

Introduction to the Life and Times of Jesus Christ

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Texts:

2 Timothy 2:15, “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.”

2 Timothy 3:15-17, “and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Commentary:

I. The last prophetic book of the Old Testament was written by Malachi circa 450 B.C. The events of Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther occurred between 536 – 432 B.C. Zechariah and Haggai prophesied during the first part of this period while Malachi prophesied in the days of Nehemiah.

II. At the close of the Old Testament the Persian Empire was the major political power in the eastern Mediterranean world. The Assyrian and Babylonian Empires had declined. Persia was pre-eminent!

A. Persia proper was the mountainous plateau east of the southern end of the Tigris – Euphrates Valley.

B. Persian capitals were Persepolis and Susa, but Persian kings sometimes resided in Babylon.

C. Cyrus conquered Babylon in 536 B.C. making Persia a world empire.

D. Other Persian rulers were: Cambyses (Artaxerxes), Darius I (Hytaspes), Xerxes (Ahasuerus), Artaxerxes I (Longimanus), Xerxes

II, Darius II, (Nathius), Artaxerxes II (Mnemon), Artaxerxes III (Ochus), Arses, Darius III (Codomanus).

E. Darius III (Codomanus) was defeated by Alexander the Great in 331 B.C. at the famous battle of Arbela near the site of Ninevah.

III. Alexander the Great (356-323 B.C.) was born the son of Philip II of Macedon and Olympias.

A. Alexander was king of Macedon by inheritance and became ruler of Southwest Asia, Egypt and the Persian Empire by conquest.

B. Alexander became king upon the murder of his father Philip II in 336 B.C.

C. Alexander died, perhaps of malaria, in Babylon on June 13, 323 B.C. at 33 years of age.

D. Upon Alexander's death the Greek Empire was divided among four of his generals.

E. Syria was then under the control of Seleucus. Egypt was under the control of Ptolemy.

F. Palestine at first was under the control of Syria, but passed to the control of Egypt in 301 B.C. and remained under Egyptian control until 198 B.C.

G. Antiochus the Great reconquered Palestine in 198 B.C. and control of Palestine returned to the political control of the kings of Syria called Seleucids.

H. Antiochus Epiphanes, 175-164 B.C., was violently opposed to the Jews and made a concerted effort to exterminate them and the Jewish religion.

I. Antiochus Epiphanes devastated Jerusalem in 168 B.C. He defiled the temple, offered a sow on its altar, erected an altar to Jupiter, prohibited temple worship, forbade circumcision on pain of death,

and destroyed all copies of the Hebrew Scriptures which could be located.

J. The last Greek king in Egypt was Ptolemy VII, 146-117 B.C. The last Greek king in Syria was Antiochus VIII, 139-130 B.C.

IV. The Maccabean (Asmonean, Hasmonean) Period of Palestine Independence is dated 167-63- B.C.

A. Mattathias, a devout priest and Jewish patriot, led a revolt against the Seleucid King Antiochus Epiphanes.

B. Mattathias had five heroic, warlike sons; viz., Judas, Jonathan, Simon, John and Eleazar.

C. Upon the death of Mattathias in 106 B.C. Judas became the leader of the revolt. He won many battles against impossible odds.

D. Judas took possession of Jerusalem in 165 B.C. and purified and rededicated the temple. This was the origin of the Feast of Dedication, Hanukkah.

E. Judas united both the priesthood and civil authority in himself, thus establishing the Asmonean priest-ruler office which, for the next 100 years, governed independent Judea.

F. The Maccabean rulers were: Mattathias, 167-166 B.C., Judas, 166-161 B.C., John Hycranus, 135-106 B.C., Aristobulus and sons, 160-63 B.C. Aristobulus and his sons were not of the character of Mattathias, Judas and other Maccabean leaders.

V. The Roman Empire conquered Palestine in 63 B.C. ending the independent Maccabean rule.

A. The Roman conquering general was Pompey.

B. Antipates, an Idumean (Edomite, descendant of Esau), was appointed ruler of Judea.

C. Herod the Great, the son of Antipates, ruled as king of Judea, Idumea, Samaria, Galilee, Perea (east of southern Jordan River) and Gaulanitis (east of sea of Galilee) 37-4 B.C. To gain favor with the Jews, Herod refurbished the temple.

D. Herod was king when Jesus was born. He was a cruel man who killed the infants in Bethlehem. He orchestrated the deaths of certain members of his own family as well.

E. When Herod died in 4 B.C., Herod's kingdom was divided among his three sons.

F. The relative Roman peace held in Palestine until the death of Nero in A.D. 68 at which time the Jews rebelled and were destroyed along with their temple.

G. Archelaus became ruler of Idumea (Land of Edom, South of Judea), Judea and Samaria. He was called by Roman designation "ethnarch," leader of a nation. He was in office 4 B.C. – A.D. 6.

H. Antipas became ruler of Galilee and Perea. He was designated "tetrarch," leader of a fourth, here meaning leader of a territory. He ruled 4 B.C. – 39 A.D. and was responsible for the death of John the Baptist.

I. Philip became ruler of Gaulanitis, (east of sea of Galilee), Batanea, Trachonitis (east of waters of Miriam) and Auranitis. Philip was designated "tetrarch" as well. He ruled 4 B.C. to 34 A.D.

J. Agrippa I (son of Aristobus, a grandson of Herod the Great) ruled from 34 A.D. until his death in 44 A.D. His territory grew with the passing of time. In A.D. 34 he became ruler of Philip's territory, of Antipas' territory in A.D. 40, and finally, the territories of Samaria, Judea, and Idumea in A.D. 41. From A.D. 41-46 Agrippa I governed essentially the same territory over which his grandfather, Herod the Great, had ruled. Agrippa sought to please the Jews, persecuted Christians, and executed the apostle James.

K. Acts 12:1-3, It was about this time that King Herod (Agrippa) arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them. He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword. When he saw that this pleased the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. This happened during the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

L. Acts 12:20-23, He had been quarreling with the people of Tyre and Sidon; they now joined together and sought an audience with him. Having secured the support of Blastus, a trusted personal servant of the king, they asked for peace, because they depended on the king's country for their food supply. On the appointed day Herod, wearing his royal robes, sat on his throne and delivered a public address to the people. They shouted, "This is the voice of a god, not of a man." Immediately, because Herod did not give praise to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died.

M. At the death of Agrippa I, his territory was placed under direct Roman rule until A.D. 53 when Agrippa II, the son of Agrippa I, became king. Agrippa II was the last Herod to rule Palestine.

N. Paul was tried before Agrippa II.

1. Acts 26:1-32, "Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself. Then Paul stretched forth the hand, and answered for himself: I think myself happy, king Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews: Especially because I know thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently. My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews; Which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee. And

now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God, unto our fathers: Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews. Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead? I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities. Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and

then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me. Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles. And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad. But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds. And when he had thus spoken, the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them: And when they were gone aside, they talked between themselves, saying, This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds. Then said Agrippa unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar.”

O. Roman procurators were fully responsible for military, judicial and fiscal matters. They resided in Caesarea, but frequently visited Jerusalem.

P. False Christs arose among whom was Theudas who gathered followers and attempted to re-establish a Jewish kingdom on earth.

Q. Three of the best known procurators were Pontius Pilate before whom Jesus was tried, Festus before whom Paul was tried (Acts 25, 26), and Felix before whom Paul was also tried (Acts 24:26).

R. The Jews rebelled against Rome. Rome under Emperor Nero and General Vespasian subdued Galilee in A.D. 67. General Titus, son of Vespasian, took charge of the Roman Army and completed the subjugation of Palestine.

S. Upon the death of Nero, Vespasian returned to Rome and became Roman Emperor after three aspirants to the Emperorship had been assassinated in rapid succession.

T. Jerusalem was destroyed by Titus' army in A.D. 70. Masada fell in 73-74 A.D. The Great Jewish-Roman War of A.D. 66-74 was over! Rome was the absolute victor. Jerusalem was again a leveled ruin.

U. The Jews mustered another unsuccessful rebellion 115-117 A.D. during Emperor Trajan's reign. This rebellion centered on Jewish communities in Egypt, Cyrene, Cyprus, Mesopotamia and possibly in Palestine. This rebellion was quelled within a few months concluding during the emperorship of Hadrian.

V. The Jews rebelled again in the Bar Kosiba War of A.D. 132-135. The Romans destroyed almost 1000 villages in Judea and killed 6,000,000 people. The Jewish nation was no more! The Jews were dispersed through the Mediterranean world.

1. These events marked the decisive split of the church with Judasim. By now most of the Christians were of Gentile origin. Jewish attempts to make proselytes among the Gentiles virtually ceased. In contrast, Christian missionaries had great success and were left in relative peace by the Roman emperors.

W. Roman Emperors from just before the birth of Jesus to just after the death of John the Apostle: Augustus 31 B.C. to 14 A.D.,

Tiberius, A.D. 14-37, Caligula, A.D. 37-41, Claudius, A.D. 41-54, Nero, A.D. 54-68, Galba, A.D. 68, 69, Otho, A.D. 69, Vitellius, A.D. 69, Vespasian, A.D. 69-79, Titus, A.D. 79-81, Domitian, A.D. 81-96, Nerva A.D. 96-98, Trajan, A.D. 98-117, Hadrian, A.D. 117-138.

VI. The New Testament contains 27 books. While, after approximately 2,000 years, some facts may have become obscure, the following information is traditionally accepted. Many opinions exist in these matters, so do not be alarmed by small variations in dates that you may encounter in your study.

Biblical Order

A. Matthew, an account of the life of Christ, was written to convince Jewish readers that Jesus is the Messiah. This Gospel was written by the Apostle Matthew, the tax collector, in Hebrew, Aramaic. The Gospel of Matthew was written between A.D. 50-55.

B. Mark, an account of the life of Christ, was written by John Mark. The book was likely written in Rome in A.D. 66-68.

C. Luke, an account of the life of Christ, was written in Greek by the Gentile physician and associate of the Apostle Paul, Luke, circa A.D. 58-62.

Note: Matthew, Mark, and Luke are known as the synoptic gospels. These writings are called synoptic from the Greek meaning “seen together.”

D. John, an account of the life of Christ, was written by the Apostle John, a son of Zebedee, near the end of the first century between 90 – 100 A.D.

E. Acts, an account of the spread of Christianity, was written by Luke, physician and associate of the Apostle Paul, A.D. 61-64, during Paul’s first Roman imprisonment.

F. Romans is an epistle written by the Apostle Paul to the church at Rome from Corinth in the spring of A.D. 56 or 57 while Paul was on his third missionary journey.

G. First Corinthians was written to the church in Corinth by Paul from Ephesus during Paul's third missionary journey in A.D. 53-55.

H. Second Corinthians was written by Paul some months after the writing of First Corinthians. Second Corinthians was written from Macedonia in A.D. 54-56.

I. Galatians was written to the churches of Galatia (Galatia was a region, not a city) by Paul the Apostle in about A.D. 48 if it was intended for South Galatia and in about A.D. 55 or 56 if it was intended for North Galatia.

J. Ephesians was written to the church in Ephesus by the Apostle Paul in the late 50s or early 60s A.D. from Rome. Some believe Paul wrote this book as a general epistle to Ephesus and other groups of Christians in areas surrounding Ephesus.

K. Philippians was written by the Apostle Paul to the church in Philippi from Rome circa A.D. 60 or 61.

L. Colossians was written by Paul to the church in Colosse from Rome in the late A.D. 50s or early 60s.

M. First Thessalonians was written by the Apostle Paul to the church in Thessalonica from Corinth in late A.D. 50 or early A.D. 51.

N. Second Thessalonians was written by the Apostle Paul to the church in Thessalonica from Corinth in late A.D. 50 or early A.D. 51.

O. First Timothy, a "pastoral" epistle, was written by the Apostle Paul to Timothy after Paul's release from his first imprisonment in Rome circa 63-65 A.D. The book was probably written from Macedonia.

P. Second Timothy, a “pastoral” epistle, was written by the Apostle Paul to Timothy from Rome in A.D. 67 or 68 after Paul had again been arrested.

Q. Titus, another of the “pastoral” epistles, was written by Paul after his release from his first Roman imprisonment circa 65 or 66 A.D.

R. Philemon was written by the Apostle Paul from Rome during his imprisonment there on behalf of Onesimus in the late 50s or early 60s A.D. Onesimus was a runaway slave whom Paul had converted.

S. Hebrews was addressed to Jewish Christians. While the author is not definitely known, Paul appears to be the most likely author. Apollos and Barnabas are also thought to be the possible authors. The exact date and place of writing are unknown. Hebrews was probably written prior to A.D. 70.

T. James was written by James the brother of Jesus before A.D. 62, possibly as early as A.D. 48.

U. First Peter was written by the Apostle Peter probably from Rome circa 64, 65 A.D.

V. Second Peter was written by the Apostle Peter circa A.D. 66 or 67 shortly before his martyrdom during the reign of the Roman Emperor Nero.

W. First John was written by the Apostle John from Ephesus toward the close of the first century, possibly between 85 and 90 A.D.

X. Second John was written toward the end of the first century by the Apostle John from Ephesus possibly between 85 and 90 A.D.

Y. Third John was written toward the end of the first century by the Apostle John from Ephesus possibly 85 and 90 A.D.

Z. Jude was probably written by Jude, the brother of James and the brother of Jesus Christ in circa A. D. 66-75. Mark 6:3, “Isn’t this the

carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us? And they took offense at him.

AA. Revelation was written by the Apostle John from the Isle of Patmos which is located off the west coast of Asia Minor (Turkey). The book was written during the latter years of the reign of the Roman Emperor Domitian, and therefore was probably written circa A.D. 90-95.

VII. Biblical Canon:

The Books of the Old Testament:

Genesis	Ecclesiastes
Exodus	Song of Solomon
Leviticus	Isaiah
Numbers	Jeremiah
Deuteronomy	Lamentations
Joshua	Ezekiel
Judges	Daniel
Ruth	Hosea
Samuel	Joel
2 Samuel	Amos
1 Kings	Obadiah
2 Kings	Jonah
2 Chronicles	Micah
2 Chronicles	Nahum
Ezra	Habakkuk
Nehemiah	Zephaniah
Esther	Haggai
Job	Zechariah
Psalms	Malachi
Proverbs	

The Books of the New Testament

Matthew	1 Timothy
Mark	2 Timothy
Luke	Titus
John	Philemon
Acts	Hebrews
Romans	James
1 Corinthians	1 Peter
2 Corinthians	2 Peter
Galatians	1 John
Ephesians	2 John
Philippians	3 John
Colossians	Jude
1 Thessalonians	Revelation
2 Thessalonians	

VIII. Greek and Roman deities, the Pantheon, Belief systems faced by early Apostles and evangelists.

Greek

Zeus
Hera
Poseidon
Athena
Aphrodite
Ares
Apollo
Artemis
Hermes
Hestia
Demeter
Hephaestus

Roman

Jupiter
Juno
Neptune
Minerva
Venus
Mars
Apollo
Diana
Mercury
Vesta
Ceres
Vulcan

IX. Jewish Months/Calendar

<u>Luna Calendar</u>	<u>Solar Calendar</u>
1. Nisan (Abib)	March-April
2. Iyyar	April-May
3. Sivan	May-June
4. Tammuz	June-July
5. Ab	July-August
6. Elul	August-September
7. Tishri	September-October
8. Marcheshvan	October-November
9. Chislev	November-December
10. Tebeth	December-January
11. Shebat	January-February
12. Adar	February-March

X. Glossary

Apocalyptic – (literally: “revelation”) a term used to describe a type of literature which claims to be revelations of hidden knowledge written by an inspired seer, an uncovering.

Apocrypha – (literally: “hidden”) a term used by Protestants to denote those books appearing in the Roman Catholic Old Testament which they do not accept as canonical.

Canon – (literally: “a measuring stick”) a closed body of writings considered to be inspired and authoritative.

Diaspora – (literally: “dispersion”) the dispersion of Jews from Palestine into the Greco-Roman world.

Eschatology – (literally: “study of the end”) the study of the end-time, for Christians, the second coming.

Hasmonean – the family of Hasmon, the best known figures of which are Mattathias and Judas Maccabeus.

Hanukkah – (literally: “dedication”) the Feast of Dedication began when Judas Maccabeus recaptured and cleansed the temple.

Pseudopigrapha – (literally: “false writings”) those ancient Jewish texts, often with Christian interpolations, not accepted today in any canon.

Septuagint – (literally: “seventy”) the Greek translation of the Old Testament supposedly done by seventy translators.

Talmud – (literally: “learning”) the Jewish oral law in its final form, including both Mishnah and Gemara. Completed by A.D. 500.

Targum – (literally: “translation”) translation of the Old Testament into Aramaic, originally done orally, later written down.

Torah (literally: “instruction”) The Old Testament Law; also (for Pharisees) the oral law.

Vulgate – (literally: “common”) Jerome’s Latin translation of both the Old and New Testaments.

Introduction to the Life and Times of Jesus Christ

Questions

1. The _____ are able to make us wise unto _____ through _____ in _____.
2. The last book of the Old Testament was written by _____ about _____ B.C.
3. At the close of the Old Testament period the _____ was the major political power in the _____.
4. Darius III was defeated by _____ in _____ B.C. at the battle of _____ near the site of _____.
5. Following the death of Alexander the Great, the Grecian Empire was divided among _____ of his generals.
6. Syria was under the control of _____ while Egypt was under the control of _____.
7. Antiochus Epiphanes devastated _____ in 168 B.C.
8. Judas Maccabeus took control of Jerusalem in 165 B.C. and purified the temple. This was the origin of the _____ of _____.
9. The Roman Empire conquered _____ in _____ B.C. under general _____.
10. _____ the _____ was king when _____ was born.
11. When Herod the Great died his kingdom was divided among his three sons, _____, _____ and _____.

12. Three of the best known Roman procurators to rule Palestine were _____, _____ and _____.

13. Jerusalem was destroyed in _____ A.D. under the Roman general _____.

14. The books of the New Testament in order are:

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

15. The synoptic gospels are _____, _____ and _____.

16. Paul wrote _____ or _____ of the New Testament books, John wrote _____, Peter wrote _____ and Luke wrote _____. Jesus wrote _____ books of the New Testament.

17. The first book of the New Testament to be written was probably _____ and the last to be written was _____.

18. There are _____ books in the Old Testament. There are _____ books in the entire Bible.

19. Our calendar is _____. The Jewish calendar was _____. This is the reason Jewish holy days do not occur on the same date each year by our calendar.

20. Another name for Hanukkah is the _____.