

Animated
Multimedia
•
DVD-ROM
Inside

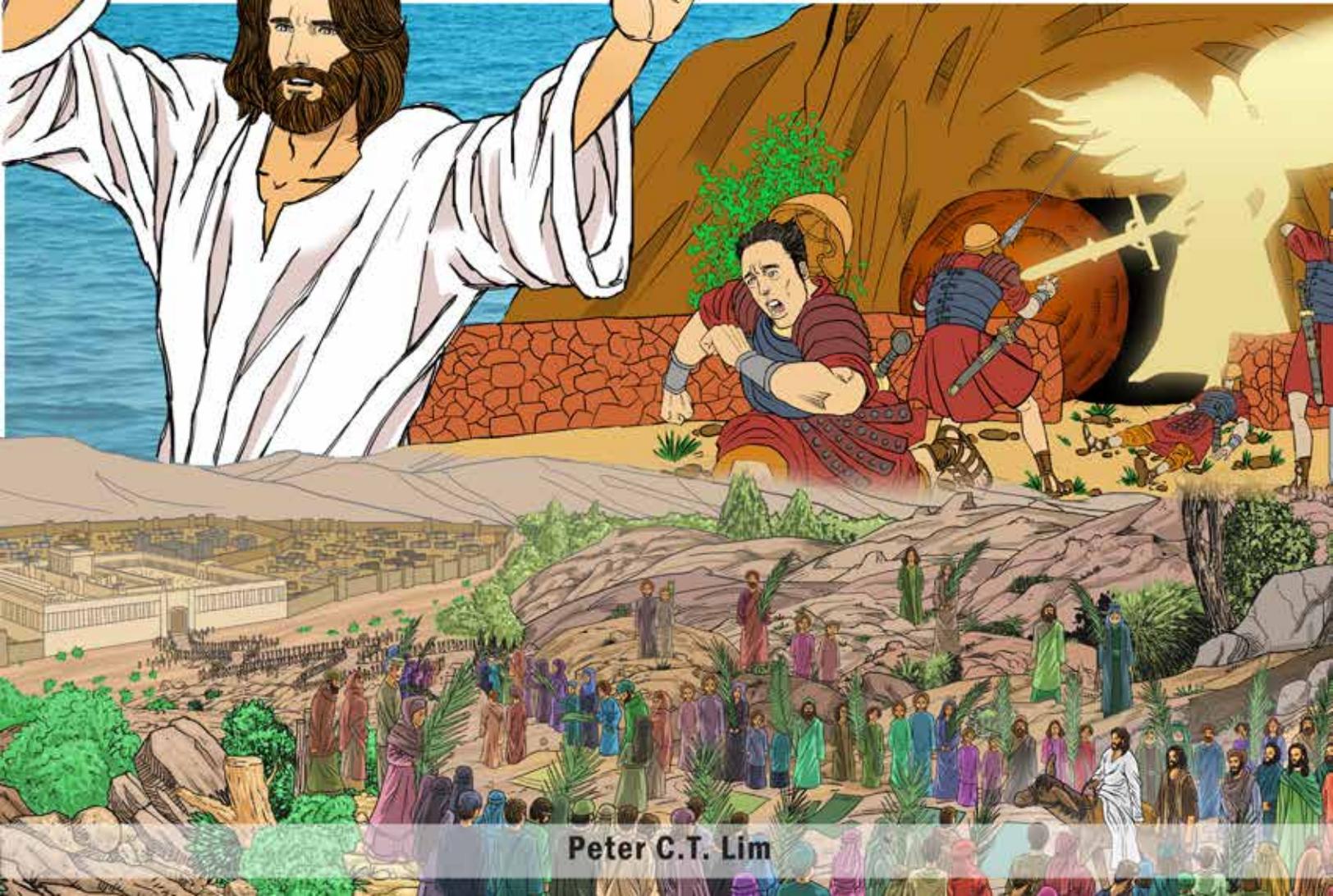
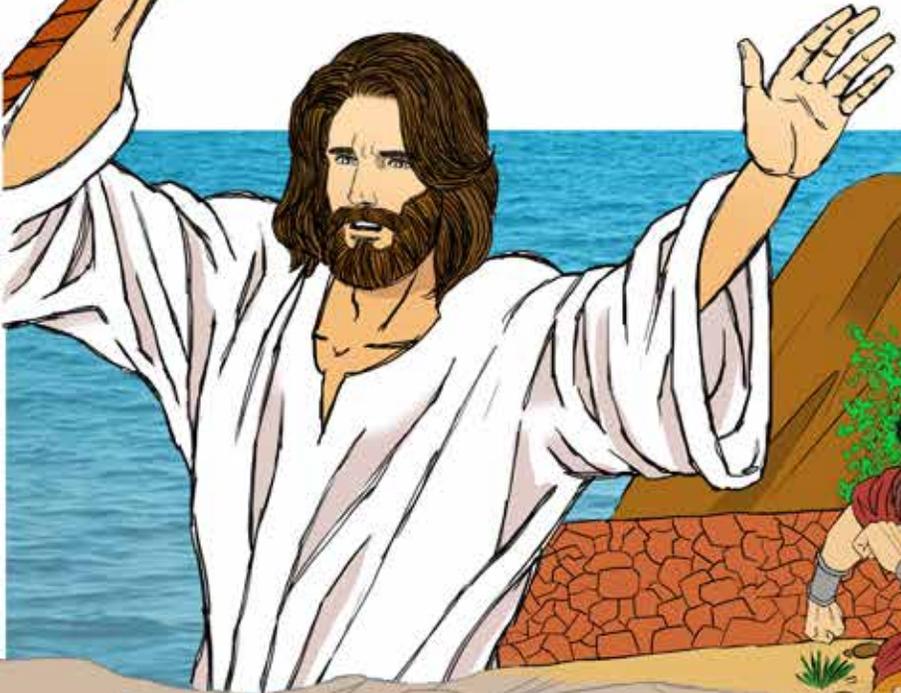
The Visual Bible Explorer Series

The Gospel Story



Vol.1 Jesus - From Birth to Transfiguration

Vol.2 Jesus - The Messiah



Peter C.T. Lim



The Visual Bible Explorer Series

The Gospel Story

**Volume 1: Jesus - From Birth to
Transfiguration**

Volume 2: Jesus - The Messiah

Peter C. T. Lim

Copyrights



First published in Malaysia in 2016 by Pristine World Sdn Bhd

First Edition Reprinted in 2008

1st Edition first published in 2008 by Pristine World Sdn Bhd

Copyright © 2008 Pristine World Sdn Bhd, Malaysia

1st Edition first published in 2009 by Pristine World Sdn Bhd

Copyright © 2009 Pristine World Sdn Bhd, Malaysia

All rights reserved. No part of this publication or multimedia may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Unless otherwise indicated,

Scriptures are taken from the Good News Bible © 1994 published by the Bible Societies/ HarperCollins Publishers Ltd., UK Good News Bible © American Bible Society 1966, 1971, 1976, 1992. Used with permission.

Scripture quotations marked NLT are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc, Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked NIV are taken from the Holy Bible, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION ©. Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved.

Author's Preface to First Edition

The four Gospels in the New Testament carry the central story of God's revelation and salvation plan for humankind. The challenge to convert it into multimedia for children is to tell the story in an easy to understand, interesting manner, keeping the essence of the original teachings in the story and highlighting the relevance for today.

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John each have a slightly different perspective and emphasis on the life and work of our Lord Jesus. I have tried my best to combine the stories into a chronological view. But some chapters have been written according to specific themes. For example, the calling of the 12 disciples, was probably spread over some time as described in the Gospels. However, in our story, we have combined them into one chapter, called "I Will Make You Fisher's of Men - The Calling of the 12 Disciples". This is so that we can draw some thematic lessons from the story.

Certain events of the gospel story are described in greater detail by certain gospel writers. For example, The Sermon on the Mount, is told in great detail in Matthew's Gospel. In this case, I have chosen to write the story from one Gospel writer's point of view. So the story on Matthew chapter 5-7 is titled - The Sermon on the Mount - as recorded by Matthew. The story is then told from a first person perspective i.e. from Matthew's and given a more personal touch. Likewise The Last Breakfast (in volume 2) is told from the Apostle John's perspective.

As with our previous productions, we have supplemented the main story with commentaries by historians, archaeologists and Bible scholars. In 2007 I made a pilgrimage trip to Israel, which included Jerusalem, Galilee, Mt Sinai in Egypt and Petra. Many of the photos I have included in this book were taken during this trip. I hope that the supplementary information will give new added dimensions to The Gospel Story that we have heard before.

It is my sincere hope that this book and CD will help bring to life the Gospel Story as told in the four Gospels of the New Testament and that you and your family will truly be blessed by them.

Peter C. T. Lim
October 2008

Acknowledgements - 2008

The author would like to express his thanks to those who have helped in the development of this book and multimedia CD. This is not a comprehensive list. If I have left anyone out, please let me know and I'll take note of it in future editions.

First of all to my wife, Ee Jin, who has given me unwavering support for this project and helped to proof-read my scripts. (If there are still any errors, they are mine.) My children, Joseph and Benjamin. To my mother, Sarah Tay, for being my first Sunday School teacher and my late father, Lim Tuan Siong, for his practical guidance.

The Elders and Pastors of DUMC where I worship: Senior Pastor Dr Daniel Ho, Elder Pastor Dato and Datin Kee Sue Sing. Pastor Chris Kam for recording two songs for us and my cellgroup who have prayed for this project.

Rev Dr Herbert Tan and Pastor Chris Choo for reading my scripts and giving me valuable feedback. The late Mr. Tan Har-Yong, who read my first draft and suggested some changes to the lines. Many of his suggestions were adopted and some of his words have been included in the final script. Mdm Goh Kim Guat, who also read my early draft and gave me feedback. Samantha Yong and Stella Lee who gave suggestions on making the language of the stories more 'children-friendly.' Ms Lim Ai Lian and Lorna Rode who did additional proof-reading. (If there are any short-comings on the script, the fault is mine alone.)

Juwita Suwito who recorded two songs for this production. Colin Kirton and his team who provided the dramatic voice-overs. Pastor Chris Choo and Mr Stephen Chia for the additional photos used in this production. Bishop Ng Moon Hing of the Anglican church of West Malaysia for his kind support.

Author's Preface to Second Edition

Since the printing of the first edition in 2008, these two volumes of The Gospel Story, volumes 1 and 2, have been translated into 4 other languages; BM, Myanmar, Mandarin and Tamil. Altogether, these titles have been published in 5 languages, including English, and over 20,000 copies have been printed and distributed. This does not include the student workbooks which have also been printed in the thousands.

In 2013, we have started rebranding our Children's Bible Explorer Series as the Visual Bible Explorer Series because we found that more teenagers and young adults have been reading the books. Since 2014, private schools have also been using our books for Bible Knowledge classes. With this new demand for our books, we decided to make some changes. We combined the two volumes of The Gospel Story into a single volume. We added more historical background and many of the illustrations were re-drawn to give it better perspective and make it more vibrant.

We have added a new chapter called Prologue to the Gospel Story. This chapter summarises the Old Testament of the Bible and gives some of the prophecies relating to the coming of the Messiah. With this introductory chapter, we hope that the reader, especially those who are reading the Gospel for the first time, can see why Jesus is the Messiah and how He fulfils all the prophecies and writings of the Old Testament.

In this edition, we have also included an additional story taken from John 8 and made it part of a chapter called Humility, Grace and Forgiveness. We have developed a new student book for teenagers from 13 to 17 years old which is a companion workbook to this edition. This workbook can be used both in a Sunday school environment as well as in a school classroom setting. Much research was put into the development of the student workbooks to help students extract the essential lessons from the Bible stories and to put thought into how they can apply the lessons in their lives.

We hope that with this second edition and the companion workbooks for the different age groups we will be able to reach a wider audience of children and youth with the essential lessons from the Gospel Story. Through the teaching of the word, we pray and hope that we can help shape a new generation of enlightened children or youth, who can go out and make a better world for tomorrow, with God's wisdom and guidance.

All glory to God.

Peter C T Lim
November 2016

Bishop's Foreword

I am extremely happy and amazed with what Peter Lim has done. He with Pristine World have developed a wonderful set of stories in the Children's Bible Explorer Series.

In the midst of development in the 21st century, I strongly believe that the church must move on with time in order to reach the new generation of young people and children. They are very accustomed and well versed with audio-visual and cyber information and learning. As the world changes, we, while keeping the purpose, vision and content of the message intact, must change the methodology with time. We ourselves do not even take black and white photographs these days and have moved into digital photography. We must also progress with audio-visual and cyber learning now and not in the near future. The near future may be unending.

I fully support this Children's Bible Explorer Series because it is first of all a Malaysian product and done through Malaysian effort. We need more of such people to write, draw, compose, create more Malaysian Christian literature, songs, movies, skits etc.

Secondly, I know Pristine World will begin to do it first in English and then it will be translated into different local languages for the benefit of the Malaysian Churches and beyond.

Thirdly, I encourage all parents to get this series to educate your children as soon as they can learn. It is so very important to start them young and set them right on proper foundation.

Fourthly, I think it is timely to move into the IT world of Bible learning. It is not only attractive to children but adults as well. The contents are so lively and colourful with all the Bible stories and teachings.

I know you will be blessed when you go through this series with your children or grandchildren.



The Most Reverend Datuk Ng Moon Hing
Archbishop
Anglican Church of South East Asia

Production Team



Content Development

Written and Produced by: Peter Lim Cheong Thye
(B. Ec - Comp Sc, Dip O.R., Monash; MBA, AGSM-NSW)

Peter Lim is the writer and producer of the Visual Bible Explorer series of Multimedia Books. He has 20 years experience in the I.T. industry. In 2005 he and his wife Dr Lim Ee Jin set up Pristine World, a company dedicated to producing children's Bible stories and teaching aids. Pristine World also helps churches to produce student material.



Editorial Consultant: Rev Dr Herbert Tan
(B Sc, Uni Malaya, M Divinity, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Illinois; PhD, Northwestern University, Illinois)

Herbert has been in ministry since 1982 both in missionary as well as pastoral capacities. He currently serves as a consultant trainer in Leadership Development, Family and Youth Ministries. He is lecturer at large and teaches part-time in Seminari Theoloji Malaysia and several other institutions in Southeast Asia. His passion is to see people grow through empowering and dynamic Christian Education as well as see leadership capacities develop in the next generation of younger leaders.

Project Advisor: Pastor Christopher Choo Yew Choong
(LLB London University, Lifeline International Ministries Singapore, Vision Bible College, Tabernacle of Glory, Kuala Lumpur)

Pr Chris Choo is a Bible teacher and regular Study Leader for Pilgrimages to Israel and the Bible Lands. He specialises in Bible History.

Illustrations By:

Lead Graphic Artist: Kee Hup Thong

Special Artist: Kenny Kong

Animation & Programming By: Ooi Teck Bian

Photos By: Peter C.T. Lim, Pastor Chris Choo, Stephen Chia

Voice-Over:

Voice-Over Director: Colin Kirton

Lead Narrators: Karen Lam & Juwita Suwito

Voice-Over Cast:

- | | | |
|-----------------|------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Colin Kirton | 6. Ian Ng | 11. Linora Low |
| 2. Jonathan Tan | 7. Jason Voon | 12. Dorothy Lee |
| 3. Rudi Cheow | 8. Teoh Chin Kee | 13. Ann Choo |
| 4. Samuel Leong | 9. Eugene Phua | |
| 5. Ee Soon Wei | 10. Adrene Wong | |

Songs & Music:

Music Arrangements & Original Music Composed By:

David Gary Ngan

Songs:

1. Silent Night

Lyrics By: Joseph Mohr (1816)

Original Music By: Franz Xavier Gruber (1818)

Guitars by Roger Wang. Vocals produced and mixed By: Aubrey Suwito

Vocals By: Juwita Suwito

2. Jesus In My Life

Composed By: Alan Wong **

Vocals: Chris Kam featuring Juwita Suwito

3. Jesus Loves Me

Music Arranged By: David Gary Ngan

Vocals By: Juwita Suwito

4. Amazing Grace

Original Music: Traditional Music arranged Willam Walker

Lyrics By: John Newton

Music Arranged By: David Gary Ngan

Vocal By: Chris Kam

5. Special Song:

Jesus loves Me

Used by permission from Cranky Music Sdn Bhd

From Album: Aubrey Suwito presents The HeART of Hymns

Sung by: Nigel Tay

Writers : William Batchelder Bradbury, 1862 / Anna Barlett Warner, 1860

Arranged and Produced by: Aubrey Suwito

Publisher Cranky Music Sdn Bhd

Aubrey Sunito

Recording studio:

All recording done at SKY Music Recording Studio except for Silent Night which was recorded at Big Bash Studio.

Printed by: Jess Concept

Proof reading assisted by:

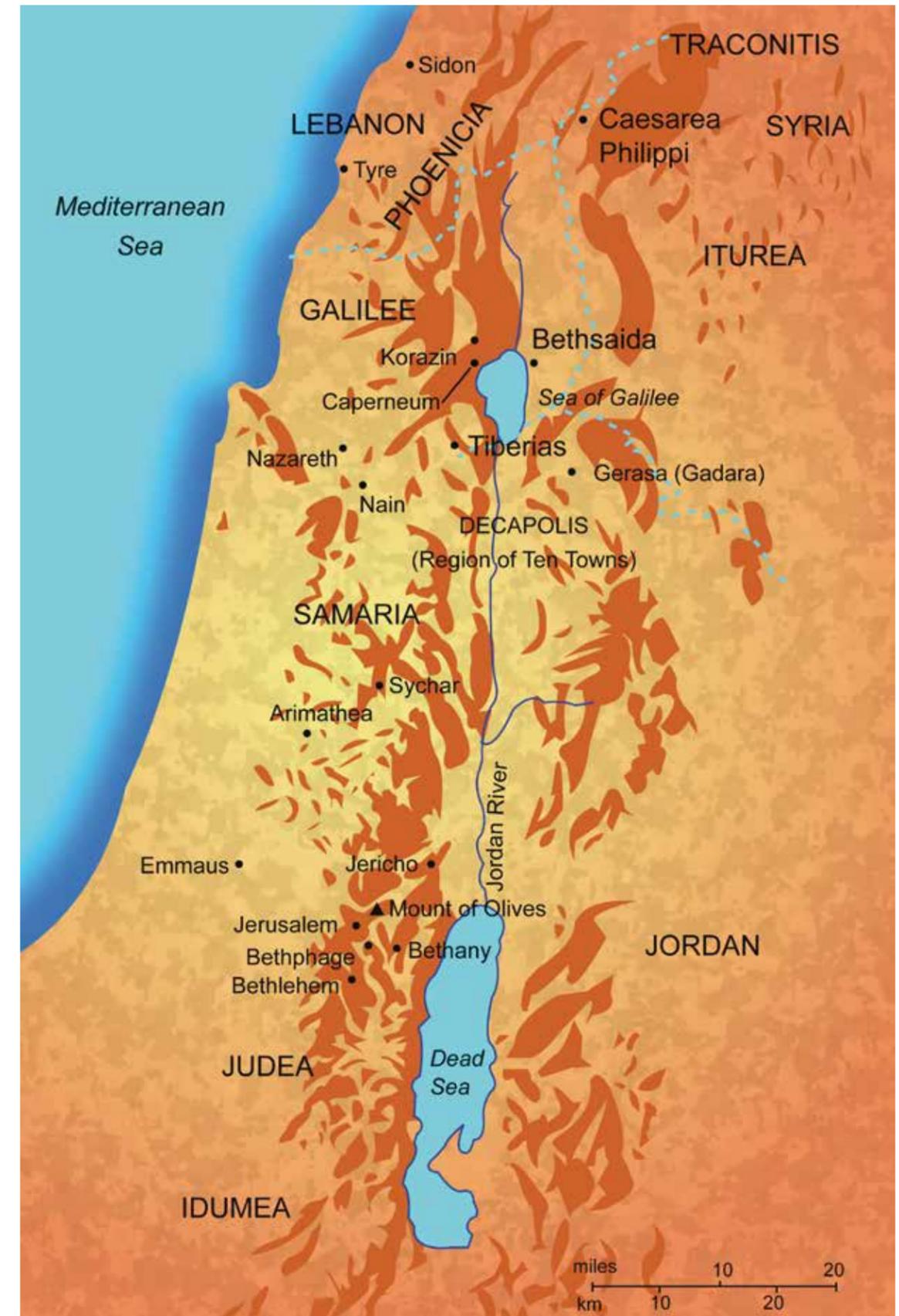
Mrs Goh Ping choo & Ms Sara Soo

Timeline Summary of Christ's Ministry

Event	Place	Date (approx)
1. Birth of Jesus	Bethlehem	4 - 6 BC
2. Baptism of Jesus	Jordan River	26 AD
3. Jesus is tempted by the Devil	Wilderness	26 AD
4. Jesus calls his first disciples	Capernaum, Sea of Galilee	27 AD
5. Jesus selects the 12 disciples	Capernaum	28 AD
6. The sermon on the Mount	Galilee	28 AD
7. Jesus calms the storm & heal's Jairus's daughter	Sea of Galilee Capernaum	28 AD
8. 12 disciples sent out to preach & to heal	Capernaum	28 AD
9. Herod Antipas murders John the Baptist	Machaerus	29 AD
10. Jesus feeds the multitude & then walks on water	Near Bethsaida Sea of Galilee	29 AD 29 AD
11. Peter says that Jesus is the Son of God	Caerarea Philippi	29 AD
12. Jesus is transfigured	Mountain top	One week later
13. Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead	Bethany	Later 29 AD
14. Jesus begins His last trip to Jerusalem	Bethany	30 AD
15. Jesus meets with Zacchaeus	Jericho	30 AD
16. Jesus enters Jerusalem & spend the final week there	Jerusalem	30 AD (Thursday)
17. Crucifixion	Jerusalem	Friday
18. Ressurrection	Jerusalem	Sunday
19. Jesus appears to ten disciples	Jerusalem	Sunday
20. Jesus appears to eleven disciples (including Thomas)	Jerusalem	One week later
21. Jesus talks with some disciples (the Last Breakfast)	Sea of Galilee	-
22. Jesus ascends to Heaven	Mt. Olives, Jerusalem	40 days later

Reference: Chronological and Background Charts of the New Testament pp. 102-103
 * Dates are approximated up to + or - 2 years

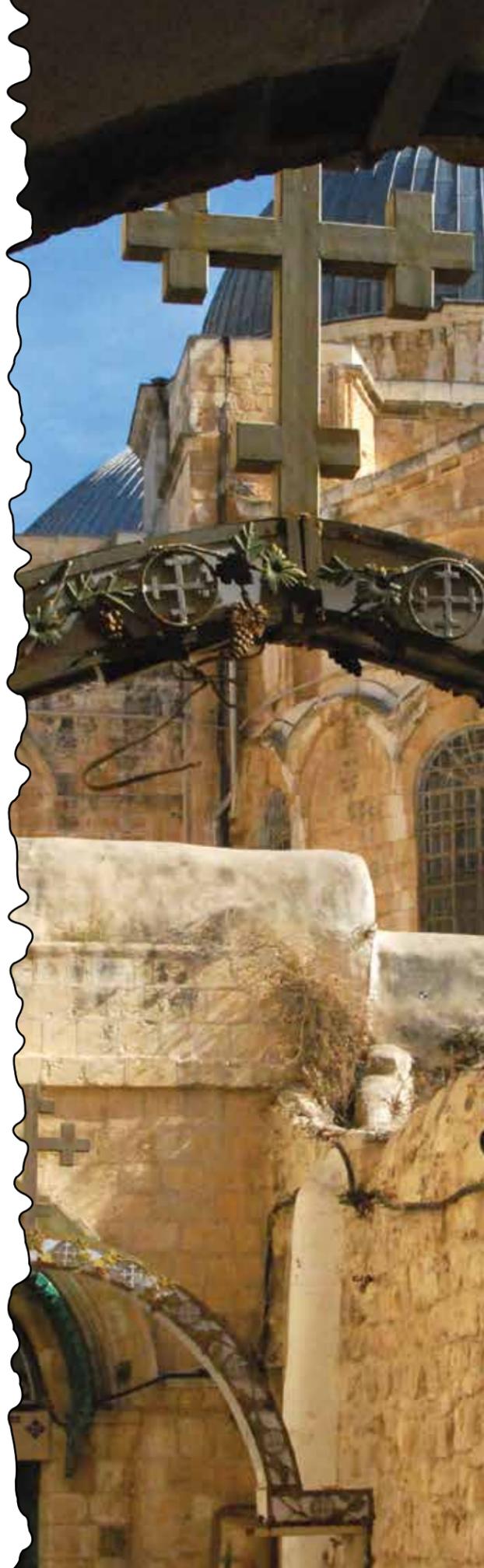
Key Place in the Gospel Story





The Gospel Story Volume 1 - Jesus - From Birth to Transfiguration **CONTENTS**

1. Introduction and Background History of the Gospel Story *pg.12*
2. The Main Characters in the Gospel Story *pg.20*
3. Visit of the Angel *pg.24*
4. The Birth of Jesus *pg.28*
5. The Magi and the Star *pg.32*
6. The Baptism and the Temptation of Jesus *pg.38*
7. Introduction of Life in Galilee *pg.42*
8. "I will make you Fishers of men." - The Calling of the 12 Disciples *pg.45*
9. The Power to Heal and to Forgive Sins *pg.50*
10. The Sermon on the Mount - As Recorded by Matthew *pg.54*
11. Faith, Power and Authority *pg.59*
12. Jesus and Jairus' Daughter *pg.63*
13. Feeding the Great Crowd *pg.66*
14. The Revelation and the Transfiguration *pg.71*



The Gospel Story Volume 2 - Jesus - The Messiah **CONTENTS**

15. The Samaritan Woman and the Good Samaritan *pg.75*
16. Humility, Grace and Forgiveness *pg.78*
17. Parables of the Lost and Found *pg.82*
18. Jesus and Lazarus - A Personal Testimony by John *pg.86*
19. Jesus and Zacchaeus *pg.90*
20. Introduction to Jerusalem in the Days of Jesus *pg.93*
21. Jesus Enters Jerusalem *pg.97*
22. The Lord's Supper *pg.103*
23. The Garden of Gethsemane *pg.108*
24. The Trial of Jesus *pg.113*
25. What Happened at the Crucifixion *pg.120*
26. The Resurrection *pg.126*
27. The Last Breakfast - A Personal Testimony by John *pg.130*
28. The Great Commission and the Ascension *pg.135*
29. Epilogue - Main Lessons from The Gospel Story *pg.139*
- Reference *pg.144*

The Gospel Story

1. Prologue to the Gospel Story

Introduction to the Bible

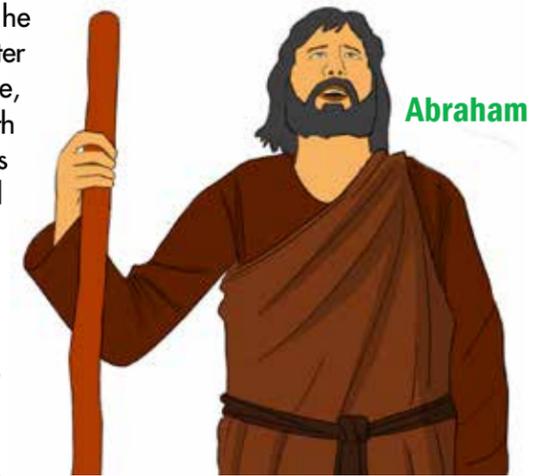
The Bible is the holy scriptures of the Christians. It is made of 66 smaller books which are divided into two broad divisions called the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament or Old Covenant consists of 39 books and the New Testament or New Covenant consists of 27 books. The Old Testament was written by authors living from about 1500 BC to about 400 BC. The New Testament was written from about 45 BC to about 100 AD. The stories in the Bible span from time immemorial in the past to a future that is still to happen. Through many episodes, hundreds of characters and detailed events, the stories represent a unified narrative about God, his creation of the world and all life in it, and his initiatives to relate to humankind.

■ Genesis

Genesis, the first book of the Bible sets the framework of the story. God created the world perfect. The first humans, Adam and Eve were created in the image of God. They were to rule the earth and have a close personal fellowship with God. When they sin, evil enters the world and brings about death and destruction. God being a holy God, cannot tolerate sin; but being a loving God offers redemption to those who have faith in him. Thus begins the story of God's continuing efforts to bring redemption to the faithful.



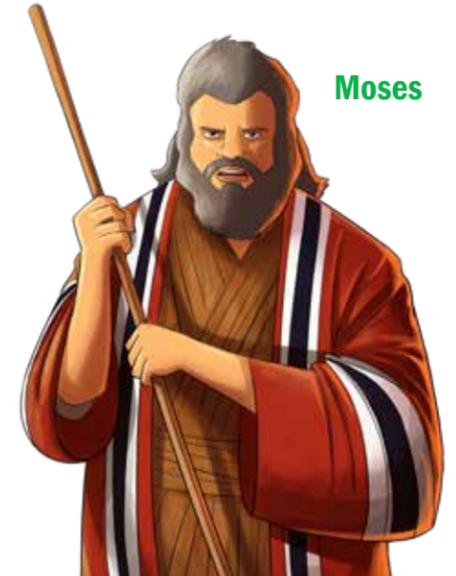
When God was about to judge the world because of sin, he commanded Noah to build an Ark for the faithful to be saved. After the flood, as humankind multiplied, sin multiplied again. This time, God spoke to a man named Abraham and made a covenant with him. God made a promise to Abraham, to make his descendants into a great nation and to give them a great land. Abraham and his wife, though childless and old at that time, showed strong faith in God. God honoured Abraham and sealed his covenant with the birth of the promised child by his aged wife Sarah. God told Abraham that one day, the nations of the earth will be blessed by one of his descendants which was a prophetic reference to the coming of Jesus the Messiah.



God's special covenant with Abraham passed on to his son Isaac, and to his grandson, Jacob. Together they represent the patriarchs, or fathers, of the Israelite people. Jacob's twelve sons and the whole clan moved to Egypt to escape a famine after the second youngest brother, Joseph, by God's grace became the first minister in Egypt.

■ Moses

After 430 years in Egypt, the clan of Jacob become a vast group of people. Pharaoh, fearing this group of foreigners, enslave them and tries to destroy them. God chooses one man, Moses, to deliver the Israelites. Through many miraculous events, Moses leads the Israelites out of Egypt to Mt Sinai. There, God gives Moses the 10 Commandments and a set of laws for the Israelites to live by. God told the Israelites that if they obeyed these laws, God would bless and protect them from their enemies. However, the Israelites kept grumbling and disobeying God's laws. God punished them by making them wander in the wilderness for 40 years before Joshua led them to the Promised Land.



■ Judges, Kings and Prophets

After the death of Joshua, the tribes occupied the land allocated to them. Although they have been given the Law they kept disobeying God and worshipped the gods of the surrounding people. Each time they are invaded by neighbouring enemy nations, and they turn to God for help, God sends them help in the form of judges, or tribal rulers, to lead the people and defeat the enemies, although not defeating them completely.

Later God used Samuel, a man recognised by all the tribes as a great prophet of God, to anoint at first Saul and later David as King of Israel. David was a powerful king who expanded the borders of Israel. Although not perfect, he loved God and was described by as 'a man after my own heart' by God. God promised David, that one of his descendants would rule over a kingdom that would never end. This again was a promise of the coming of the Messiah but with an additional piece of information. Jesus the Messiah would come from the line of David who was from the tribe of Judah.

Solomon, David's son succeeded David to the throne and built a magnificent Temple to honour God. But in spite of a good start, Solomon failed to keep God's commandments because he made offerings to the many gods that his foreign wives had introduced to him. After his death, the kingdom split into two parts. The northern kingdom called Israel with ten of the tribes and the southern kingdom called Judah, with two tribes, namely Judah and Benjamin.

From here on, the kings that led the two nations of Israel continually failed to bring the Israelites back to an uncompromised worship of God as during the time of Moses. Despite the efforts of prophets like Elijah, Elisha and others to bring Israel back to God, they continue to do evil in the sight of God. God allowed the two kingdoms to be conquered; first the northern kingdom by Assyria in 722 BC and later the southern kingdom by Babylon in 587 BC.

From that time until about 537 BC when Babylon was conquered by Persia the Jews were led away in exile. In 537 BC Cyrus the King of Persia allowed the Jews to return to their homeland and to rebuild their Temple. Cyrus of the Persian Empire was well known for allowing people of vassal states to return to their homeland and to practice their religious beliefs as long they continued to pay tribute and acknowledge him as the overall lord.

Throughout this time, before, during and after the exile period, God spoke through many prophets that he would send a Messiah, a Saviour, who would deliver Israel from bondage.

■ Prophetic Messages

In the Old Testament, prophets were people whom God used to speak his message to the people of Israel. It could be for individuals, tribes or the whole nation. The prophet was the voice of God. Sometimes the prophet spoke God's judgement on an individual who had done something wrong. Example, when King David had an affair with Bathsheba and later conspired to murder her husband, the prophet Nathan came and spoke God's judgment on him. Sometimes a prophet would give a warning to a city. Example Jonah was sent to Nineveh to tell them that unless they repented of their sins, God would overthrow their city. The people of Nineveh repented and God spared the city. Sometimes, it was to tell them about a future event so that the people would be warned or encouraged or both.

■ Messianic Prophecies

One type of prophecy which featured very strongly in the Old Testament was called Messianic Prophecies. Before, during and after the exile period, God spoke through many prophets that he will allow Israel to be defeated and the people exiled because they turned away from worshipping him alone. They worshipped other gods and committed heinous crimes such as human sacrifice and breaking all the 10 Commandments. However, he would limit the duration of their punishment. If they turn back to worship him, he would send a deliverer, in the form of a foreign king, Cyrus of Persia, who would allow the Israelites to return to their homeland and rebuild their Temple.

The prophecies also spoke of a future King, a Messiah, who would rule Israel and his kingdom would last forever. He would rule with righteousness but his light would not only shine for Israel but for all the nations of the earth as well. This group of prophecies was so important that it occupies much of the prophetic sayings in the Old Testament. God wanted his people to recognise the Messiah by the prophecies given about him. Below are just some of the prophecies given of the coming Messiah in the Old Testament.

1. Genesis 12:3 – The Messiah would be a descendant of Abraham
2. Genesis 49:10 – He would be a descendant of Judah
3. Jeremiah 23:5-6 and Psalms 132:11 – He will be descendant of King David
4. Isaiah 7:14 – He would be born of a virgin
5. Micah 5:2 – He would be born in Bethlehem
6. Isaiah 9:1-2 – He would do much of his work and spend much time in Galilee
7. Isaiah 11:10, 42:1 and 49:6 – He will bring salvation to the non-Jews
8. Deuteronomy 18:15-19 – He will be a great prophet like Moses
9. Isaiah 61:1-2 – He will perform many miracles
10. Psalms 2:7, Proverbs 30:4 – He is Divine, the Son of God
11. Zechariah 9:9 – He will enter Jerusalem on a donkey
12. Isaiah 53 – He would suffer and pay the penalty of our sins
13. Psalms 22 – Details of his sufferings on the cross
14. Psalms 16:10 – He would resurrect from the dead
15. Isaiah 25:8 – He will have victory over death

■ Historical Notes

Although Cyrus had allowed the Jews to return to their homeland, Judea, as it was called then, was still a vassal state under the Persian Empire until about 332 BC when Alexander the Great defeated the Persians. Judea then came under Greek influence. After the death of Alexander the Great, his empire was divided by his generals. Judea was placed under one of Alexander's generals who started the Seleucid dynasty.

In 167 BC, the Jews under the Maccabees, defeated the Seleucids and gained independence for their country. The Jews hailed the Maccabees as messiahs who gained their independence for them and started the Hasmonean dynasty. This independence lasted until 63 BC when Judea was conquered by Magnus Pompey the Roman general. For decades after this event, the Jews longed for another messiah, like the Maccabees, to liberate them from the burden of the Romans again.

■ The Conflicting Expectations

The Jewish people, longing for freedom from foreign rulers, desired a conquering, political Messiah king; and they interpreted the prophecies to be as such. They were looking forward to the arrival of a powerful warrior Messiah like the Maccabees. Even King Herod I, who was the vassal king during the birth of Jesus, believed this interpretation of the prophecy and was afraid of being usurped by the coming of a Messiah.

The ruling party of the Jews, the Sanhedrin, having achieved a certain understanding with the Roman rulers did all they could to preserve this status quo: The Romans remain as the overall rulers with a local king as a puppet ruler taking care of small local matters. The Sanhedrin council of 70 rulers governed all religious matters. There was a lot of money and status to be gained just being on this council. So the status quo was to be preserved at all cost.

It was in this world, with all this tension in the air, that the real Messiah, Jesus, was born. He lived in this world, bringing his message of peace and enlightenment and proving his statements with signs and wonders, just as it was prophesied.

This is the prelude to the Gospel Story. The first four books of the New Testament are the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. They give an account of the life, teachings, work, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.



c.63 BC Roman General Pompey captures Jerusalem.

[A Quick History of the Kings and Emperors during the Time of Jesus](#)

■ [Historical Background of Palestine](#)

Nearly four hundred years have passed since the last of the Israelite prophets had spoken among the Jews. The Jewish community remembered the promise of a Messiah and of a new Elijah who would prepare the way for Him. It was a very difficult period for the Jews and so they eagerly looked forward to the arrival of the Messiah.

■ [Political Trouble](#)

Although the Jews had returned from their Exile since 536 BC, they did not have true independence. They were constantly ruled by foreign masters. The people were poor, and they were troubled by many rebellions and local wars. In 332 BC, they became a part of the Greek Empire of Alexander the Great. After Alexander the Great died in 323 BC, his empire which included Palestine was left to the hands of his generals.

■ [The Maccabean Revolt](#)

In 167 BC Jewish sacrifice was forbidden by their Greek overlords. Sabbaths and feasts were banned and circumcision was outlawed.

Altars to Greek gods were set up and animals prohibited to Jews were sacrificed on them. The statue of Zeus was placed on the altar of the Temple. Possession of Jewish scriptures was made a capital offence. This sparked the Maccabean Revolt led by Mattathias, and later his son Judas Maccabeus.

■ [Herod the Great](#)

Herod, born in 73 BC, was the eldest son of Antipater, an Idumean. Herod's father, was an Idumean ruler who constantly sought the friendship of the Romans. When Pompey captured Jerusalem in 63 BC, he left Hyrcanus in charge of Judea with Antipater as the chief minister. Antipater then plotted to put himself and his family into a position of greater power.

■ [Herod and Mark Antony](#)

After Pompey's death, Antipater quickly changed his allegiance to Julius Caesar. His son, Herod, developed a friendship with Mark Antony, a leading general under Julius Caesar.

Later Herod helped Mark Antony by supplying food and water to his soldiers while he was on a battle campaign in Egypt. He gave Antony much money to buy his support. In return, Mark Antony obtained a decree from the Senate in Rome to declare Herod as Rome's vassal king of Galilee. In 37 BC, Herod became king of Galilee, Samaria, Judea and Jerusalem, and other nearby territories. He married Mariamne I, granddaughter of Hyrcanus, to gain acceptance by the Jews. Josephus recorded that she was his favourite wife out of 10 wives

■ [Herod and Caesar](#)

Later, when war broke out between Antony and Octavian Caesar, Herod was caught in a dilemma. Should he support his old friend Antony or the new Caesar? After he learnt that Antony and Cleopatra had been defeated at the battle of Actium on 2nd September 31 BC, Herod very quickly surrendered himself and his kingdom to Octavian (later known as Augustus) Caesar.

He declared his undivided loyalty to the new Caesar, and even furnished him with soldiers and supplies for his campaigns. Caesar saw the usefulness of Herod and confirmed his 'kingship' over the provinces given to him at first by Mark Antony.

■ Octavian Caesar

Octavian was the nephew of Julius Caesar. Caesar had named him his heir. Together with Mark Antony, he defeated Brutus and the other people who had murdered Julius Caesar. However, later, he went to war with Mark Antony who was helped by Queen Cleopatra of Egypt. After having defeated Mark Antony and Cleopatra at the battle of Actium, Octavian then became the emperor of Rome and took the name of Augustus Caesar.

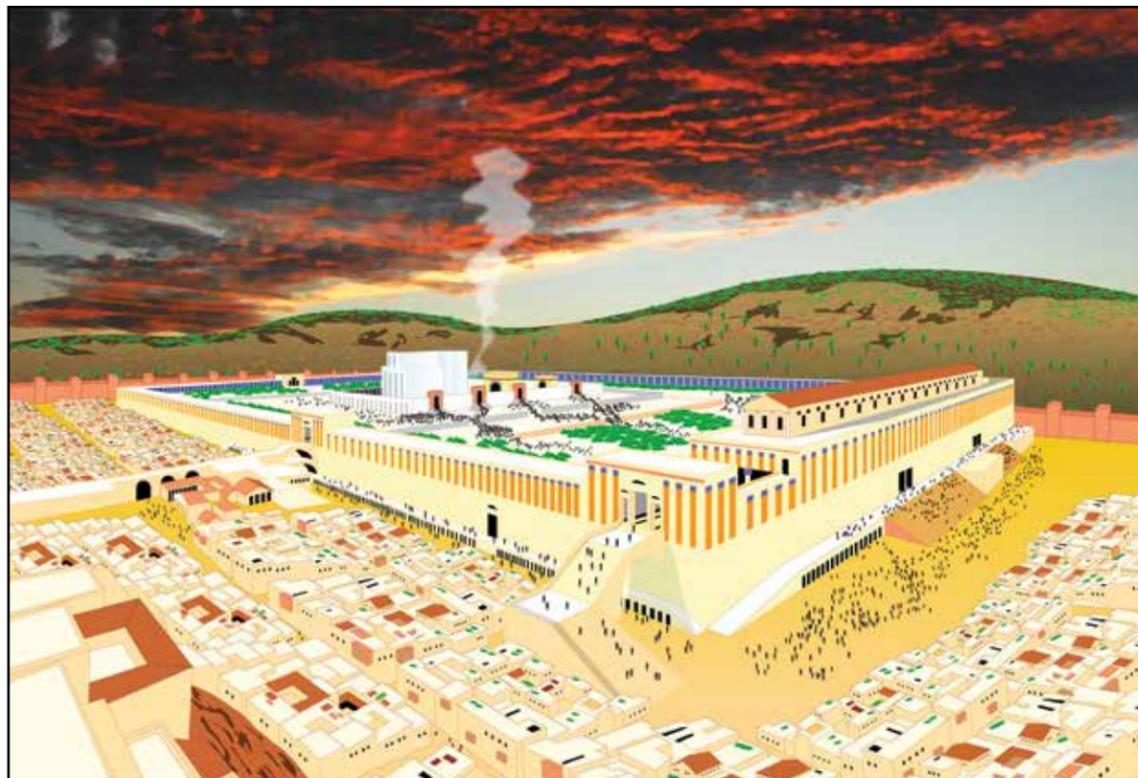
■ Herod's Building Projects

Having strengthened his position as political ruler, Herod then turned his attention to his building programs. He is famous for having built many buildings and cities that remain to this day. The fortress of Masada; Caesarea by the Sea, named in honour of Augustus Caesar and many other cities.

His most famous building project however was the rebuilding of the Second Temple in Jerusalem. He did this to please the Jews. While the Jews admired the Temple, they certainly were not happy with Herod, because of the heavy taxes he imposed on them for his building projects.

Second Temple

According to some sources, Herod was told to build the Temple to show his repentance for having many rabbis killed earlier on in his life when he was struggling for power. Some of the stones of Herod's Temple may have been recycled from Solomon's First Temple. These stones were found with Phoenician lettering. In contrast, columns made for Herod's Temple were engraved with Hebrew lettering of the Aramaic variety to tell the workers how to assemble the pieces of the columns.



■ Herod the Murderer

Herod was also a violent man. He killed anyone whom he suspected was after his throne. Using this as an excuse he murdered his wife Mariamne I, who was a Hasmonean Jewess, her brother, and three of his own sons. He was a tyrant ruler of his kingdom.

Today, most Bible scholars and historians would agree that the birth of Jesus occurred around 4-6 BC. Some time later, Magi from the east, following the star, arrived in Bethlehem looking for the Messiah. Imagine how Herod must have felt when the Magi told him they had come to Jerusalem to look for the one who would become the 'King of the Jews'! (Matt 2:2).

Feeling very threatened by the presence of the child Messiah, he murdered the children of Bethlehem. He died very shortly after committing this crime in Bethlehem, sometime in 4 BC, of a disease that caused him great pain and discomfort.

■ After the death of Herod the Great

After Herod's death, the kingdom was divided among his sons, Philip, Herod Antipas, and Archelaus. Judea was ruled by Archelaus who was a wicked king. Joseph and Mary, on their return from Egypt, when they heard that Archelaus was king of Judea, decided to avoid being his subject, and went to live in Nazareth, Galilee (Matt 2:22).

Herod Antipas was the Tetrarch (local ruler of a quarter of a kingdom) of Galilee. This is told to us in Matthew 2:22 - 23. It is in this environment, that Jesus spent His childhood as He grew up in Nazareth.

(references: Herod "the Great" by Gretchen S.,
New Lion HandBook to the Bible by Zondervan, pp. 627,
New Testament Times by Merrill C. Tenney, pp. 47 - 66