



## EPISODE 2: THE ROMANS AND HEROD'S WORLD LUKE 1:1-4; MATTHEW 2

### Prologue: Enter the Romans (63-B.C—4<sup>th</sup> Century A.D.)

#### From the book of I Maccabees (Apocrypha) 8:1-20

*8 Now Judas heard of the fame of the Romans, that they were very strong and were well-disposed toward all who made an alliance with them, that they pledged friendship to those who came to them,<sup>2</sup> and that they were very strong. ...<sup>17</sup> So Judas chose Eupolemus son of John son of Accos, and Jason son of Eleazar, and sent them to Rome to establish friendship and alliance,<sup>18</sup> and to free themselves from the yoke; for they saw that the kingdom of the Greeks was enslaving Israel completely.<sup>19</sup> They went to Rome, a very long journey; and they entered the senate chamber and spoke as follows:*

*<sup>20</sup> "Judas, who is also called Maccabeus, and his brothers and the people of the Jews have sent us to you to establish alliance and peace with you, so that we may be enrolled as your allies and friends."*

- I. **The Rise of the Roman Empire** *c. 753 B.C.—A.D. 117*
  - a. In 63 B.C. Pompey marched into Jerusalem and entered the temple.
  - b. **Roman Emperors (31 B.C.—A.D. 98)**
    - i. Augustus (31 B.C.—14 A.D.)
    - ii. Tiberius (14–37 A.D.)
    - iii. Caligula (37–41 A.D.)
    - iv. Claudius (41–54 A.D.)
    - v. Nero (54–68 A.D.)
    - vi. Galba (68–69 A.D.)
    - vii. Otho (January–April 69 A.D.)
    - viii. Aulus Vitellius (July–December 69 A.D.)
    - ix. Vespasian (69–79 A.D.)
    - x. Titus (79–81 A.D.) (70. A.D.—Destruction of the Temple)
    - xi. Domitian (81–96 A.D.)
    - xii. Nerva (96–98 A.D.)

## II. HEROD THE GREAT (37–4 B.C.)

*Matthew 2:1-2* Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, <sup>2</sup> saying, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.” <sup>3</sup> When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; <sup>4</sup> and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.

- a. His character
- b. The Herodian Temple
- c. His Cities—Caesarea
- d. Masada: His Fortress of Solitude (and Monument to Paranoia)

## III. THE CONTEXT OF NEW CHRISTIANITY

*In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered.* <sup>2</sup> This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria.<sup>1</sup> (Luke 2:1-2)

- a. **Social Structure, Economics, Politics, and Law In Roman Judea**
- b. **Education and Philosophy**
- c. **Philosophical Systems of the First Century A.D.**

Sophists            Enamored with the successful execution of rhetorical argumentation (sometimes regardless of the particular position taken in the argument).

Cynics              Contended for a more naturalistic way of pious living, often engaging in shocking verbal and physical feats to make their points.

Epicureans        Believed that all that exists were miniscule packets of matter (atoms), that humans were entirely composed of aggregate matter (thus ceasing to exist upon death), and that life was consequently about maximizing earthly pleasure through friendships and enjoyment of life.

Stoics                Argued that the world was fundamentally the expression of a rational force (the *logos*), and that harmonious good living required an exaltation of reason over spontaneous emotions in all of life.

*From the ESV Study Bible*

- d. **Religion and Magic**
  - i. Roman pantheon of gods and goddesses: Jupiter, Venus, and Mars (or their Greek counterparts Zeus, Aphrodite, and Ares)
  - ii. Household gods
  - iii. Hero worship (Alexander the Great) as a god in his lifetime
  - iv. Emperor Worship
  - v. Mystery religions
  - vi. Magic
  - vii. Monotheism
  - viii. “Atheism”

<sup>1</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Lk 2:1–2). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

#### IV. Jewish Groups at the Time of the New Testament

- a. **The Sadducees** (*See table below*)
- b. **The Essenes** (*See table below*)
- c. **The Pharisees** (*See table below*)
- d. Scribes
- e. Zealots

#### V. Revolt

- a. The First Jewish Revolt *A.D. 66–73*
- b. The Bar Kochba Revolt *A.D. 132–135*

	PHARISEES	SADDUCEES	ESSENES
<b>GENERAL</b>	In the world but not of the world	In the world and of the world	Neither in the world nor of the world
<b>LAW</b>	Valued oral law, also accepted old written law	Rejected oral law, accepted only old written law	Wrote hidden law, accepted and gave interpretations to old law
<b>INTERPRETATION</b>	Accurate, precise	Pragmatic, accommodating	Creative, adaptive
<b>GOD</b>	Participates in events of world	Removed from the evil of world	Messiah will destroy the evil of world
<b>FATE</b>	Fate cooperates in human actions	Rejected Fate, emphasized agency	Accepted Fate
<b>SOCIETY</b>	Kind to each other, lenient (Mt 5:46; Acts 5:39)	Rude to each other, boorish, punitive (compare Acts 5:40)	Great attachment to each other
<b>MAIN LOCATIONS</b>	Rural villages and cities	Urban centers	Remote communes, separate quarters
<b>GENTILES</b>	Partially accepted	Openly accepted	Mostly rejected
<b>PROPERTY</b>	Lived simply	Sought wealth	Despised wealth, held goods in common

<b>SOULS</b>	Imperishable, good souls alone go on to another body, wicked souls suffer eternal punishment, believed in resurrection	No afterlife, no eternal rewards or punishments	Bodies perishable, souls immortal, liberated upon death
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