

Part One

N.T. WRIGHT
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THE NEW
TESTAMENT
— IN —
ITS WORLD

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE HISTORY,
LITERATURE, AND THEOLOGY OF
THE FIRST CHRISTIANS

A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK

The New Testament in Its World
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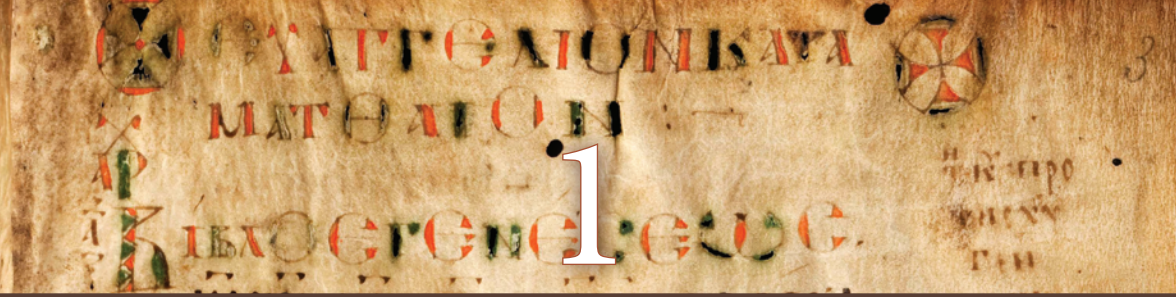
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Beginning Study of the New Testament



Coptic fragment

2 Cor. 6:5–7 and 2 Pet. 2:4–5 and 7–9, Louvre Museum

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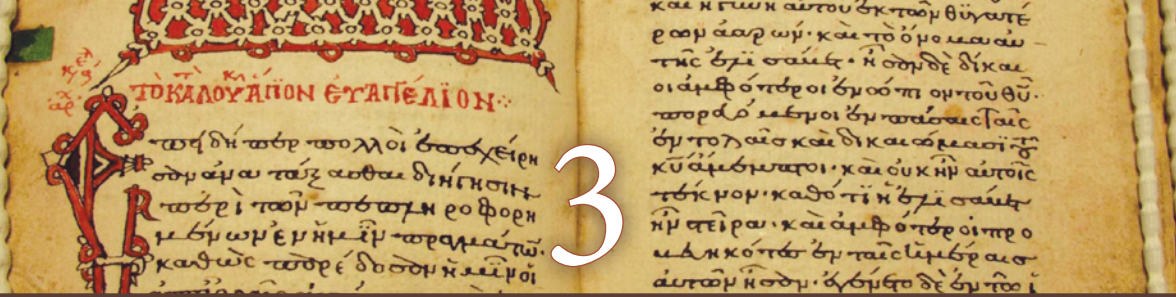
The New Testament as History



Tiberian denarius
Jay King Collection

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The New Testament as Literature

FIGURE 1: THE ROLE OF THE ‘IMPLIED READER’ ACCORDING TO NARRATIVE CRITICISM

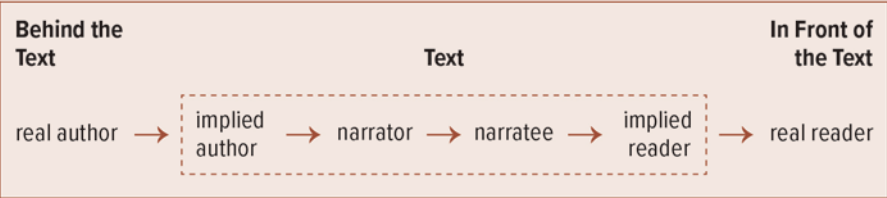


FIGURE 2: THE ROLE OF THE ‘REAL READER’ ACCORDING TO NARRATIVE CRITICISM



TABLE 3.1: CLASSIFICATIONS OF RHETORICAL CRITICISM

<i>Types of rhetorical proof</i>	<i>Types of rhetorical discourse</i>	<i>Parts of rhetorical speeches</i>
Ethos: appeal to moral and intellectual character	Forensic: the attempt to exonerate or indict a person or group	<i>exordium</i> : introduction to the subject <i>narratio</i> : setting forth of the facts leading to the matter of discussion <i>propositio</i> : statement of the thesis
Pathos: appeal to emotion	Deliberative: the attempt to persuade or dissuade people regarding a future course of action	<i>probatio</i> : proofs to prove the thesis <i>peroratio</i> : conclusion
Logos: appeal to reason	Epideictic: the attempt to bestow praise or blame on something or someone	

*The taxonomy here is a generalized summary of the structure prescribed by rhetorical handbooks; see further Aune 2003, 62–4.



Beginning of the gospel of Luke, minuscule 244 (Gregory-Aland), thirteenth-century New Testament manuscript

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The History of the Jews between the Persian and Roman Empires

TIMELINE OF THE PERSIAN AND GREEK PERIOD

Babylonian period 597–539 BC

- **597**
Jerusalem taken by Nebuchadnezzar II
- **587**
Jerusalem destroyed, inhabitants taken into exile in Babylon
- **539**
Babylon defeated by Persian king Cyrus

Persian–Greek period 538–323 BC

- **538**
return of exiles from Babylon; rebuilding of Temple begun (completed 516)
- **450s–440s**
Ezra and Nehemiah in Jerusalem
- **336**
Alexander the Great rises to power
- **332**
Alexander conquers Palestine
- **323**
Alexander dies: his empire divided

Egyptian (Ptolemaic) period 320–200 BC

- Palestine under Ptolemies; administered by high priests in Jerusalem

Syrian (Seleucid) period 200–142 BC

- **200**
Antiochus III defeats Egyptians

(continued)

- **175**
Antiochus IV Epiphanes enthroned
- **167**
Antiochus IV desecrates Temple: builds altar to Zeus Olympus
- **166**
Judas Maccabaeus leads revolt
- **164**
Judas Maccabaeus cleanses Temple
- **164–142**
running battles with Syria
- **160**
death of Judas Maccabaeus
- **160–152**
Jonathan leader of Judean forces
- **142**
semi-independence from Syria, start of Hasmonean dynasty



Route of returning exiles

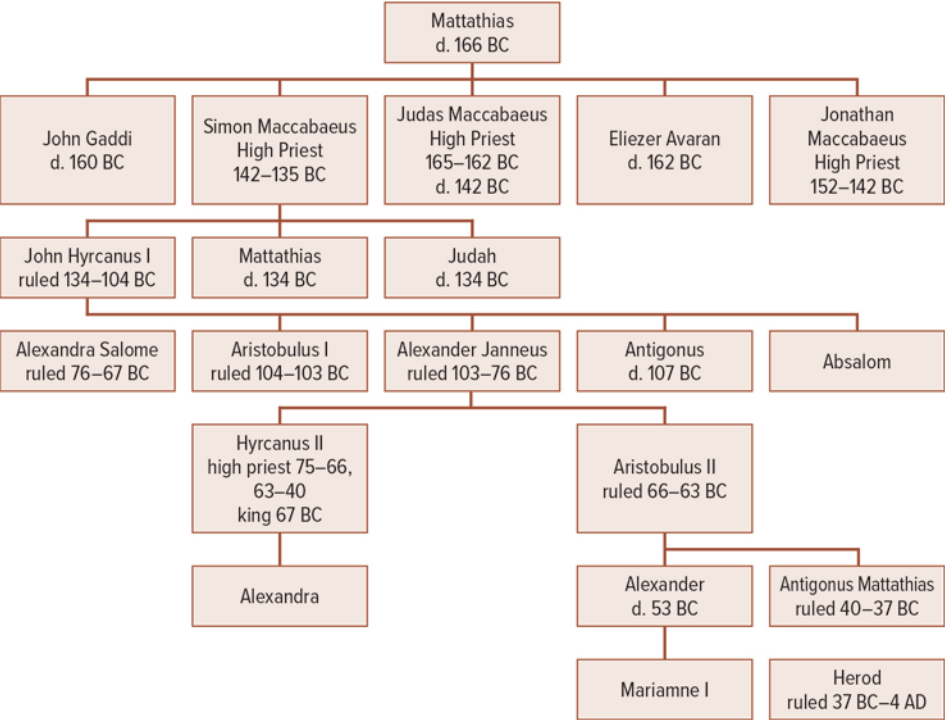


Alexander the Great's empire



The Ptolemies and Seleucids in the third century BC

HASMONEAN DYNASTY 165–64 BC



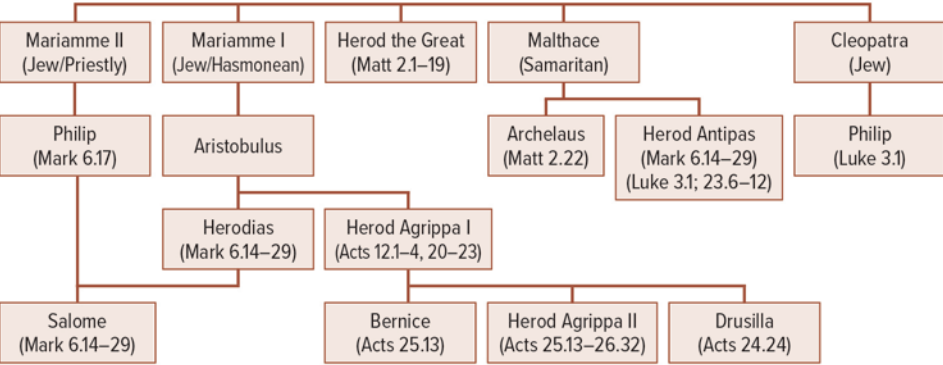


Hasmonean kingdom



Palestine under Herod the Great

HEROD THE GREAT'S FAMILY TREE



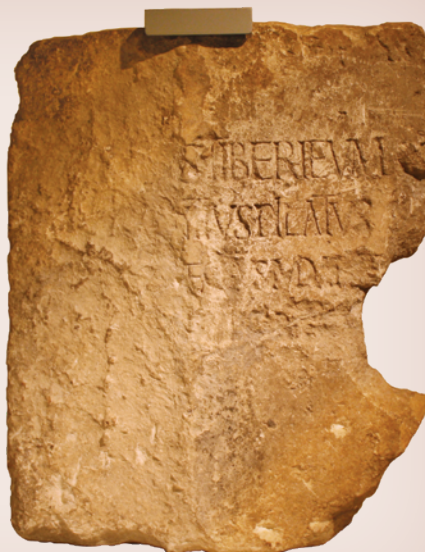


ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE FOR THE EXISTENCE OF PONTIUS PILATE

A four-line dedicatory inscription was discovered by excavators in Caesarea Maritima in 1961 with these words:

TIBERIEUM
[PO]NTIUS PILATUS
[PRAEF]ECTUS IUDA[EA]
[FECIT D] E [DICA]VIT.

It is most likely a building dedication in honour of the emperor Tiberius: 'To Tiberius . . . Pontius Pilate . . . prefect of Judea . . . has made and dedicated.'



BRBurton / Wikimedia Commons

CHRONOLOGY OF ROMAN EMPERORS AND PREFECTS*

27 BC –AD 14 Augustus

- **6–9** *Coponius*
- **9–12** *Marcus Ambivius*
- **12–15** *Annius Rufus*

AD 14–37 Tiberius

- **15–26** *Valerius Gratus*
- **18** Caiaphas high priest
- **26–36** *Pontius Pilate*
- **30** Crucifixion of Jesus
- **33/4** Conversion of Saul of Tarsus/Paul the apostle
- **36** Nabatean king Aretas invades Perea, defeats Antipas

AD 37–41 Gaius Caligula

- **37–41** *Marullus*
- **37–9** Herod Agrippa becomes king over Philip's (37) and Antipas's (39) territory
- **40** Crisis over Gaius's attempt to erect a statue of himself in the Temple

* Emperors in bold and Roman governors of Judea in italics.

(continued)

AD 41–54 Claudius

- **41** Claudius makes Herod Agrippa king of Judea too
- **42/3** Agrippa executes James the brother of John, Passover (Ac. 12.2)
- **44** Death of Herod Agrippa (Ac. 12); Judea reverts to procurators
- **44–6** *Cuspius Fadus*
- **44** Famine (Ac. 11.28)
- **46–8** *Tiberius Alexander*
- **47** Crucifixion of Jacob and Simon, sons of Judas the Galilean
- **48–52** *Ventidius Cumanus*
- **49** Claudius expels Jews from Rome (Ac. 18.2)
- **50** Paul begins his missionary journeys
- **50–1** Paul in Corinth during the consulship of Gallio (Ac. 18.12)
- **52–60** *Antonius Felix*

AD 54–68 Nero

- **54** Jews return to Rome after Claudius's death
- **60–2** *Porcius Festus*
- **62** James the Just executed during interregnum (Jos. Ant. 20.200)
- **62–5** *Lucceius Albinus*
- **63** Temple finally completed
- **64** Fire of Rome: persecution of Christians
- **65–6** *Gessius Florus*
- **66–70** Judean revolt against Rome

AD 68–9 Galba

- **69** 'Year of four emperors'

AD 69 Otho

AD 69 Vitellius

AD 69–79 Vespasian

- **70** Titus captures Jerusalem
- **post-70** Establishment of a rabbinic academy at Javneh under Johanan ben-Zakkai
- **74** Capture of Masada (last stronghold of rebels)

AD 79–81 Titus

AD 81–96 Domitian

AD 96–8 Nerva

AD 98–117 Trajan

- **110** Pliny governor of Bithynia
- **110–15** Letters of Ignatius of Antioch
- **115–17** Jewish revolts in Egypt, Cyrene, and Cyprus

AD 117–38 Hadrian

- **132** Hadrian's anti-semitic legislation; temple of Jupiter built in Jerusalem
- **133–5** Rebellion of Simeon ben-Kosiba (Bar-Kochba)
- **135** Martyrdom of Rabbi Akiba

* Emperors in bold and Roman governors of Judea in italics.

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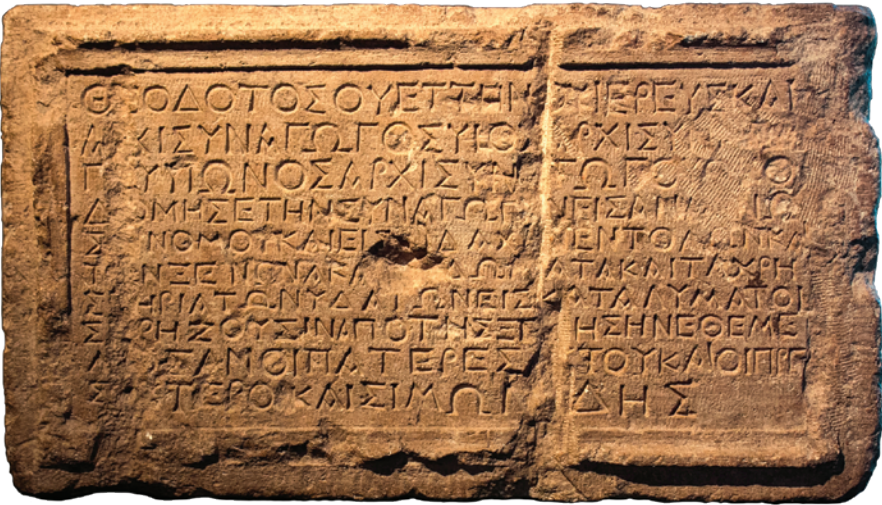
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The Jewish Context of Jesus and the Early Church



The holy land



A first-century Greek inscription from a synagogue in Jerusalem honouring Theodotus, the synagogue leader. The inscription is significant because it proves the existence of a building set aside for worship by Greek-speaking Jewish immigrants in first-century Jerusalem (see Ac. 6.9) and it attests the title of *archisynagogos* as 'synagogue leader' (see Lk. 8.49; 13.14; Ac. 13.15; 18.8, 17).

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An ancient mikveh located in Qumran and used for ritual washings

Robert Hoetink / Shutterstock



The final stronghold of Jewish resistance against the Romans was Herod's mountain fortress of Masada. Josephus (*War* 7.252–406) recounts how the defenders committed suicide rather than surrender to the Romans.

Bill Schlegel / BiblePlaces.com



Cave number 4, one of ten caves in and around Qumran where some nine hundred scrolls were found during 1947–56.

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The War Scroll from Qumran (1QM), a dramatized liturgy about an end-time battle between the sons of light and the sons of darkness.

© The Israel Museum, by David Harris / Bridgeman Images

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7

The Greco-Roman Context of the Early Church



Roman Empire

TABLE 7.1: ECONOMIC SCALES FOR URBAN CONTEXTS IN THE GRECO-ROMAN WORLD

<i>Group</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>%</i>
Imperial, provincial, and municipal elites	Ruling elites drawn mostly from the senatorial and equestrian classes, plus some decurion families, and retired military officers	3
Moderate surplus wealth	Some merchants, traders, large landowners, some freedmen, some artisans, and military veterans	17
Stable, near subsistence level	Most merchants, traders, artisans, regular wage-earners, large shop-owners, freedmen, some farm families	25
Subsistence level	Small farm families, labourers, artisans, wage-earners, most merchants and traders, small shop-owners	30
Below subsistence level	Some farm families, unattached widows, orphans, beggars, disabled, unskilled day-labourers, prisoners	25



Site of the temple of Artemis where the riot in Ephesus occurred. ‘The city clerk quietened the crowd and said: “Fellow Ephesians, doesn’t all the world know that the city of Ephesus is the guardian of the temple of the great Artemis and of her image, which fell from heaven? Therefore, since these facts are undeniable, you ought to calm down and not do anything rash. You have brought these men here, though they have neither robbed temples nor blasphemed our goddess.”’ (Ac. 19.35–36 NIV)

Goldika / Shutterstock



Artemis of the Ephesians was the patron deity of Ephesus and widely worshipped in the greco-roman world. She was identified with the Greek goddess Artemis and the Roman goddess Diana, and was worshipped for her fertility blessings. The temple dedicated to her was one of the wonders of the ancient world. The book of Acts records Paul visiting Ephesus and preaching so effectively that it was feared that interest in Artemis would fade. In particular, the silversmiths led by a certain Demetrius were afraid that their trade of making silver shrines of Artemis would be jeopardized (Ac. 19.23–41).

mountainpix / Shutterstock

Lares were household spirits who protected a household and its occupants. Many Roman families maintained a *lararium*, which was a shrine where the *lares* were honoured. In the photo is a *lararium* depicting two *lares*, each holding a drinking container; in-between them is a *genius/daemon* holding a libation bowl; and a snake (a symbol of agricultural fertility) approaches the altar.

Gianni Dagli Orti / Shutterstock



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9

The Profile and Praxis of a Prophet



Galilee



The River Jordan, the traditional site where John performed his baptisms

iStock.com / Alatom



Mount Beatitude in Capernaum, close to where Jesus may have taught Galilean crowds
Sopotnicki / Shutterstock

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10

Who Did Jesus Think He Was?

JESUS' 'SON OF MAN' LANGUAGE COMPARED WITH VOICES FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

Jesus at his trial

Again the high priest asked him, 'Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?'

'I am,' said Jesus. 'And you will see **the Son of Man** sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and **coming on the clouds of heaven.**' (Mk. 14.61–62)

Daniel and the Psalmist

In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a **son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven.** (Dan. 7.13)

The Lord says to my lord: 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.' (Ps. 110.1)

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11

The Death of the Messiah



Found in the Christian quarter of the Old City is the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, located on the traditional site of Jesus' crucifixion and burial. The Church was built in AD 330 by Constantine, though it has been renovated several times since then. Found inside the church is a rocky outcrop that was part of a landscape outside the original walls of Jerusalem. It has been a pilgrimage site since the fourth century.

dominika zarzycka / Shutterstock



Golgotha was just beyond the city walls.

JESUS' WORDS AT THE LAST SUPPER

<i>Matthew</i>	<i>Mark</i>	<i>Luke</i>	<i>Paul</i>
<p>²⁶ While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take and eat; this is my body.' ²⁷ Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you.'</p> <p>²⁸ This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. ²⁹ I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.'</p> <p>(Mt. 26.26–29)</p>	<p>²² While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take it; this is my body.'</p> <p>²³ Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank from it. ²⁴ 'This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many,' he said to them. ²⁵ 'Truly I tell you, I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.'</p> <p>(Mk. 14.22–25)</p>	<p>¹⁵ And he said to them, 'I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.' ¹⁶ For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God.' ¹⁷ After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, 'Take this and divide it among you.' ¹⁸ For I tell you I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.' ¹⁹ And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.' ²⁰ In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.'</p> <p>(Lk. 22.15–20)</p>	<p>²³ For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: the Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.' ²⁵ In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.'</p> <p>²⁶ For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.</p> <p>(1 Cor. 11.23–26)</p>

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The Afterlife in Greek, Roman, and Jewish Thought



Tomb of Herod, Herodium

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The Story of Easter according to the Apostle Paul

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The Story of Easter according to the Evangelists



Replica of the right heel bone of a crucified person in Jerusalem, Israel Museum

Todd Bolen / BiblePlaces.com

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15

The Story of Paul's Life and Ministry



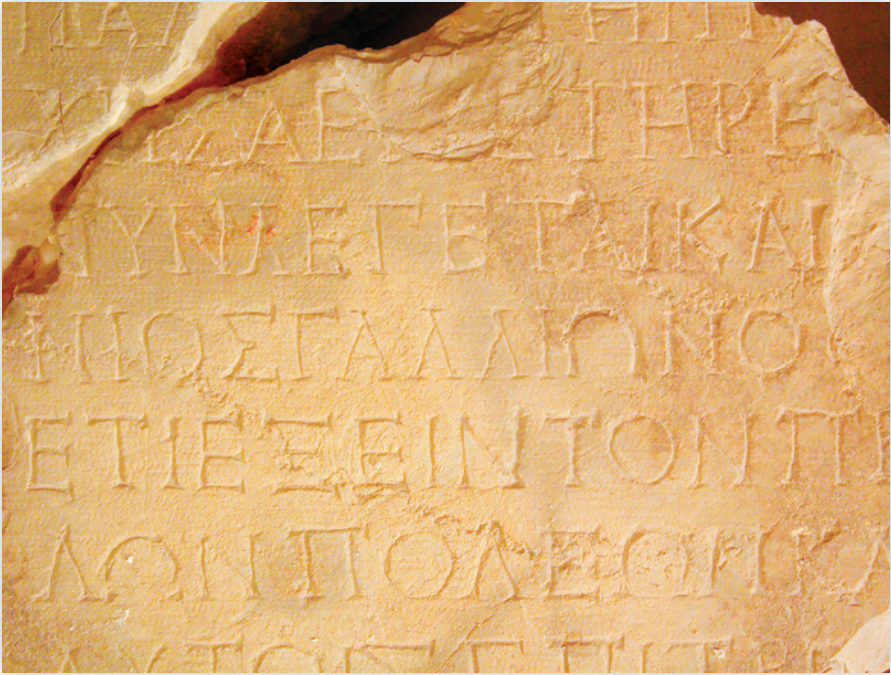
Tarsus, in the region of Cilicia



Paul's second missionary journey



What if Paul had gone east into Bithynia?



An inscription from Delphi in Greece referring to Lucius Gallio and his time in office in Achaia. The inscription is dated to c. AD 52 and therefore places Gallio and Paul in Corinth c. AD 51. See if you can find the name GALLIO (GALLIŌ).

Todd Bolen / BiblePlaces.com

SKETCH OF PAULINE CHRONOLOGY

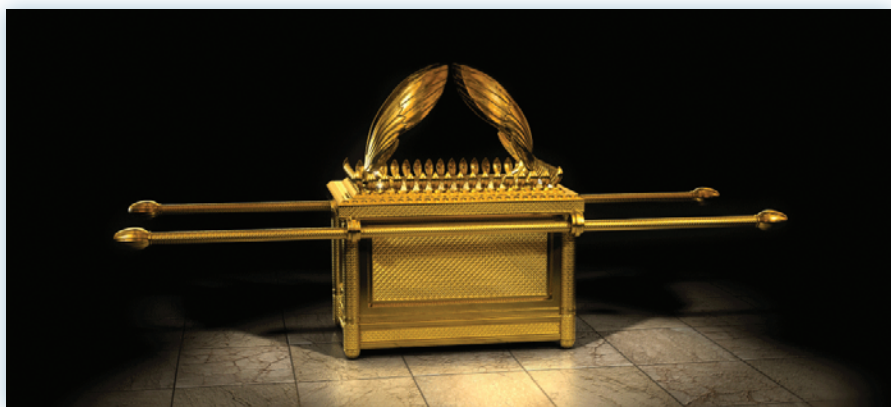
- **c. 4 BC** Birth of Jesus of Nazareth
- **c. AD 5–10** Birth of Saul of Tarsus
- **30** Crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth
- **33** Jesus revealed to Saul on the road to Damascus
- **33–6** Paul in Damascus, Arabia, Damascus again
- **36** Paul's first post-Damascus visit to Jerusalem (Gal. 1.18–24)
- **36–46** Paul in Tarsus; brought to Antioch by Barnabas
- **40** Gaius (Caligula) plans to erect statue in Jerusalem
- **41** Assassination of Caligula; accession of Claudius
- **46/7** 'Famine visit' to Jerusalem (Ac. 11.30; Gal. 2.1–10)
- **47–8** Paul and Barnabas on **first missionary journey: Cyprus and south Galatia**
- **48** Peter in Antioch (Gal. 2.11–21); crisis in Galatia
- **48** GALATIANS
- **48/9** Jerusalem conference (Ac. 15)
- **49** Claudius expels Jews from Rome
- **49** Paul and Silas on **second missionary journey: Greece**
- **50/1** 1 and 2 THESSALONIANS
- **51 (early)–52 (late)** Paul in Corinth
- **52/3** Paul in Jerusalem, Antioch; **third missionary journey: Ephesus**
- **53–6** In Ephesus
- **53** 1 CORINTHIANS
- **53/4** Short, painful visit to Corinth
- **54** Death of Claudius; accession of Nero
- **55** PHILIPPIANS
- **55/6** PHILEMON, COLOSSIANS, EPHESIANS
- **56** Released from prison; **continues journey to Corinth**
- **56** 2 CORINTHIANS
- **57** ROMANS
- **57** **From Corinth to Jerusalem**
- **57–9** 'Hearings' and imprisonment in Jerusalem and Caesarea
- **59 (autumn)** **Voyage to Rome; shipwreck on Malta**
- **60 (early)** **Arrival in Rome**
- **60–2** House arrest in Rome
- **62–4** Further travels, either to Spain or to the east, or both?
- **After 62** 1 and 2 TIMOTHY and TITUS?
- **64** Fire of Rome; persecution of Christians in Rome
- **64 or later** Death of Paul
- **66–70** Roman–Jewish War
- **68** Death of Nero
- **70** Fall of Jerusalem

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16

A Primer on Pauline Theology



3D reproduction of the ark of the covenant with the mercy seat overshadowed by cherubim wings

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Capernaum synagogue on the shoreline of the Sea of Galilee, dating to the fourth century AD

© 2015 by Zondervan

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Galatians



Political Galatia



Ethnic Galatia

TABLE 17.1: PAUL’S DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE SPIRITUAL HEIRS OF SARAH AND OF HAGAR

<i>Sarah’s family</i>	<i>Hagar’s family</i>
descended from Isaac	descended from Ishmael
children of promise	children of the flesh
free	slave
represent the covenant of the heavenly Zion (implied)	represent the covenant of Sinai
citizens of Jerusalem above (restored future state)	citizens of Jerusalem below (present state of exile)
bereft but now fruitful	in slavery along with all her children
Galatian believers	Jewish-Christian intruders
trusting in God by the spirit	trusting in fleshly identity
persecuted	persecutors
will inherit promises	will be cast out

TABLE 17.2: TULIP OF THE ‘APOCALYPTIC PAUL’

Tendency to downplay salvation- historical continuity	The gospel is punctiliar, not linear, and continuity is minimal; it was Paul’s opponents who were arguing for continuity with Israel’s sacred history by urging gentiles to be circumcised.
Unveiling of salvation in the apocalypse of Jesus Christ	Salvation is revealed exclusively in the Christ-event, his faithfulness, death, and resurrection, which Paul himself experienced in his call to preach the gospel.
Law as agent of oppressive powers	Paul, especially in Galatians, regards the law as part of the evil age that is dominated by hostile powers, from whom Jesus rescues believers.
Invasion of grace as the end of religion	Paul’s gospel means the end of all religion, obviously Judaism in particular, but in application this equally applies to moral therapeutic Deism (mainline Protestantism) or boundary-set proselytism (evangelicalism).
<i>Pistis Christou</i> as the faithfulness of Christ	The opposite of ‘works of the law’ is <i>pistis</i> , not ‘faith’ but the ‘faithfulness’ of Christ.

TABLE 17.3: TULIP OF ‘PAUL WITHIN JUDAISM’*

T orah-observant Paul	Paul himself obeyed the Torah and faithfully followed the Jewish life, albeit flexibly at times, depending on his environment.
U nder the Jewish covenant	The Jewish people are saved under the aegis of their own covenant. In other words, Jesus is the Messiah for gentiles, not for Jews.
L imited proselytism	Although Paul steadfastly refused to circumcise his male gentile converts, he none the less insisted on a certain degree of Torah-observance by urging his converts to avoid idolatry and sexual immorality.
I ntity without essentializing	Jewish identity is complex, and should not be reduced to some kind of fixed ‘essence’. Gentile Christians have guest status within ‘Israel’; they are not a ‘third race’, nor part of Israel; nor do they ‘replace’ Israel.
P olemics as a poor way to map Judaism	Ancient Judaism should not be understood in the light of the polemics within Christian groups, like Paul and his Jewish-Christian opponents, but in terms of its own literature and claims, without imposing Christianized categories and beliefs.

*My thanks to Patrick Schreiner for helping me (MFB) refine this taxonomy.

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18

1 and 2 Thessalonians



Thessalonica

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Philippians



The prison cell where Paul and Silas are believed to have been imprisoned
www.holylandphotos.org



Achaia and Macedonia

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Colossians, Philemon, and Ephesians



Asia Minor in the time of the apostle Paul



The massive Ephesian theatre which was the site of a huge commotion and protest against Paul by the silversmiths of Ephesus, according to Acts 19

© 2012 by Zondervan



The huge mound under which the city of Colossae remains buried, though plans are in place to excavate it by teams from Flinders University (Australia) and Pamukkale University (Turkey).

Clinton E. Arnold

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21

1 and 2 Corinthians



Ancient city of Corinth

SOCIAL STRATIFICATION OF PERSONS IN CORINTH ACCORDING TO THE NEW TESTAMENT

<i>Status</i>	<i>Individual(s) mentioned by Paul or Luke</i>	<i>NT source</i>
A director of public works	Erastus	Rom. 16.23
A synagogue leader	Crispus	1 Cor. 1.14; Ac. 18.8
Heads of households	Crispus, Stephanas, Chloe	1 Cor. 1.11, 14, 16; 11.22; 16.15
Those capable of service and benefaction to Paul	Gaius, Titus Justus, Phoebe	1 Cor. 1.14; Ac. 18.17; Rom. 16.1–12
Merchants or artisans	Aquila and Priscilla	1 Cor. 16.19; Rom. 16.3
Labourers and the destitute ‘who have nothing’	Unnamed	1 Cor. 11.18–34, esp. 11.22
Slaves	Unnamed	1 Cor. 7.21; 12.13

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22

Romans



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