

## THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JESUS THE MESSIAH

### Week 2 – The World Into Which Jesus Was Born

January 28, 2020

The world of Jesus was not the Old Testament Hebrew world.

The Hebrew world of the OT was originally God-centered. God told Abraham He would make of Abraham's descendants a great nation with God as King (I Sam. 8:6-8). God had told the children of Israel that His desire was to dwell with them (Ex. 25:8). AND, the glory of God, the manifestation of God's localized presence took up residence in the tabernacle in the wilderness (Ex. 40) and in the Temple in Jerusalem until the people had set up idols in the Temple (Eze. 8)! To the patriarchs, God communicated a God-centered belief in Him and worship in Him.

The OT Hebrew world became man-centered before Jesus' incarnation! When Jesus came into the world as Emmanuel/God with us/God in the flesh, Israel was multicultural. Israel included a combination of Aramaic (main language of Persia, Babylon, and Assyria), Greek, and Roman influences. How did that happen? God called Israel to be set apart from all the other nations. We read of many Gentile nations in the book of Daniel. We are told of the "times of the Gentiles" (Luke 21:24) through the dream of the King of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar. Dan. 2:1 – *Nebuchadnezzar had dreams....* Dan. 2:28 - *But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. Your dream, and the visions of your head upon your bed, were these:* Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar through God's revelation the Gentile empires that would rise up, beginning with Babylon, to oppress Israel through the entire Tribulation until Jesus' 2<sup>nd</sup> coming – until the Millennial Kingdom is established by Jesus. (image in handout). To oppress Israel? Why would God orchestrate such oppression? We are going to focus on God's compassion in the midst of His people's forsaking Him! In the history of Israel recorded in the Bible we read of the Jewish people veering from belief in God; idol worship; the northern Kingdom of Israel taken into captivity by Assyria; then the northern Kingdom, Samaria specifically, was populated with people from Gentile nations. The two groups intermarried to form a mixed race. This is why we read of contention between the Jewish people in Jesus' day and the Samaritans. The southern Kingdom of Judah was chastised by Babylon. God used Babylon to chastise Judah (Hab. 1:6). Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed by the Babylonians.

How does this impact our Biblical perspective? How do we view God? How do we view Israel? How we answer these questions will color our understanding of Scripture! How we understand the life and times of Jesus the Messiah, the messages of Jesus for the Jewish people, hinges on how we answer these questions. The answers can be found in: The Abrahamic Covenant – Unconditional/Unilateral re: the fulfillment of the promises not being dependent upon Israel's obedience. The Abrahamic Covenant is the promise.

The Mosaic Covenant – Conditional/Bilateral (blessings/curses – wrapped up in Israel's obedience). The Mosaic Covenant is the law.

The answers can be found in God's UNCONDITIONAL PROMISES! The FULFILLMENT of God's promises through the ABRAHAMIC COVENANT are based

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SOLELY on GOD! God required OBEDIENCE under the MOSAIC COVENANT! The Mosaic Covenant taught that if you disobeyed one commandment of the 613, you were guilty of all (Dt. 27:26). In their disobedience – Israel was chastised!!! (Based on God's love...based on God desiring to purge them...based on God's promise of a remnant of Jewish people who would believe in God and believe God – in what God PROMISED them – in what God said). Are these two covenants at odds with each other? Is the law against the promises of God? Certainly not! (Ga. 3:21) No. Gal. 3:19-24 - the Mosaic Covenant was given to the Jewish people temporarily until the Messiah. The Mosaic Covenant was intended to serve as a tutor – to instruct them...to reveal their need for the Savior - to lead the Jewish people to Jesus. And so there were Jewish people in the OT who surrendered by faith in God and in His promise of the MESSIAH Who He would send...the MESSIAH Who would redeem those who would ask for redemption – deliverance from bondage to sin!

Because of the Abrahamic Covenant *when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself* (Heb. 6:13). And so, Israel exists today. God has guaranteed Israel's protection. God chose Israel AS A NATION to accomplish His purposes. While accomplishing God's purposes does not guarantee each individual Jewish person's salvation, it does guarantee their continued existence.

Returning to how a God-centered belief system became man-centered....

Hosea 3:4 - *For the children of Israel shall abide many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar, without ephod or teraphim*. It is recorded in Scripture that the Jews were in exile for 70 years without a Temple, without an altar, without sacrifices, and without Temple priests. Because God had promised to bring them back to their land, many Jews returned to Israel under a decree written by the King of Persia. The exile was a fulfillment of prophecy (70 years – II Chron. 36:21; Jer. 25:12) as was the return to the land (Dt. 30:1-6; II Chron. 36:22-23; Ezra 1).

Once back in the land of Israel, the Jewish people rebuilt the Temple and Jerusalem. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple was built under the leadership of Zerubbabel, a Jewish man in the line of Judah who returned from exile (Ezra 2:2). In Jesus' genealogy in Matt. 1:12-13 we read of Zerubbabel in the kingly line. BUT, Zerubbabel is NOT recorded as a king. In Haggai 1:1, 14 and Haggai 2:2, 21 Zerubbabel is noted as the Governor of Judah! In Matt. 1:16 we read of Joseph. Joseph is in the kingly line of Judah. Joseph is not a king. What happened? Let's read a portion of Jesus' genealogy through Joseph. We are reading of the line of Judah...

Matt. 1:6-11 - *David the king begot Solomon by her who had been the wife of Uriah. <sup>7</sup> Solomon begot Rehoboam, Rehoboam begot Abijah, and Abijah begot Asa. <sup>8</sup> Asa begot Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat begot Joram, and Joram begot Uzziah. <sup>9</sup> Uzziah begot Jotham, Jotham begot Ahaz, and Ahaz begot Hezekiah. <sup>10</sup> Hezekiah begot Manasseh, Manasseh begot Amon, and Amon begot Josiah. <sup>11</sup> Josiah begot Jeconiah and his brothers about the time they were carried away to Babylon. Do you recognize these names? Who were they? KINGS!*

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Matt. 1:12-16 - *And after they were brought to Babylon, Jeconiah begot Shealtiel, and Shealtiel begot Zerubbabel. <sup>13</sup> Zerubbabel begot Abiud, Abiud begot Eliakim, and Eliakim begot Azor. <sup>14</sup> Azor begot Zadok, Zadok begot Achim, and Achim begot Eliud. <sup>15</sup> Eliud begot Eleazar, Eleazar begot Matthan, and Matthan begot Jacob. <sup>16</sup> And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ.* Joseph was a descendent of King David. Joseph was not a king. Following the return to the land of Israel, we read of no kings in Judah's line! Read Matt. 1:11 re: Jeconiah also known as Coniah.

Jer. 22:28, 30 - *Is this man Coniah a despised, broken idol—a vessel in which is no pleasure? Why are they cast out, he and his descendants..., <sup>30</sup> Thus says the LORD: 'Write this man down as childless, a man who shall not prosper in his days; for none of his descendants shall prosper, sitting on the throne of David, and ruling anymore in Judah.'* Jeconiah/Coniah is the roadblock in Jesus' genealogy through Joseph! NO Kings from Coniah's loins! How does this impact Jesus as King? While we're reading of an interruption in the kingly line of Judah...we need to remember the biblical principle: God's will is never thwarted! And so, Who was coming? Who was prophesied to arrive? Jesus, the Messiah! Jer. 23:5-6 - *Behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, 'That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; a King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. <sup>6</sup> In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely; now this is His name by which He will be called: THE LORD (Jehovah; YHWH) OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.* The Branch is King from King David's line. The King is the LORD! The Branch is a title for the MESSIAH!

Jesus will return as King of Kings and Lord of Lords (Rev. 19:16). How? How is Jesus King if there's a roadblock? Where's the solution? Matt. 1:18 – Following Jesus' genealogy through Joseph we read, *Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit.* THE SOLUTION IS THE VIRGIN BIRTH!

Luke records Jesus' genealogy through Mary's and Matthew records Jesus' genealogy through Joseph. Matthew follows the line of Joseph, through David's son Solomon. Luke follows the line of Mary, through David's son Nathan. Through either Mary's or Joseph's line, Jesus is a descendant of David and therefore eligible to be the Messiah. Tracing a

genealogy through the mother's side is unusual, but so was the virgin birth. Luke's explanation is that Jesus was the son of Joseph, "so it was thought" (Luke 3:23).

When the Jewish people returned to Israel following the exile, in addition to no Kings on the throne in Judah...the priesthood was corrupt. This is recorded by the last Jewish prophet, Malachi, before John the Baptizer. Through Malachi, God told the Jewish people if they didn't repent He would strike the earth with a curse. AND, for 430 years between Malachi and Matthew – there was no prophetic voice...God didn't send a prophet to warn the Jewish people.

Jesus was not born into the Hebrew world that Abraham, Moses, and King David knew. Rabbinic Judaism (opinions/teachings of the Rabbis apart from the Word of God) came began during the exile. No Temple in the exile – and no Jewish Priests. Rabbis became the teachers and synagogues became the schools. And, the Rabbis began embellishing on the 613 commandments that God had given Israel. “How did we get to this place of exile? We disobeyed God's 613 commandments. What should we do? We need to make sure we don't disobey, so we need to DO better.” The Rabbis added to the 613 commandments in the Torah. The Talmud consists of the Mishnah – Rabbis explaining how to live out the 613 commandments which is known as the oral law as opposed to the written law in the Bible. The Talmud also consists of the Gemara which is the record of the Rabbinic discussions, debates, commentary concerning the oral law. The Rabbis added legalistic, external rulings that would be impossible to obey!

While idol worship caused the Jewish people to be scattered from their land and driven into exile, when they returned to Israel, the “religion” of self-righteousness plagued Israel.

Malachi ends with a potential curse. The answer is found in Matthew 1. Matthew wasn't written directly following Malachi. A timeframe of 430 years transpired between Malachi and the birth of Jesus!

Intertestamental Period – Hellenism/Greek philosophy pervaded.

Jesus confronted various Jewish responses to Hellenism/Greek philosophy (many gods; man is at the center)

The Scribes — a scribe was considered a teacher and was often called a Rabbi. Scribes/Rabbis had disciples that followed them and learned by memorizing their teaching and observing their lifestyle. The custom was for a disciple to choose a Rabbi to follow; Jesus reversed the practice and chose 12 men to follow Him. By the time of Jesus the endeavor on the part of the scribes to interpret and apply the law within the Greco-Roman culture resulted in a massive tangle of oral traditions. Jesus faulted the scribes and Pharisees for the misuse of the Law and condemned them as “hypocrites” and “blind guides” (Matt. 23).

The Sadducees – took control of the Temple, making it and the sacrificial system their primary concern. They were willing to cooperate with corrupt priest-kings and Roman

officials to protect their privileged status. They recognized only the authority of the Torah and rejected the oral law. They denied the existence of angels, the resurrection and life after death. They lived for the present and did not look for Messiah's coming.

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Because their primary focus was the Temple, the Sadducees disappeared after its destruction in 70 AD.

The Pharisees – *Pharisee* comes from an Aramaic word meaning “to separate.” They first appeared during the Intertestamental period. The Pharisees response to Hellenism/ Greek philosophy was to separate themselves from everyone and everything they considered unclean. They were passionately zealous for the Law. They believed the entire OT (the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings) and their own oral traditions were equally authoritative. Unlike the Sadducees, the Pharisees believed in a bodily resurrection, a future judgment, and the existence of angels. Nicodemus objected to the unfounded conclusion that Jesus was a false Messiah (John 7:50-51) and helped Joseph of Arimathea give Him a royal burial (John 19:38-42). Acts 15:5 - ...*some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed*

The Zealots – similar to the Pharisees in opposing Hellenism. However, they openly believed in using violence for the cause of religious freedom and in full-scale war for the cause of independence.

The Essenes – Like the Pharisees, the Essenes believed in the importance of strict ritual purity, yet unlike the Pharisees, the Essenes considered the priest-kings so corrupt they withdrew from worship in the Temple and the customary practice of Judaism. Many isolated themselves and lived together out in the Judean wilderness. Many of these formed the Qumran community near the Dead Sea and were considered Israel's “righteous remnant.” They believed Messiah would return soon and lead them, “the sons of light,” into holy war against “the sons of darkness.”

And, when Jesus came to earth...

Gal. 4:4 - *when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law,*

According to God's plan, this verse is addressing a SPECIFIC TIME when all the religious, cultural and political conditions were in place!

Chanukah – Hellenism (Gk philosophy) taking hold in the Jewish world (171-165/164 BC).

Puppet kings who were not Jewish put in place under the Roman rule in Israel (Herod – Idumean [Esau's line] – not Jewish but “crowned” King of the Jews”.

The Septuagint was in the hands of people – the Hebrew Scriptures having been translated into Greek – the universal language since Alexander the Great (270 BC).

SO? Since Greek was the universal language...Scripture (the OT) could be read throughout the world!

“Pax Romana” – the peace of Rome, relatively speaking. During this time large construction projects (roads/bridges) were completed.

SO? What’s the significance of that? What did “Pax Romana” lead to? Ease of travel...the Gospel being spread more rapidly after Pentecost!

AND regarding the 430 years of silence between the last Jewish prophet, Malachi, and the events recorded in the book of Matthew...regarding the 430 years of God NOT

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sending a prophetic voice...I’m NOT telling you that God was not moving, stirring, PREPARING the world for the SENDING FORTH OF HIS SON, JESUS! He was indeed!

The children of Israel were in Egypt for 430 years and then God raised up Moses, a deliverer!

*Ex. 2:23-24 - Now it happened in the process of time that the king of Egypt died. Then the children of Israel groaned because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry came up to God because of the bondage. <sup>24</sup> So God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.*

GOD had not forgotten His covenant promises to Israel under Abraham!

430 years between the testaments and then word comes to the Jewish people about THE Deliverer. After the angel Gabriel visited Zacharias in the Holy Place in the Temple in Jerusalem, after Elizabeth conceived, after John was born, Zacharias praised God...

*Luke 1:68-75 - Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people, <sup>69</sup> And has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David, <sup>70</sup> As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, who have been since the world began, <sup>71</sup> That we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us, <sup>72</sup> To perform the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember His holy covenant, <sup>73</sup> The oath which He swore to our father Abraham: <sup>74</sup> To grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, <sup>75</sup> In holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life.*

GOD had not forgotten to send the Redeemer, the Savior, the Messiah.

And so, in His first announcement of the “Gospel,” Jesus declared, *The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel* (Mark 1:15).

#### QUESTIONS:

Any V8 moments?

How would you summarize the Jewish world in Jesus’ day?

What is “the time of the Gentiles”?

In light of the exile, how do you view God and how do you view Israel? Note your questions; I have an addendum to share.

Will this cultural/historical background impact the way you study Scripture?

What is the meaning of Mark 1:15?

SUGGESTED HOMEWORK:

Read week 2's handout with cross references.

Journal your observations and questions.

Begin to find answers to your questions from Scripture.

Share what you've learned with at least one person.

Read week 3's handout when you receive it.