

## THE LIFE OF JESUS BACKGROUND INFORMATION BETWEEN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

In order to understand Jesus' life on earth, we need to understand some of the history. We need to look back to about 600 years before Jesus was born. Babylon was the most powerful and wealthy nation of any kingdom on earth. King Nebuchadnezzar had taken captives of the Jews 4 times, and a young man named Daniel was among the captives.

One night the king had a dream that he could not remember. God revealed the dream and its meaning to Daniel. None of the king's wise men could tell him the dream or the meaning, so Daniel was called. Daniel was able to tell the king what he wanted to know.

The king had seen a great image. The head was of gold, the chest and arms of silver, the stomach and thigh were brass, the legs were iron, and the feet were part iron and part clay. In the dream, a large stone hit the image on the feet and broke them into pieces. Then the iron, clay, brass, silver, and gold broke in pieces. The wind carried the pieces away. The stone became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. We find the story in Daniel chapter 2.

Daniel explained the dream to Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel told him that God had made him a great king and had given him power, strength, and glory. He was the head of gold in the dream. Daniel continued to reveal the rest of the meaning. There would be an inferior nation defeat Babylon, and this was represented by the silver. The nation was Persia. Another nation would later rule over the whole earth, and this nation was Greece, represented by brass. Eventually, that nation would be defeated by another kingdom and divided. This was represented by the legs of iron and feet of iron and clay. All of this came true and can also be proven by history.

More than 50 years after King Nebuchadnezzar's dream, Daniel dreamed about 4 great beasts, a lion with eagles' wings, a bear, a leopard, and a terrifying powerful beast. This beast was Rome.

In 63 B.C., Rome took over Palestine. Herod the Great became the governor of Galilee. Herod murdered members of his own family to keep anyone from taking his power away. Imagine how he felt when he heard that there was a king of the Jews born in the land he governed.

Remember the stone that broke the feet into pieces in Nebuchadnezzar's dream? This represented the coming of Jesus. Daniel told King Nebuchadnezzar that in the days of these kings (the Roman kings or Roman Empire, God would set up a kingdom that would never be destroyed. It would break all other kingdoms in pieces and take over all kingdoms. It would stand forever. That kingdom is the church.

In the dream, the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands. This meant that the dream was certain, and the interpretation was true.

Everything in this dream came true. Each nation defeated the other just as Daniel interpreted the dream. It took many years before the prophecy came true, but eventually it did all come true.

This information is important because it proves God keeps His promises.

## THE LIFE OF JESUS JEWISH LEADERS IN OUR STUDY

### PHARISEES

- These men were committed to observing the law as it was interpreted by the scribes.
- They believed there were 613 laws.
- They believed in strict interpretation of laws regarding the Sabbath, divorce, oaths, wearing phylacteries, tithing, and ritual purity (such as washing the hands).
- They had limited contact with other Jews because those Jews were not strict.
- They would not eat with a non-Pharisee.
- They believed in the resurrection of the dead.
- They wanted the praise of men.

### SADDUCEES

- They were mostly rich landowners and powerful priests.
- They denied the resurrection of the dead.
- They came from leading families, priests, merchants, and aristocrats.
- They had privileged positions.
- They insisted that only the laws written in the Law of Moses were binding.
- They did not believe in angels.
- They liked to make fun of anyone that opposed their beliefs.
- The chief priests usually came from this group.
- They were favorable to Greek customs and Roman law.

### SCRIBES

- They copied the law, were editors and teachers.
- They were known for their study and knowledge of the Law of Moses.
- The era of the scribes began after the captivity in Babylon.
- They interpreted the law to mean what they wanted it to mean.
- Jerusalem was the center of the Scribes' knowledge and interpretation of the Law.

- They began studying at the age of 14. When they finished at age 40, they could be ordained. They could act as judges, be called rabbi, and hold positions in the government and education. They could be members of the Sanhedrin.
- They were not paid for their services.
- They might also be Pharisees.

## PRIESTS

- They came from the tribe of Levi.
- They wore special garments and served God and His people.
- They offered sacrifices.
- They taught the Law of Moses to the people.
- They read the entire Law of Moses every seven years to the people.
- They served as judges.
- They were some of the most disrespectful of Jesus.

## THE SANHEDRIN

- This was the highest ruling body and court of justice among the Jews.
- The high priest of Israel headed this group. He was called the President.
- It had 71 members, 65 of which were Sadducees.
- This group came from the council of advisors for the high priest when the Jews lived under the Persian and Greek Empires.
- Member were leading priests and the most distinguished men among the people.
- As the influence of the Scribes grew, they were given positions on the Sanhedrin.
- They had their own police force called the Temple Police. The Temple Police could arrest people. This is the group that arrested Jesus.
- They served as the supreme court of the Jews.
- They could not sentence someone to death.

## THE LIFE OF JESUS JEWISH FEASTS

Jewish feasts and festivals were celebrated by eating meat and drinking wine. The fat and blood of the animals were reserved for sacrifice to God. There were 3 feasts that were considered great feasts: The Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Tabernacles. Every Israelite male was expected to observe these. The nation remembers its past and renewed its faith in God through these feasts.

### PASSOVER

- Commemorated the Israelites leaving Egypt.
- Observed on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the 1<sup>st</sup> month (Abib). This would be mid-March to mid-April on our calendar.
- Began in the evening according to Leviticus 23:6.

### UNLEAVENED BREAD

- Observed on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the 1<sup>st</sup> month as a part of the Passover (Exodus 13:3; Leviticus 23:6-8).
- Manual labor was strictly forbidden.
- Began with a convocation.
- Could eat only unleavened bread.

### FIRSTFRUITS

- The firstborn of the flocks and the first vegetables and grains were gathered at harvest time.
- It was part of the celebration of Pentecost (Numbers 28:26; Second Chronicles 31:5).

### PENTECOST (FEAST OF WEEKS; FEAST OF HARVEST)

- Pentecost means 50.
- Observed early in the 3<sup>rd</sup> month on the 50<sup>th</sup> day after the offering of the barley sheaf at the Feast of Unleavened Bread.
- Included a holy convocation with the usual restriction on manual labor.

- Numbers 28:26-31 gives the number and nature of the offerings.
- Deuteronomy 16:9-12 gives those who were invited to the feast (included servants, sons, daughters, Levites, the fatherless, the widow, the stranger).
- Acts 2 is the celebration of Pentecost.

## TRUMPETS

- This was the 7<sup>th</sup> month festival.

## DAY OF ATONEMENT

- Celebrated on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> month, equivalent to our August.
- Set aside as a day of public fasting and humiliation.
- On this day the nation of Israel sought atonement for its sins (Leviticus 23:27; Leviticus 16:29; Numbers 29:7).
- It was preceded by special Sabbaths (Leviticus 23:24).
- The only fasting period required by the Law of Moses (Leviticus 16:29; Leviticus 23:31).
- A recognition of people's inability to make any atonement for their sins.
- The high priest who officiated sacrificed a goat for a sin offering. He sprinkled blood on and around the mercy seat (Leviticus 16:12, 14, 15).
- The scapegoat bearing the sins of the people was sent into the wilderness (Leviticus 16:20-22; Galatians 3:12; Second Corinthians 5:21).

## TABERNACLES (BOOTHS OR INGATHERING)

- Observed on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> month (our mid-September to mid-October).
- Completed the autumn harvest.
- Holy convocation was on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> days.
- Offered animal sacrifices.
- The Israelites were commanded to live in booths made of palm and willow trees during the festival to commemorate their period of wilderness wanderings.

## DEDICATION (HANUKKAH)

- John 10:22
- Celebrated the cleansing of the temple.

- Observed on the 25<sup>th</sup> day of the 9<sup>th</sup> month (Our mid-November to mid-December).

## PURIM

- Celebrated as a reminder of the deliverance of the Jewish people from destruction by Haman (The story of Esther).
- The name came from the Babylonian word, “put”, meaning “lot”. Became Haman cast lots to decide when he would destroy the Jews.
- Observed on the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> days of Adar (Our mid-February to mid-March).
- This feast was accompanied by the giving of gifts.

## THE LIFE OF JESUS NEW TESTAMENT WRITERS OF THE GOSPELS

MATTHEW--He concentrated on the relationship of Jesus to the Jewish faith.

- Wrote to the Jews.
- How Jesus came to fulfill the Old Testament.
- How Jesus came to judge the Jews for their unfaithfulness to their religion.
- Denounces the Pharisees.
- Calls the Jews to see Jesus as the promised Messiah.
- Portrays Jesus as a teacher.

MARK—Emphasizes action.

- Wrote to the Romans.
- Jesus' teaching the disciples about the suffering and rejection He would face.
- The disciples need to be ready to suffer persecution.

LUKE—Stresses the blessings of salvation brought by Jesus.

- Wrote to the Greeks.
- Emphasizes the signs of the coming of the Messiah.
- Brings out the grace of God to those who seem unworthy.

JOHN—Reveals Jesus as the One sent by God.

- Wrote to everyone.
- He is God's son.
- Has His Father's authority.