

Week 1: Context of the New Testament

Readings:

- None

Resources:

- Dr. Jeannie Constantinou
 - ACTS Intro to NT (<http://actslibrary.org>)

Powerpoint:

- <https://www.dropbox.com/s/egn8rrxt9qfv59r/2021-09-01%20-%20Introduction%20to%20Bible%20Study.pptx?dl=0>

Quiz:

- <https://forms.gle/DDwFKyMWCzgEkEDn9>

Introduction

Welcome to Bible School!

- Agenda and Plan for Bible School
- What do you need to bring?
- How does the Bible Homework work?

Why is Bible Study important?

- "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
- The people in Berea "were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether

these things were so." (Acts 17:11)

- "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me." (John 5:39)

What kinds of things will we study?

- Literal - Stories, Historical Context, Cultural Context, Etymology, Numerology, etc.
- Tropological - What lessons can I learn? What are the virtues? Etc.
- Allegorical - What does this tell us about God? How does the OT point to Christ in the NT?

Biblical Context

Review the History of the Old Testament

- Genesis
 - God created the universe and everything in it
 - God made man in His image, according to His likeness
 - Man fell by the envy of the devil and had to be removed from Paradise lest they eat from the tree of life and live eternally in their sin
 - The Lord promises that He will save them and He will trample on Satan
 - The generations continue and they have some evil and some good... a line of evil from Cain, and a line of good from Seth
 - From the line of Seth comes Enoch and Methuselah and Noah
 - Because of the evil in the line of Cain, the Lord decides to send a flood on the earth to purge it from the evil people. Noah and his family are saved.
 - Abraham comes along, a descendant of Noah and he is a righteous man who is faithful to God and God's promises. And God promises him children and descendants more than the number of stars in heaven or dust on the earth.
 - Abraham has Isaac, a son of Promise who is just as faithful and just as righteous.
 - Isaac has Jacob, who starts life pretty bad - deceiving his father and his brother several times, but then by the end of his life he is very faithful.
 - Jacob's name is changed to Israel and he has 12 sons. Those become the 12 tribes of Israel. Unfortunately, 10 of those sons go and sell Joseph (the 11th son) as a slave. He ends up in Egypt but remains faithful to God. So God keeps taking care of him, until he becomes the most powerful man in Egypt (second to Pharaoh).
 - There is a famine and the brothers of Joseph have to come to Egypt to get grain which is when Joseph tests them and then reveals himself to them. He invites them to come live with him in Egypt and to bring their father and whole family. They comply. He gives them some of the best land in Egypt to live in.
- Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy
 - A new Pharaoh rises up and he does not know Joseph. All he sees is the Israelites multiplying and taking up their land... so he makes them slaves. And they were slaves for 400 years until God raised up for them someone to save them - Moses.

- Moses was born in Egypt and raised by Pharaoh's daughter. When he was 40 years old he killed an Egyptian who was beating a Hebrew. So he fled from Egypt to the wilderness.
- He lived out there for 40 more years until God appeared to him in the Burning Bush.
- God told him that he would go to Egypt and demand that Pharaoh let God's people go
- Moses takes his brother Aaron and they go to Egypt and they work many signs for Pharaoh but he still won't let them go... so God sends 10 plagues on them. After the 10th plague, Pharaoh lets them leave... but even then, he chases them out.
- God splits the Red Sea for them and closes it on the Egyptian army, so they escape from Egypt.
- God gives them the Commandments before they enter their new land - the land of Canaan, the land God had promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
- God also gives them instructions to build the Tabernacle and they build it.
- Then God leads them out to enter the Promised Land, but they refuse to enter when they get there. They don't have faith. They think they will lose the battles that will follow. Except for Joshua and Caleb.
- So instead, they wander 40 years in the wilderness until that whole generation dies off. During this time, they are eating Manna sent from heaven, and quail. They are following a cloud and a pillar of fire. They are getting water from rocks. They are seeing miracle after miracle after miracle.
- In the end, they reach the border of the land, Moses and Aaron both die and Joshua becomes the leader.
- Joshua
 - Joshua guides the people into the conquest of the land. He is positioned as Moses' replacement.
 - They start with the big city of Jericho and they encircle it every day for seven days. On the seventh day they encircle it seven times and the walls of the city fall completely and crumble. They overtake the city.
 - They continue the conquest of the land and take over much of the Promised Land.
 - When Joshua dies, he tells them to finish their conquest, to have faith, and to not reject the Lord.
- Judges
 - They continue to do those things until all the elders who knew Joshua died. By then, they had forgotten everything Joshua had told them.
 - And this starts the period of the Judges... the people lose faith in God, go after wives from the Canaanites, worship idols of the Canaanites, etc. So God gives them over to those other nations. Then they plead to God and He raises for them a judge... a judge is a military leader who also has a relationship with God, and to whom God speaks. The judge rescues them from captivity, then they repent and are good for a little while, then the cycle repeats.
 - Some judges that are well known are Samson, Deborah, Barak, Gideon.
 - The last of the judges is Samuel the Priest.
- 1&2 Samuel
 - Samuel hears God calling to him and he ministers as His priest.

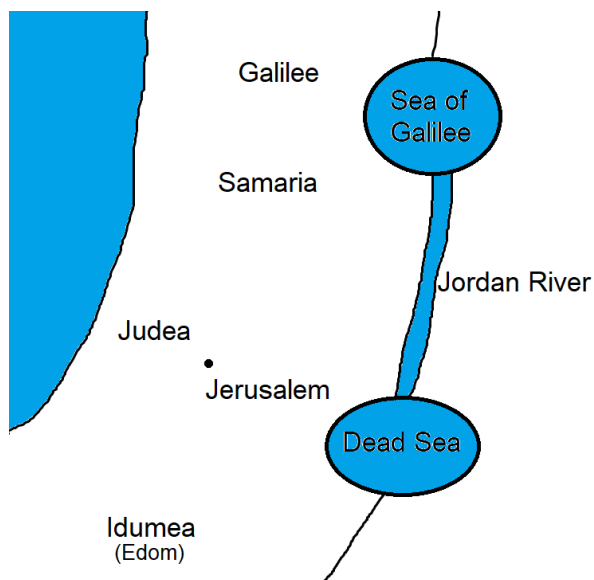
- The people come to Samuel and tell him that they want a king... he is not happy because they should be following God as their king, not desiring an earthly king like the other nations.
- God agrees with Samuel, but tells him to give them what they want.
- So they choose Saul - a good man from the tribe of Benjamin to be the king. Saul is good for a while... but one time, instead of waiting for Samuel to come and offer the burnt offerings, he did it himself. But he is not a priest. So it was a grave sin.
- From there, it was all downhill for Saul.
- Samuel anoints David when he is young, because God chose him to be king one day.
- David goes and defeats Goliath and then continues to defeat the Philistines for many years and the people seemed to love him more than Saul. So Saul starts to chase after David to try and kill him. David had many opportunities to kill Saul, but he didn't because he would not lay a hand on the Lord's anointed.
- At one battle against the Philistines, Saul's sons were all killed, and Saul fell on his sword to avoid getting captured. So David became King.
- David ruled as a good king - a man after the Lord's heart. He made many mistakes but he always repented of them. And this is why the Lord accepted him to be king. The Lord promised him that his descendants would keep the royal line.
- King Solomon
 - When David died, his son Solomon became king. King Solomon asked the Lord for wisdom and the Lord gave it to him. He wrote the Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Book of Wisdom and Song of Songs.
 - He made Israel so powerful and so rich during his reign
 - He built the Temple
 - God appeared to Solomon and told him that if he walks before God in the way David walked, and keep His statutes and His judgments, then his throne will be established on the kingdom forever.
 - Unfortunately, Solomon did not do that... but he went after foreign women - Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, Hittites, and even a daughter of Pharaoh. He had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines. And they caused him to turn his heart after other gods. He was not loyal to God.
 - Then one of his officers, Jeroboam met with a prophet named Ahijah and Ahijah told him a prophecy - that the Lord will split the kingdom. And 10 of the tribes will go to Jeroboam, and 2 of the tribes will continue in the line of Solomon for the sake of his father King David.
- Split of the Kingdom
 - When Solomon died, his son Rehoboam became king. And Rehoboam was not good to the people. He taxed them harder than even his father Solomon.
 - Ten of the tribes revolted against him and they chose Jeroboam as their king. The other two stuck with Rehoboam.
 - The rest of the Books of 1 and 2 Kings describe the period of the split kingdom... they list the kings of the North and the kings of the South. All of the kings of the North were evil. Most of the kings of the South were evil. Only a couple of Kings were good - like King Asa, King Hezekiah and King Josiah.

- During the time of the Split Kingdom is also when we see almost all of the prophets. Some of them in the North and some of them in the South.
- Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian Captivity
 - The Assyrian conquest came up from the North and took over the Kingdom of Israel (map). And the Assyrian king resettled people in Samaria (capital city of the North) - he brought Babylonians and other foreigners.
 - Later on, the Babylonians led by Nebuchadnezzar started their conquest and they defeated the Assyrians and took over the Assyrian kingdom. They continued further south and conquered the Kingdom of Judah.
 - The Israelites were all taken captive.
 - Jerusalem was destroyed and the Temple was destroyed.
 - After 70 years, King Cyrus of Persia conquered the Babylonian kingdom. And he said that God commanded him to build for God a house at Jerusalem so he issues an Edict to allow Jews to return to their land.
- Returning to Jerusalem
 - The Israelites returned in three waves:
 - Zerubabel led the first wave of Jews to rebuild the Temple
 - Ezra led back a second wave and guided them as priest and read to them the words of the Law
 - Nehemiah led back a third wave to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem

Activity

Geography of New Testament Palestine

- We will draw together the following map, each on his own paper with his own pen:



Historical Context

History of the Intertestamental Period

- Greek Empire
 - We left off before the drawing with the Persian Empire being in control, but letting the Jews return to their own home. And they rebuilt the Temple and the walls of Jerusalem.
 - Around 330 BC, Alexander the Great set out to conquer the Persian Empire. And he was successful and he conquered even as far as India. He established his kingdom far and wide - but he ruled in a very different way than previous kingdoms. He wasn't interested in having power, but he was interested in Hellenization - the "Greekifying" of everything. So he would conquer a place, put one of his generals there to rule it. The generals want all of their Greek comforts - amphitheaters, competitions, temples, art, Greek language, etc. So they start to establish these things. And the people start to imitate the ruling class. And the Empire becomes Hellenized - Greek. The whole world starts to imitate the Greeks in their language, philosophy, thought, etc.
 - Back when the Jews returned from Exile, it was... different. Many of them had decided not to come back. They had lived their lives in the Babylonian or Persian Empire and had already become accustomed to it. They didn't want to move their whole family to Judah. So this was the start of Jewish Diaspora - that means Jews outside of Judea. The ones who came back were really the religious and the strict ones. So this resulted in two changes:
 - Greek
 - And now that Alexander the Great is conquering everything and making it Greek, what language do those Jews speak? They speak Greek! But all their Scripture is in which language? Hebrew!
 - So Ptolemy II of Egypt, who had many Jews living in Alexandria and speaking Greek, commissioned the authorship of the Septuagint. He called on 70 Jewish elders to translate the Old Testament into Greek and this is the Scripture that most of the world would use in the 1st Century. This is the Scripture that the Lord and the Apostles quoted from.
 - Rejection of Samaria
 - When people came back from captivity, they found the Samaritans living in Israel. And the Samaritans claimed to be Israelites... but the Jews coming back from captivity did not want anything to do with them.
 - They considered Samaritans to be ethnically and religiously impure.
 - The Samaritans wanted to rebuild the Temple but the Jews rejected them and didn't allow them to help, because they would defile it.
 - So the Samaritans build their own temple on Mt Gerizim and start to say "the temple in Jerusalem is not the real temple"
 - This hatred and rivalry continues to the New Testament... that's why the story of the Good Samaritan that Christ tells is so effective. Because the priest and the levite left the man, but the Samaritan did not. That's why Christ's conversation with the Samaritan Woman is so important - because it's unheard of that He would speak to her. And she says the part about "Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that

in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship."

- Maccabean Revolt

- Several hundred years later, during the Greek Empire, a Dynasty arose called the Seleucid Dynasty. Led by Antiochus IV - he wants the empire to all worship the same gods. So he attacks Ptolemy in Egypt and starts persecuting the Jews. He burned their Scriptures, bans circumcision, forbids keeping the Sabbath, puts an idol up in the Temple, sacrifices a pig on their altar, has immoral activities inside the Temple, etc. He sold the position of "priest" to whoever wanted to buy it. He forced the people to eat pork.
- Mattathias was a priest and did not want to do those things. Instead, when he found out a Jew was going to do those things, he would kill them and would kill the government official who told them to.
- He was older but he had many sons, so he instructed his sons to lead the revolt.
- Judah Maccabee, his son, leads the revolt and is killed. His next son takes over and is killed. His third son takes over and defeats the Seleucid Dynasty.
- They cleansed the Temple and rededicated it which is the Feast of Dedication or Hannukah as they call it now. All of this is in the books of the Maccabees.

- Hasmonaean Kingdom

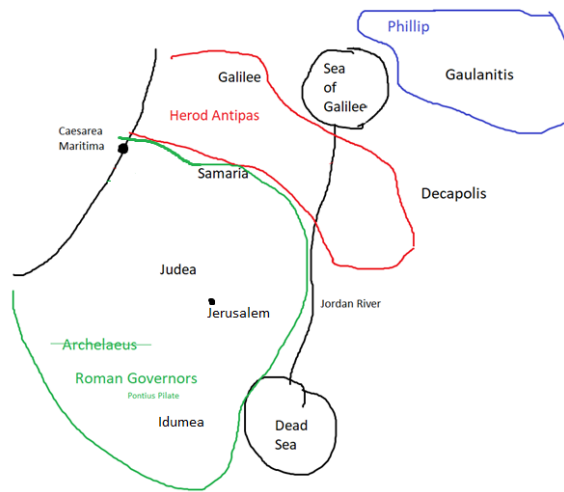
- The Maccabean brothers started to call themselves kings... but kings are supposed to be from the line of David. They weren't.
- They took over as high priests... but high priests have to come from the line of Aaron/Eleazar/Zadok.
- They go to Mount Gerizim and destroy the Samaritan Temple
- One of them goes down to the kingdom of Idumea and forces them to become Jews - making them circumcised.
- The point here is that the Jews were persecuted, but when they had power they turned around and persecuted everyone around them.
- They started to fight amongst themselves as to who should be king or who should be high priest... so they asked the Romans to help them decide... by this time, Rome had conquered the Greek Empire.
- Roman General Pompey came "to help them" and conquered them instead.

- Rise of King Herod

- Pompey chooses Hyrcanus to be king, but after Hyrcanus dies, a rich man from Idumea who had connections with the Romans wanted his son to be king. His son's name is Herod.
- Of course, that couldn't happen because the king has to be Jewish, right? But remember that they had gone to Idumea and forced everyone to be Jewish and circumcised them... none of this would have happened if they just left the Idumeans alone!
- So Herod becomes King of Judea and is known as Herod the Great. His name becomes a title "Herod" - everyone after him is called a "Herod". He is well-known for a long and bloody reign, for his cruelty and for his building projects.
 - He expanded the Second Temple, built many palaces, etc.
 - He is very paranoid... that's why we see that he kills all the children in Bethlehem because he's afraid a "King of the Jews" will rise up. They say "it was safer to be a pig than a prince in Herod's palace" (because Jews don't eat

pork).

- He left an order upon his death that 1,000 of the leading citizens in Jerusalem would be put to death so that the people in the city are guaranteed to mourn his death.
- Death
 - When he died, his three sons split his kingdom:



- Herod Antipas: responsible for killing John the Baptist, the one mentioned in the Crucifixion trials, etc.
- Herod Archelaus ended up being worse than his father and killed even more people for no reason. The people complained to Caesar and he replaced him with Roman Governors instead... one of them was Pontius Pilate.
- Philip is the third son of Herod the Great and he took over the north area.
- "Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene" (Luke 3:1)

Religious Context

- When the Jews came back from Babylonian Captivity, and not everyone came back, this was the beginning of Jewish Diaspora - not all the Jews are in the same place, or speak the same language. They are dispersed.
 - After Alexander the Great conquered they all spoke Greek. So in 250 BC, the Septuagint came out which was the Greek Old Testament
 - Herod the Great had rebuilt the Temple and beautified it in Israel, but it did not contain the Ark of the Covenant
 - With Jews all around the world, a Synagogue system was set up so that Jews could go there for daily prayer, reading Scripture, etc. even though the only place to do sacrifices was in the Temple at Jerusalem
 - All of these things led to contention and different sects of Judaism
- Pharisees
 - Rabbis and Scribes
 - They were in charge of Synagogues

- They emphasized ritual purity and they had thousands of rules called the Oral Law which was their interpretations of the Law of Moses. For example, when Christ is criticized because He did not wash His hands before eating - where is this in the Law of Moses? It's not found. But it was one of thousands of little rules and laws that they invented based on their interpretation of the Law of Moses.
- They thought they were better than the average person because they "kept the law."
- This is the Judaism that is still around today and has even more rules and laws than before (for example, you can't use an elevator on the Sabbath; you can't have meat and dairy in the same meal; etc.)
- In the 1st Century, they accepted two categories of books as their Scripture: The Law and the Prophets (Books of Moses, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Minor Prophets). You will hear Christ refer to "The Law and the Prophets" when speaking to them
- Scribes
 - These are Pharisees who were experts in the Law of Moses. They went to school and memorized all the regulations and they could answer any questions based on the Law
 - Sometimes they are called Lawyers
- Sadducees
 - They only accepted the Torah; did not accept the Oral Law of the Pharisees
 - Didn't believe in angels, demons, afterlife, resurrection, etc. You will see them challenge Christ on the Resurrection and how He answers them
 - They were in charge of the Temple and the systems of sacrifice. Once the Temple is destroyed in 70 AD, they disappeared.

Messianic Expectations

- What were the Jews expecting/waiting for at this time?
 - They all expected Elijah to come back before the Messiah
 - Malachi 3:1 - "Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming," says the Lord of hosts."
 - Malachi 4:5 - "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord."
 - The people saw John and thought he was Elijah
 - "He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, 'I am not the Christ.' And they asked him, 'What then? Are you Elijah?' He said, 'I am not.'" (John 1:20-21)
 - They thought Christ was Elijah
 - "'Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?' So they said, 'some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.'" (Matthew 16:13-14)
 - So the Jews were waiting for Elijah and during the Passover they would even leave their door unlocked and set an extra spot in the hope that Elijah would come (they do this until now). But of course, Elijah who is to come is St John the

Baptist who came "in the spirit of Elijah" (which we'll talk about)

- Zacharias identified his son, John, as the Elijah who is to come: "He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children.' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."
 - Christ identified John as Elijah: "And if you are willing to receive it, he [John] is Elijah who is to come." (Matthew 11:14)
 - The Jews had expectations of the Messiah
 - The word "Messiah" simply means "The Anointed"
 - Six Messianic Expectations
 - Davidic King - As promised to King David
 - Transcendant Messiah - Like the Book of Daniel
 - Miracle-working Messiah - The Jews were looking for this and always asking for a sign
 - Prophetic Messiah - Based on what Moses said ("The Lord God will raise up for you a Prophet like me")
 - Priestly Messiah - Based on what is written in the Psalms ("You are a priest forever...")
 - Suffering Messiah - Based on the Prophecies of Isaiah
 - Some thought that this would be more than one person
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