the kingdom to his 4 generals

The cultural war simmering beneath the surface came to a boil

Out of the Seleucids (Syria) came Antiochus Euphron

Dan 11

Thought he was a god and demanded to be worshipped

Jews refused

He marched on Jerusalem and erected an idol of himself in the Holy of Holies,
precursor to the “abomination that causes desolation” (Dan 9, Matt 24)

Maccabean Revolt

Fueled by outrage caused by the “abomination that caused desolation”

Broke the yoke of the Greeks...Jewish independence after 440 years

Hasmonean Dynasty...lasted about 100 years

But...the Maccabees:

- crossed a line, combined offices...
King/Priests (priests that would be kings)
- worldly, ambitious, corrupt

Rome (~145 BC) [map]

Rome...the most powerful, fierce, and ruthless of the Gentile kingdoms

Army built the world's largest and most advanced road system to defend the empire from within and without...the role model for

- Autobahn (Hitler)
- US Interstate system (Eisenhower)

Zero Tolerance (political, insurrection)

Religious tolerance (keep the masses in control, absorb and change names of all gods)
until Caesar worship (declared gods by Roman Senate starting with Augustus)

The Maccabees...Hasmonean dynasty...dared to fight Rome to keep "independence"

Rome brutally put down insurrection after insurrection but the rebellion continued...

kinda like the Jews of Neb/Babylon...continued into the days of Jesus and beyond

Governor of Judea (Roman province): Herod

- Idumean/Edomite
 - Esau vs Jacob
 - enemy of Israel
 - forced to convert to Judaism by Maccabees, not Jewish
- Political genius dedicated to exterminate the Maccabees and gain their power
 - in Rome with the Caesars and the senate
 - in Alexandria with Mark Anthony and Cleopatra
- Tyrant...his reign characterized by cruelty and bloodshed
 - sons
 - wives
 - the High Priest (fired/hired 6x)
- Ever edgy (insecure) about the talk of a Jewish Messiah...
 - personal threat to his power
 - threats from Rome to keep power
 - leading to the slaughter of the innocents of Bethlehem

- Great builder
 - Caesarea...one of most important/profitable ports in Roman Empire
 - Caesarea Philippi (on major trade route)
 - Tiberias (HQ for Sanhedrin)
 - Herodian...monument of paranoid self-preservation
 - Masada...ditto
 - temple to Augustus Caesar (promoted worship of the Caesars)
 - entertainment centers
 - theaters
 - amphitheaters
 - hippodromes
 - public bath houses
 - Temple Mount and Temple...and Antonio Fortress
 - “a better Jew than the Pharisees and Rabbis”
 - to “win” the people’s love and admiration
 - 46 years in the building (a work in progress) when Jesus began His ministry

Goals:

1. Political and economic power
2. “Make the people love me”
3. finally and forever defeat the Maccabees

Throughout the Roman Empire: widespread anti-Semitic attitudes and contempt for the Jews

- Circumcision (sign of covenant with Abraham): barbaric and horrifying
- Holiness/separate-ness:
 - God: one (uncompromisingly monotheistic) vs many
 - “better” than everybody else (Jews had contempt for the Gentiles)
 - abject refusal to be “Roman”, be assimilated by the Greek culture
- Sabbath: a sanctioned day of laziness
- Jealous of their industry, prosperity, talent, capital
(blessed by their faithful God)
- hope in a Messiah (a direct threat to the Caesars)

In Judea, daily life was governed by the Romans but the Jewish religious life governed by the Sanhedrin (70 elders)

At the time of Jesus, the dispersed Jews had been re-gathered in their land and the Temple had been restored as the center of worship

At the center of Israel's history, religion, and hope: The Temple in Jerusalem

Solomon's Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians

70 years later, Ezra and Zerubabel led less than 50,000 exiles home and re-built the Temple...2nd Temple was small and modest compared to Solomon's

Herod, to win the hearts of the Jews, destroyed the 2nd Temple and built one

- “after the Jews’ own hearts”
- worthy of Roman glory

Herod's Temple was anything but small and modest...yet

- built by a usurper to the throne of David – Herod
- served by apostate High Priests that prostituted their office
 - made merchandise of the people
 - moneychangers
 - sacrificial animal markets
 - lived luxuriously like aristocrats

Into this time...

- “unified world”
 - Government: Rome
 - Language and culture: Greece
- spiritual anticipation and disillusionment
 - Jewish Temple and the sacrificial system of worship were restored
 - Jews were looking for their Messiah (Mal 4:4-6, Acts 1:6)
 - Heathen had lost faith in their gods, who did not protect them from the conquest and oppression of Rome
- Roman roads...all roads led to Rome...
 - the Good News could get to the entire world

But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. (Gal 4:4-5)

Retracing our steps...Dan 2, the time of the Gentiles told in advance

- The Babylonians came...and went
- The Medes and the Persians came...and went
- The Greeks came...and went
- The Romans came...and went

But the Jews endured...were preserved because God of Abraham is faithful to His Word

We live in the time of the fragile toes, a mixture of iron and clay

Next: a stone not cut by human hands that will destroy and crush the kingdoms of man and set up the kingdom of God on earth

The context of the entire Bible:

Jesus Christ (Seed of Woman, Messiah)

- coming
- revealing
- suffering
- dying
- rising
- ascending
- returning
- reigning

So what!

Mal 1:10b I have no pleasure in you, saith the LORD of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand.

Rev 4:10-11 The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created. "

As was true to the Jews before the Messiah came, revealed, suffered, died, rose...
it is true for us before the Messiah returns and reigns:

Are you pleasing to God?

Is your life pleasing to Jesus Christ...or are you pleasing your Self?

How do our lives reflect the Life that is pleasing to the Father...Jesus Christ's?

Matt 3:17 baptism

Matt 12:18 Servant of God to take justice to the Gentiles

Matt 17:5 transfiguration (revelation)

Very important questions in these days in which we have been chosen to live

Chuck Girard's (*Love Song*) recent experience

"Christianity is getting weird!" (translation: liberal vs conservative)

Recent large church:

Went to meet with the pastor...sent to the Production Manager

"You have 2 songs and this much time then you gotta get off the stage
for...and then at the end you close."

Closed with a worship song

Pastor about tore his head off

"We don't worship here – it offends people.

We don't want to offend unbelievers that are here."

Large churches usually don't mention "Jesus"...

to not offend people but bring them in

Such a "witness" is NOT pleasing to the Father!

Be on guard of falling away..."getting weird", as contrasted to faithful to the Word!

- paraphrases of Scripture (NIV, NLT, Message)
- extra-Biblical books studied vs the Word
- traditions
- "commentaries" (false teachings, false gospels) leading many astray

I have been called here to help...so...

Let it be known here and now as we start our study of Jesus Christ, His Life and Ministry:

Get ready to

- worship
- be offended
- please the Father

Invite "Christians" you know and love

Invite unbelievers you know and love

We are going to meet Jesus Christ!

We will confronted by the Life that is pleasing to God!

I have yet to hear a voice from heaven speaking of me, "Behold, My son in whom
I am well-pleased"

Yet that is in essence what I want in this life more than anything...

To be pleasing to my Father in heaven...

so Jesus is going to have to be Lord and shine in my life.

More than anything in this life, what do you want?

Every one of us needs to know the answer to that question!

Next week: 400 years of silence from God is broken!

(read ahead...Luke 1)

Note: The 4 Gospels are a written record of the Life and Ministry of Jesus Christ...
Yet they do not give a complete, detailed biography/Autobiography
The purpose of the 4 Gospels is
John 20:31

Next: the 400 years of silence is broken – the birth announcement of the Messiah’s Forerunner

Why 4 Gospels...and where might we expect to find what we looking for?

	<u>Matthew</u>	<u>Mark</u>	<u>Luke</u>	<u>John</u>
Jesus is	Son of David	Servant	Son of Man	Son of God
Written to	Jews	Roman	Greek	Church
Sign	lion	ox	man	eagle
Ends with	resurrection	ascension	Promise of the Father	Follow Me