

Introduction:

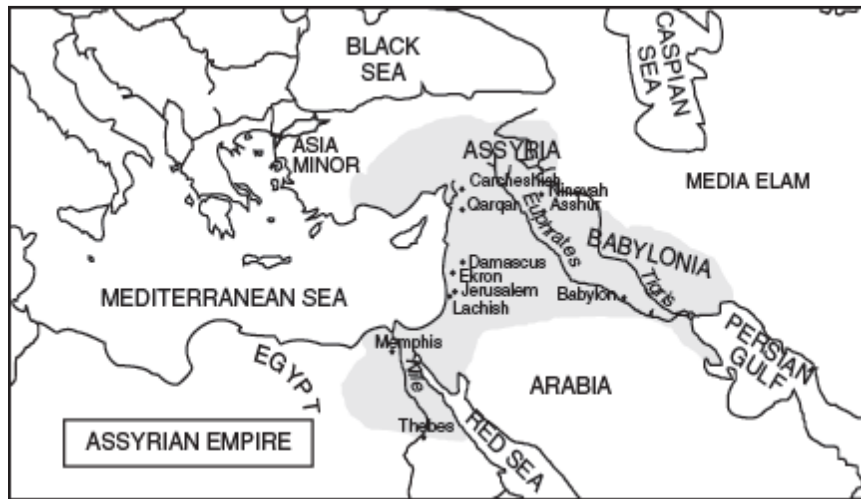
Today we will be looking at *the historical background*.

Things we will look at in this lesson:

- Part One: Historical Empires That Impacted Palestine
- Part Two: The Influence of Greece and Rome
- Part Three: Politics of Palestine
- Part Four: Jewish Cultural Differences

Part One: Historical Empires That Impacted Palestine:

Figure 1)



01. State how God used Assyria in relation to Israel.

02. Where did the name “Samaritan” come from?

Figure 2)



03. What did God use Babylon to do?

Figure 3)



04. How did the Persian period benefit the Jewish exiles?

Part Two: The Influence of Greece and Rome:

05. Who did Greece owe its rise to?

06. How long did the Persians rule before they were conquered by Alexander's armies?

07. What two parts of Greek influence tied the people of the empire together?

Figure 4)



08. What does "Hellenism" describe?

09. What did Egypt and Syria battle each other for possession of?

10. Which empire was the most powerful in history?

Figure 5)



Article 1)

1. More than any other empire, Rome established peace throughout the far-flung empire that was to last for centuries.
2. Rather than destroy the culture of Greece, Rome incorporated much of what was good and continued to promote it. Hellenism continued to be a force for many years.
3. The legal and political system Rome established was a model that many nations would use for centuries.

11. What are the 400 years between the Old Testament and the New Testament known as?

Part Three: Politics of Palestine:

12. What family led the Jewish people in rebellion against the Syrian rulers who were trying to force their religion on the Jews?

13. When did Antipater gain control of the Jewish nation?

14. When did Herod the Great rule Palestine?

Figure 6)

THE HERODIAN FAMILY GENEALOGY

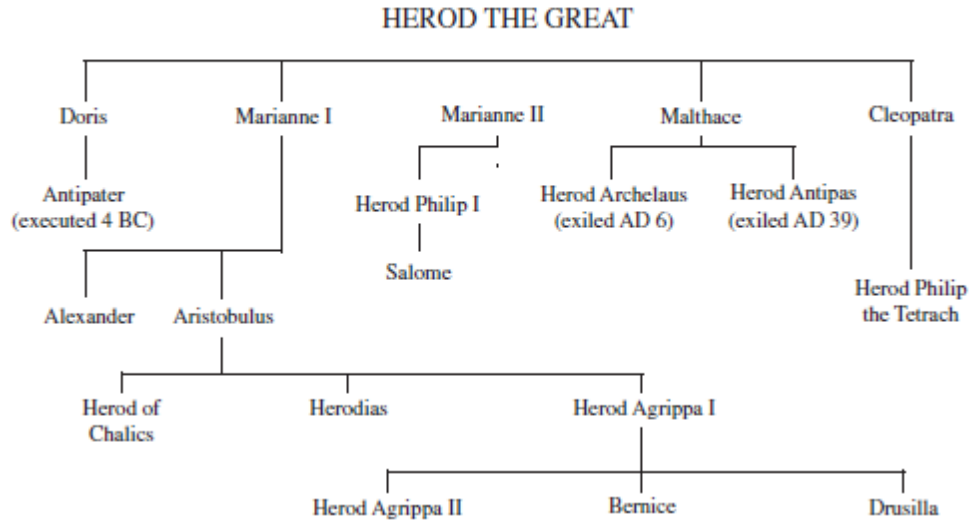
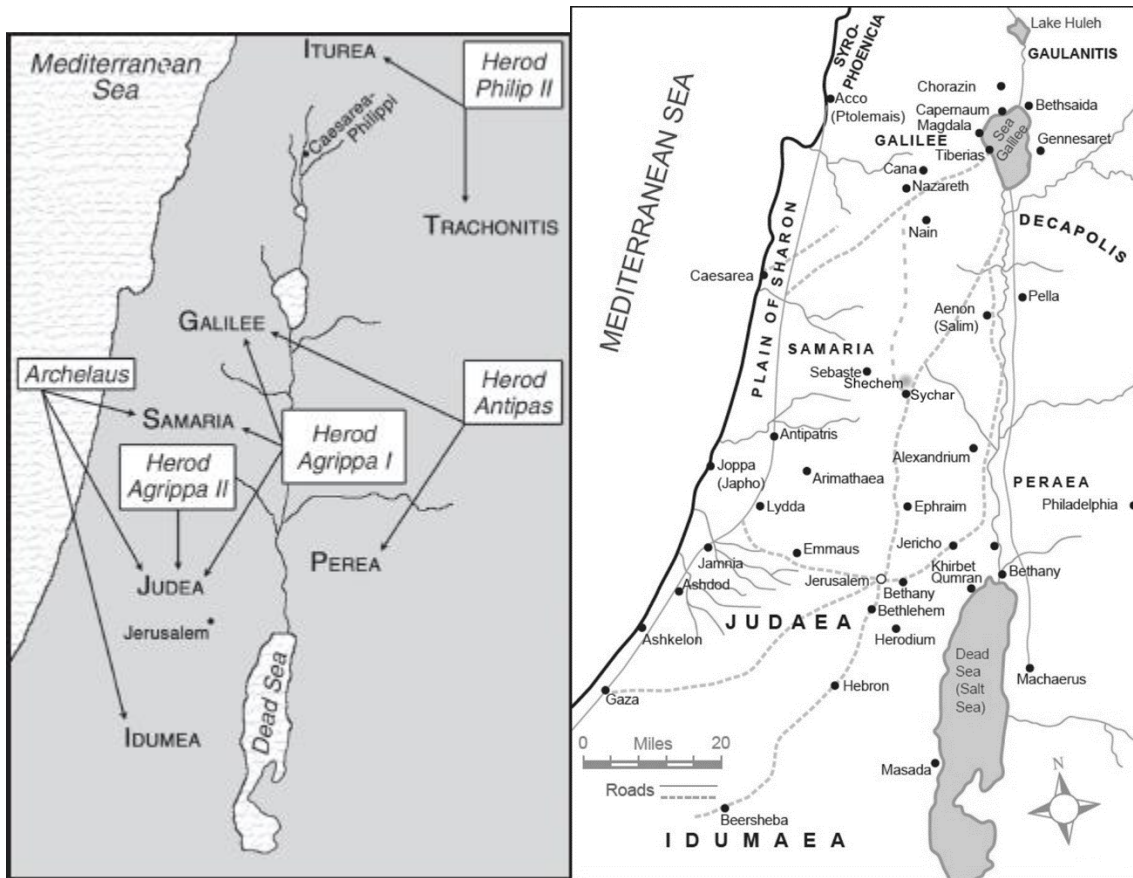


Figure 7)



Article 2) is a bulleted list of all the regions and districts in and around Palestine that we encounter in the Gospels. You will need to consult the map (**Figure 7**) showing Palestine in New Testament times. In this way, you should be able to fix each region firmly in your mind.

- Syria was the province that lay to the north-northeast of Palestine. It included Phoenicia, which was a coastal region and the area from which the Syro-Phoenician woman came (Mark 7:26).
- Palestine was the name given to the whole area that was traditionally the land of Israel. Palestine was further divided into districts or regions, which we will list.
- Galilee was the northern region of Palestine that lay west of the Jordan River.
- Samaria was the region that lay between Galilee in the north and Judea in the south. Although orthodox Jews ignored Samaritans, Samaria was still considered part of Palestine.
- Judea was the southernmost region of Palestine. You will probably find that most maps include Idumea in this region.
- Perea, although not mentioned by this name in the New Testament, is the land on “the other side of the Jordan” (Matthew 19:1). It was inhabited by Jews and ruled by Herod Antipas. Perea may also be considered as a region of Palestine.
- Decapolis was a self-governing territory lying mostly east of Jordan. Its name came from a league of ten cities that made up the territory. Although Decapolis bordered the regions of Palestine, it is not usually considered part of Palestine.
- The lands north and east of Galilee included the districts governed by Herod Philip the Tetrarch, such as Iturea, Gaulanitus, Trachonitis, Batanea, and Auranitis. While this territory bordered Palestine, scholars generally consider it to be more a part of Syria than Palestine.

Part Four: Jewish Cultural Differences:

15. Where did Jesus grow up and spend the greatest part of His public ministry?

16. What was the general attitude of the people of Judea?

A Brief Summary

1. Each ancient empire of the Middle East and Mediterranean area, beginning with Assyria, had a profound effect on the Jews, the Old Testament people of God. This was especially true of the empires that arose nearer the time of Christ.
2. During the intertestamental period, many political developments that affected the Jews occurred in this part of the world.
3. God shaped the Middle Eastern peoples and nations that related to and affected the Jewish people in preparation for the coming of Christ.
4. Three major forces arose that were prominent at the time of Christ and during the early spread of Christianity:
 - a. Hellenism, which represented a strong cultural force
 - b. Judaism, which constituted the strong religious force that provided an appropriate base for the gospel
 - c. Roman **imperialism**, which provided the strong legal and political force that gave peace, unity, and excellent communications and transportation within the empire
5. Discussion of the political divisions or regions in and around Palestine helped locate the setting of the places in which Christ labored and the conditions under which He worked.
6. The beginnings of the family from which Herod and his infamous sons came were traced, as well as their effect on the Jewish people.
7. Finally, a few of the cultural differences within the Jewish community itself were explored.

