

THE  
DISCIPLESHIP  
PLACE

Telling the New Testament  
Story of God



**SESSION 7**

The Historical, Social, and Religious Settings of the  
First Century, Greco-Roman World

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# The Historical, Social, and Religious Settings of the First Century, Greco-Roman World

## SESSION OVERVIEW

**Historical Setting of the First Century, Greco-Roman World**

**Public, Social Climate of the First Century, Greco-Roman World**

**Social and Religious Setting of the First Century, Greco-Roman World**

**Application**

**Exam**

**Discussion Guide for Mentor and Participant**

## LEARNER OBJECTIVES

At the end of this session, you should:

- understand the historical events and public, social climate of the first century and their impact on the spread of Christianity.
- understand the social and religious settings of the first century and their impact on the spread of Christianity.
- understand the setting for the development of the Early Church.
- use this historical, social, and religious data as a basis for interpreting the New Testament.

# The Historical, Social, and Religious Settings of the First Century, Greco-Roman World

## INTRODUCTION

While Christianity began within the folds of Judaism, by the close of the first century AD, the Church would be primarily comprised of Gentiles, largely as a result of Paul and other Christian missionaries (Session 8). Paul's ministry and message placed him at odds with the Greco-Roman society in which he lived. This was a syncretistic society or one marked by the blending of various religious and philosophical systems and outlooks. Contrary to popular belief, it was an age generally tolerant of diverse beliefs and practices. What was not tolerated, however, was intolerance itself. As Christianity entered the world scene, it ran into problems through its exclusiveness and viewing itself as representing the one true God and system of belief and practice. As it differentiated itself from Judaism, thus being a new religion, it was not afforded the freedoms granted the Jews. As a result, persecution would at times result.

What was the nature of this Greco-Roman society? What key persons and events formed and shaped this society? What was life like in this society? How was society structured? How important was religion? What role did it place in society and what forms did it take? To such issues, we now turn beginning with a review of certain persons and events leading up to the first century itself.

## HISTORICAL SETTING OF THE FIRST CENTURY, GRECO-ROMAN WORLD



### NOTES

#### HERODIAN PERIOD (63 BC–AD 66)

##### *Antipater II (63-37 BC)*

Antipater II was the father of Herod the Great. His official title was ethnarch, which means a local governor or prince of Palestine. He was given this position in 47 BC because of his military support of Julius Caesar. The Hasmonean kings continued to take care of the more Jewish issues and serve as high priests, but they were no longer recognized as the only power in Palestine.

Julius Caesar, also because of Antipater's support, made Judaism a *religio licita* (legal religion), which meant Jews had freedom of religion, did not have to make pagan sacrifices, they could keep the Sabbath, and their Torahs were sacred and could not be desecrated by even a Roman ruler. This religious privilege was extended to Christianity as long as it was recognized as part of Judaism, probably into the 70s and 80s. During this time the ruling power of the Jews was divided between client kings (Antipater) and high priests (former Hasmonean king). Rome appointed both of these positions during the 1st century AD. So not only were the kings appointed by a pagan empire, but also the Jewish high priests were appointed by the Romans.

##### *Herod the Great (37-4 BC)*

Again, by way of review, remember that Herod was called the King of the Jews when Jesus was born. His kingdom included Judea, Idumea (Edom), Perea, and Galilee. Herod was an able and intelligent ruler who is known for his numerous building projects. One of his most noteworthy accomplishments was the rebuilding of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem. A popular saying of the time was, "Whoever has not seen Herod's building, has never seen anything beautiful." In addition, whenever, there was a calamity such as an earthquake, Herod was there to provide food and clothing. In spite of his positive attributes, however, Herod was a ruthless ruler who never gained acceptance by the Jews who viewed him as a half-Jew and friend of the Romans.

His vicious personality was known even to the Roman emperor. Augustus Caesar said of him: "It is better to be Herod's pig (*hus*) than his son (*huios*)". This comment came as a result of Herod's actions toward his own family members. He drowned his son-in-law, assassinated two of his sons, strangled his wife, had his eldest son




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executed five days before his own death, and left orders that upon his death all the leaders be executed so there would be mourning in the land at his funeral. Fortunately, this final order was not carried out.

Herod ruled under Octavian or Augustus Caesar (31 BC-AD 14) who decreed the census at the time of the birth of Jesus. Augustus Caesar was somewhat of a moral reformer, making laws that encouraged marriage, and having children, and discouraged adultery and divorce.

#### *Kingdom Divided Between Three Sons After Herod's Death Around 4 BC*

You will remember that Herod's kingdom was divided between his three sons Archelaus, Antipas, and Philip.

- Archelaus ruled from 4 BC to AD 6 over Judea, Idumea, and Samaria. He was a ruthless ruler, whose tyrannical rule incensed the Jews and the Samaritans, so Archelaus was deposed and exiled to Vienne in the Rhone Valley.
- Antipas ruled over Galilee and Perea from 4 BC-AD 39. After Archelaus' exile he also ruled Samaria, Judea, and Idumea. He was an astute politician like his father and he maintained his position with his own army. Herod Antipas was known for his "slyness," love of women, and the building of Sepphoris and Tiberius in Galilee. Jesus called him "that sly fox." Antipas is also known for ordering the beheading of John the Baptist (see Mark 6:14-29).
- Philip ruled from 4 BC to AD 34 over a small area west of the Upper Jordan and a larger area east of the Jordan. He rebuilt and enlarged a small town, Paneion, and called it Caesarea or Caesarea Philippi. He also rebuilt Bethsaida as his winter residence, and called it Julias after Augustus' daughter Julia. He was a moderate and tolerant ruler who ruled mostly Gentiles and so did not have as many of the Jewish problems as his brothers did.

These three Herodian kings ruled under Emperor Tiberius (AD 14-37), cited in Luke 3:1 as ruling at the time of Jesus' baptism.

#### *Agrippa I (AD 37-44)*

After Herod Antipas died, King Agrippa I (see Acts 12:19-23), grandson of Herod the Great, ultimately became king over all Palestine. He ruled under Emperors Caligula (AD 37-41), who tried to erect a statue of himself in the Temple in


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Jerusalem in AD 41; and Claudius (AD 41-54), who expelled all Jews from Rome for disturbances at the instigation of a man named Chrestus, which many scholars think may be a reference to *christos* or Christ in Greek.

*Agrippa II (AD 44-66)*

King Agrippa II followed (see Acts 26:28), ruling over Palestine and having the power to appoint the high priest. He shared power with Felix from 52 to 60, the Roman governor of Judea whose wife was Drusilla, a great granddaughter of Herod the Great, and with Porcius Festus from 50 to 62 who followed Felix, the Roman governor of Judea. He is the king to whom Paul gave his defense and who said to Paul, “Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?”

*First Jewish Revolt and Destruction of Jerusalem (AD 66-70)*

The end of the Herodian dynasty coincided with the beginning of the first Jewish revolt. The emperor of the revolt was Nero, who ruled Rome from AD 54-68. He is also the emperor who, in AD 64, blamed the fire of Rome on Christians and brought about the first organized persecution of Christians. But Nero died before the revolt ended and Vespasian was called back from his fight with the Jews to become emperor in 68.

Vespasian ruled from 68 to 79 and was in power during the destruction of Jerusalem and the burning of the Temple. When he died, Titus became emperor and ruled from 79 to 81. Titus’s claim to fame was that he was the Roman general who conquered and destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70.

Emperor Domitian ruled from 81 to 96 and is credited with decreeing the first official persecution of the Christians throughout the Roman Empire. From the Council of Jamnia in AD 90 on, the Jews identified themselves as separate from Christians. They closed or confirmed the Old Testament canon and became a religion of the Law (Torah) because the Temple was destroyed. So this persecution by Domitian did not include the Jews, since Judaism was still a *religio licita* or religion given a legalized status.

The emperors of Nerva (AD 96-98) and Trajan (AD 98-117) continued to carry out similar policies, but there was also growing unrest among the Jews during this time. It was during the reign of Emperor Hadrian (AD 117-138) the second Jewish War occurred under the rebel leader Bar Cochba, a messianic zealot who fought the Romans AD 132-135. This rebellion led to the destruction of Jerusalem, again. It was rebuilt as a Roman city with a temple dedicated to Jupiter. Hadrian expelled the Jews from Jerusalem and banned them from ever entering the city again. He renamed Judea as Palestina and Jerusalem as Aelia Capitolina in AD 135.

## PUBLIC, SOCIAL CLIMATE OF THE FIRST CENTURY, GRECO-ROMAN WORLD

### NOTES

#### SOCIAL CLASSES

In the Roman world, there was a sharp contrast between the rich and the poor. There was a small middle class, and the slaves were at the bottom as far as status was concerned. The slaves' quality of life depended greatly upon their masters. Some slaves of aristocratic households enjoyed what we might call a wealthy lifestyle; however, they were not free to do as they pleased. Slaves outnumbered the free and this was a cause for concern. Many feared the possibility of slave riots.

The Roman class system was very explicit and complicated, but there were the aristocrats, the freedmen, and the slaves. Economically, there were primarily two classes, rich and poor. But some self-made merchants and trades people could be considered an economic middle class. Jewish society had minimal extreme poverty—except during times of famine and revolt—and was a two-class system with chief priests and leading rabbis in the upper class. Farmers, artisans, and businesspeople made up the broad middle class. Tax collectors became wealthy but were despised as collaborators with the Romans, extortionists, and oppressors of the poor.

The *Am ha-Aretz*, people of the land, or common people, were the largest group in this Hellenistic, Jewish society. They worked hard to make ends meet, had little political power, and tried to please God the best they could in view of their circumstances.

When we look at the Pauline letters, we discover a mixture of social statuses. Christians were both Jewish and Gentile but they also included different occupations, genders, and economic levels.

- Craftspeople, traders, and merchants, like Paul and most of the apostles, seem to predominate. Unlike the Gentiles, the Jews felt it was honorable and important to learn a trade, or to work with one's hands. Every Jewish boy was taught a trade whether or not he used it during his life.
- We find references to both slaves and masters, like Onesimus and Philemon.
- There were also *wealthy Christians*, with perhaps Theophilus being an example of a patron for Luke. Of course, others who had homes big enough in which to host Christian churches. And there were the poor,




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probably exemplified best by the widows mentioned in Acts 6:1. Widows without adult children to support them would ordinarily be destitute. The Early Church looked after the needs of these women.

- Counted among the Christians were public officials like Erasmus (Rom. 16:23). They were probably not a large percentage of the Christian Church, but certainly an influential part.
- Especially contrary to Jewish practice, we find women were actively involved in the Early Church. The Gentile world more readily accepted the role of women in the religious sphere because religion to them could also be a private event, hosted in homes. For the Jews, religious practice was usually a public event in the synagogue or Temple worship. Priscilla was a prominent Jewish-Christian woman who, along with her husband Aquila, was probably exiled from Rome during the time of Nero. Priscilla was actively involved in discipling Apollos.

## ENTERTAINMENT

Gladiatorial shows in the arena were very popular, which usually ended in the death of men and animals. Violence in entertainment is not a new thing. Sports heroes were winners of the chariot races and Olympic athletes.

Theater shows took place during the day, usually during the siesta time of the early afternoon because without electricity, it was very difficult to see at night! Interestingly, actors were not considered good marriage material: "A senator, or his son, or his grandson, or his great-grandson, by his son, or grandson, shall not knowingly or with malicious intent become betrothed to, or marry a freed woman or a woman whose father or mother practices, or has practiced the profession of an actor." Music and literature were highly honored and supported by wealthy patrons.

## BUSINESS AND LABOR

Trade guilds with patron deities functioned like trade unions, with benefits for widows and orphans and burial. Some regulated working days and hours. They provided a welcome place for workers who had to live away from their hometowns and extended families.

Industry was limited to small, local shops and home industry. Apparently, Paul would work with other tentmakers or leather-workers in their local shops to pay for his room and board as he evangelized. Compared to overland caravans, shipping was expensive and risky. But sometimes it was the only way to transport goods and people. Agricultural practices were quite highly developed and

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included fertilization, seed selection, use of pesticides, and crop rotation. All kinds of modern banking services were available, and interest rates varied from 4 to 12 percent.

**SCIENCE AND MEDICINE**

Jews were not interested in science during this period. They were an occupied people with no time or money for interests outside of providing food, clothing, and shelter for their families. In the Greco-Roman world, medicine, surgery, and dentistry were widely practiced, but there was no anesthetic. Among the Greeks and Romans mathematics and astronomy were highly developed.

## SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS SETTING OF THE FIRST CENTURY, GRECO-ROMAN WORLD

### NOTES

#### EVERYDAY LIFE ISSUES IN ROMAN PALESTINE

##### *Meals*

Romans tended to eat four meals a day, perhaps reflecting a more urban lifestyle. Most Jews ate two meals a day, one at noon and one at night, reflecting a more rural lifestyle or one in which the men worked away from home for most of the day. The main meal for both groups was at night. This night meal usually took two to three hours to eat and was combined with long conversations. After all, there was not much else one could do after it got dark, with no electricity and only oil lamplights to see by.

The common people ate largely a vegetarian diet with meat only rarely. The wealthier one was, the more often one could afford meat. For the common people meat came to be associated with religious feast days when the food was provided by the wealthy. This is perhaps an important social background to the strong and the weak in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians (Session 8). The strong being the wealthy that did not associate eating meat with religious festivals and the weak being the poor whose few times of eating meat were at pagan religious festivals. The people of this period sat for informal meals and reclined on cushions at formal meals.

##### *Clothing and Styles*

The men wore tunics extending to the knees with a belt or sash at the waist and a scarf on the head. They would wear a cloak for warmth. Togas were reserved only for Roman citizens to wear. It was illegal for a non-Roman to wear one. Women wore a short under-tunic and a colored, outer tunic extending to the feet, and sometimes cosmetics, earrings, and nose ornaments. Married women covered their head with a veil when they went out in public.

Non-Jewish males kept their hair short, and they shaved. Jewish men grew beards and longer hair. Women's hair was generally kept long and worn in a bun after marriage. Some prostitutes and *hetaerae* (mistresses or female entertainers) would cut their hair short.


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*The Family*

As we mentioned earlier, Caesar Augustus was somewhat of a moral reformer. He recognized there was a low birth rate and high divorce rate among Greco-Romans, and especially among the aristocrats. He felt this was endangering the power and influence of the ruling class, so he enacted the Augustan Social Laws:

- “In 18 BC, the Emperor Augustus turned his attention to social problems at Rome. Luxury and adultery were widespread. Among the upper classes, marriage was increasingly infrequent and, for couples who did marry, childlessness was common. Augustus was interested in raising both the morals and the numbers of the upper classes in Rome, and in increasing the population of native Italians in Italy. He enacted sumptuary laws, laws against adultery, and laws which encouraged marriage and having children.”
- “The law against adultery (*lex Iulia de adulteris coercendis*) made the offense a crime punishable by exile and confiscation of property. Fathers were permitted to kill daughters and their partners in adultery. Husbands could kill their partner under certain circumstances [e.g. when he finds him in his own house] and were required to divorce adulterous wives.” Augustus eventually had to invoke this law against his own daughter, Julia. He exiled her to the island of Pandateria.
- “The Augustan social laws were badly received, and the emperor, years later, modified them. The *lex Papia Poppeae*, enacted in AD 9, softened slightly the rigidity of the earlier legislation (*lex Iulia de maritandis ordinibus*.)” The law was named after the two consuls of that year, both bachelors. The laws were never officially repealed, but they were never really successful either.
- There were prizes for marriage and children. “He [Augustus] laid heavier assessment upon the unmarried men and women and on the other hand offered prizes for marriage and the begetting of children. And since among the nobility there were far more males than females, he allowed all [free men] who wished, except senators, to marry freedwomen, and ordered that their offspring should be held legitimate.”

In Palestine and among the Jewish population, the extended family was the basic unit with large nuclear families. Deformed and many female babies were unwanted and many were exposed—left outside the walls of the city for animals to kill and eat—or killed and disposed of upon birth. An early Christian compassionate ministry was the collection of these children and the forming of orphanages.


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Jewish male babies were circumcised and named on the eighth day. Non-Jewish babies had to be recognized as legitimate by the father before being named. There were no family surnames, but individuals were identified by the name of their father (Simon the son of Zebedee), occupation (Simon the Tanner), or other designation (Simon the Zealot).

The average marriageable age for Roman women was 12, with their husbands ranging between 30 and 50 years old. The concern here was that all the children born to this woman would belong only to the husband. Wives were chaperoned whenever they left the house. Average marriageable age for Jewish women was 13-14 years old with their husbands ranging between 25-50 years old. Engagements, which were sometimes referred to as marriage, could take place as much as 10 years earlier. Note the difference between Matt.1:24-25 (married) and Luke 2:5 (engaged) on the relationship of Joseph and Mary at the birth of Jesus. Jews generally waited until after the woman menstruated, because the Jewish value shifted slightly from chastity (although this was also a very important issue) to the ability to have children. So they would be concerned that the woman was normal.

Roman husbands had the power of life or death over their wives and children. Examples from law: "The offspring then of you and your wife is in your power, and so too is that of your son and his wife, that is to say, your grandson and granddaughter, and so on. But the offspring of your daughter is not in your power, but in that of its own father" (*Patria potesta*, the power of the father). This father's right of life and death also extended over any man who committed adultery with his daughter.

### *Morals*

The Greco-Roman gods were guilty of every type of immorality and as such were not high moral examples. This was in stark contrast to the God of the Jews, who demanded a very high level of morality. Acceptable Greco-Roman sexual practices included: Temple prostitution as part of worship, use of street prostitutes and *hetaerae* (educated and talented women who entertained at banquets), bisexuality, and pederasty (men and boys had sexual relationships generally as part of the mentoring process of bringing the boy into his station in society).

This was in stark contrast to the Jewish sexual practices of the first century. Temple prostitution, bisexuality, and homosexuality were abhorrent to the Jewish mind. Sex outside of marriage was prohibited for both respectable Greco-Roman and Jewish women, but there are conflicting views on whether it was considered proper for a Jewish man to have relations with a prostitute.


**NOTES**

Slaves had no rights and could be abused or murdered at will. Runaway slaves could be punished by branding or death. Under the Romans, slavery was not based on racial prejudice according to the modern understanding. In the first century AD Roman Empire, about 10 per cent of the population was slaves. The primary source of slaves was prisoners of Rome's numerous and successful wars. While some slaves had difficult living circumstances, some rose to prominent positions in society. For example, Epictetus who was a Stoic philosopher began his life as a slave and later corresponded with the Roman emperor Hadrian.

### COMPETING RELIGIONS AND PHILOSOPHIES

Jews were known as abstainers from the imperial cult, but many during this period admired their religion. The ancientness of its Scriptures and traditions was highly admired. In terms of religions and philosophical systems in the ancient world, old was better. In addition, the sense of community characterized by the synagogue was not found anywhere else in ancient Greco-Roman religion.

Christians were generally unnoticed by the broader Roman society. They were generally seen as a small, peculiar, anti-social, and irreligious group of people who were from the lower strata of society. A second century AD letter between Pliny the Younger and the Roman emperor Trajan throws light on this issue. Pliny was sent by Trajan to deal with problems in the province of Bithynia-Pontus. Pliny writes to Trajan asking guidance on what to do about Christians. Pliny views Christians as those who do not participate in broader society, have no respect for traditional worship and the gods, possibly participate in criminal behavior, have no interest in discussions with educated people, and come from the lower social classes. Some Romans viewed Christians as atheists because of their disbelief in the gods and goddesses affirmed by others.

#### *Religions*

- *Roman Traditional Religion.* The traditional religion of the Roman Empire was largely the result of modifications to the gods of classical Greek tradition. There was a blending of Greek and Roman deities with many aspects of Greek religion being taken up by the Romans. For example, Zeus (Greek name) becomes Jupiter (Roman name) and Athena (Greek name) becomes Minerva (Roman name). In Lystra, Barnabas was called Zeus, probably because he was the oldest and Paul was called Hermes because he was the chief spokesperson (Acts 14:12).

The gods were extremely important to the Romans. R. M. Ogilvie states: "The chief feature, then, of Roman religion was the belief that all the important processes in the world were divinely activated and, conversely,




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that different gods had charge of particular functions and spheres of activity.” For example, Vesta was the god of fire and Ceres the god of agriculture. The gods were thought of in terms of their social functions. Proper interactions and respect for the gods was important for the well-being of society. This interaction primarily took place through sacrifice and prayer. While moral virtue was not important in service of the gods, the proper and precise performance of rituals was.

- *Emperor Worship.* This was required by the state, of all persons—except for Jews because of the special position of their religion as a *religio licita*—but was more of a political acknowledgment than a source of hope. Emperor worship helped incorporate provinces into the empire through the worship of Rome and the emperor.

The emperor was the chief priest for the worship of the Roman gods and so emperor worship was intertwined with the Greek and Roman mythology. They believed dead emperors became deities, and eventually living emperors (Caligula) declared themselves deities to be worshiped.

In terms of the worship experience itself, the emperor cult was not concerned with personal devotion, but rather civic obedience. Whether or not one believed the emperor to be a god, it was essential to treat him as such. Generally, all that was expected of citizens was to avoid work, keep the peace, and offer sacrifice to the emperor on designated occasions. Emperor worship served, therefore, as a political instrument. Christians’ refusal to participate in this worship would lead to their persecution.

- *Mystery Religions.* These were more informal religious groups that met the need for personal involvement and devotion, salvation, afterlife, health, and welfare. Participation in these religions was voluntary. Greek, Egyptian, and Oriental in origin, these religions featured secret initiation, baptism, and blood sprinkling for purification, trances (spirit possession), tongues, and sacramental meals. Because of the similarities in worship styles and practices, Christianity was sometimes lumped with the mystery religions in pagan literature. Examples of these religions include the Eleusian cult, the cult of Osiris-Isis, and the cult of Mithras (popular with Roman soldiers). The mystery religions were highly competitive with Christianity during the life and ministry of Paul and other Christian missionaries.
- *Superstitions.* Astrology and magic were practiced by all classes and by both Jews and Greco-Romans, and probably some Christians, although they were not considered proper for a good Jew or Christian to practice.


**NOTES**
*Philosophical Schools*

- *Neo-Platonism* was the prevailing philosophy that served as a foundation for the different schools of the first century. The two main ideas that affected their worldview were:
  - Mind over body. The mind could control the body and its desires.
  - Body (matter) is not important and only houses the soul, which is always looking for a way to go back to the forms, the essence of what is. This is why the bodily resurrection the Pharisees and the Christians advocated was so undesirable for the Greco-Romans. They could not understand why anyone would want to have a resurrected body, when the goal of the soul was to escape the body (Acts 17:16-34).
- *Epicurean School*. The motto of the Epicureans was: Withdraw from society and do not worry about it. They sought to avoid pain and seek pleasure that endures throughout life, the serenity of the soul and intellectual pleasure. A famous Epicurean slogan is, “Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die.” Although the pleasure usually associated with Epicureans is sensual pleasure, the most accurate understanding of this group is seeking pleasure that endures, such as serenity of the soul and intellectual pleasure. Overeating and drinking too much ultimately produces pain, so these are not truly something to be sought after. Moderation in these things brings true pleasure. Paul converses with these philosophers (as well as the Stoics) in Acts 17:18-34.
- *Stoic School*: The duty of the stoic was to remain in society and put up with life. Their philosophy had a sense of fatalism as in the song: *Que sera, sera*, (what will be, will be)! To be content a person must conform to nature and maintain harmony and balance in life. Reason was emphasized over emotion in the living out of one’s life. The modern idea that we cannot control our circumstances, but we can control our attitudes would be a good stoic idea. Above all, the stoic would say that to be happy one must: Do your duty! Much concern was placed on ethics or living a life according to certain moral standards.

*Cynicism*

The cynic stepped outside the boundaries of society and judged it from without. These people lived a simple life on the fringes of society, and rejected the comforts of affluence and prestige. Many of the famous cynics were wealthy men

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who gave up their wealth as a protest against society. The term cynic means dog, a dirty, despicable animal, not your pet poodle! Many cynics called attention to their message of cultural and social critique by antisocial behavior, such as urinating in public.

*Skepticism*

The skeptic, like the stoic, remains in society, but suspends judgment on society. A skeptic believed absolute truth was unattainable because reason could not penetrate into the true meaning of things. It could only understand what it appeared to mean. A good skeptic slogan would be: Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

## APPLICATION

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### NOTES

1. Using study Bibles, Bible dictionaries, or Internet websites (Biblical Studies Foundation <http://www.netbible.com>; Blue Letter Bible <http://www.blueletterbible.org>; or Crosswalk.com Bible Study Tools <http://bible.crosswalk.com>), locate the geographic areas associated with the rules of Herod the Great (Judea, Idumea, Perea, and Galilee), Archelaus (Judea, Idumea, and Samaria), Antipas (Galilee and Perea), and Philip (a small area west of the upper Jordan and a larger area east of the Jordan).
2. Read an encyclopedia article on the myths of the Greeks and Romans. Identify the major Greco-Roman gods and goddesses and what areas of life for which they were responsible (see Internet sources above).
3. Look up mystery religions of the Greeks and Romans and identify the most popular ones. What kinds of things were people looking for in these mystery religions (see Internet sources above)?

## EXAM



### NOTES

1. Because of \_\_\_\_\_ support, Julius Caesar granted the Jews freedom of religion.
  - A. Herod the Great's
  - B. Antipater II's
  - C. Herod Antipas'
  - D. Philip's
2. The Roman general \_\_\_\_\_ is credited with conquering and destroying Jerusalem in AD 70.
  - A. Nerva
  - B. Hadrian
  - C. Vespasian
  - D. Titus
3. \_\_\_\_\_ was the King of Judea who ruled when Jesus was born. He was ruthless toward all who opposed him.
  - A. Archelaus
  - B. Herod Antipas
  - C. Nero
  - D. Herod the Great
4. At the command of \_\_\_\_\_, John the Baptist was beheaded.
  - A. Herod the Great
  - B. Domitian
  - C. Herod Antipas
  - D. Hadrian
5. \_\_\_\_\_ is infamous for blaming the fire in Rome on Christians (AD 64) and ordering their persecution.
  - A. Nero
  - B. Vespasian
  - C. Domitian
  - D. Titus
6. The *Am ha-Aretz*, people of the land or common people were the largest group in Jewish society. They had little interest in serving God, but were simply concerned with their own survival.
  - A. True
  - B. False

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7. Contrary to Jewish practice, we find women were actively involved in the Early Church.
  - A. True
  - B. False
  
8. Unlike the Gentiles, the Jews believed it was honorable and important to learn a trade, or to work with one's hands even if that trade was not used later in life.
  - A. True
  - B. False
  
9. Both Jews and Romans tended to have their primary or main meal at night.
  - A. True
  - B. False
  
10. The average marriageable age for Jewish women was \_\_\_\_\_ years old.
  - A. 10-11
  - B. 12
  - C. 13-14
  - D. 16-17
  
11. The sexual ethic and practices of the Greco-Roman world were embraced by most Jews during the time of Jesus.
  - A. True
  - B. False
  
12. Emperor worship was required by the state.
  - A. True
  - B. False
  
13. The Christian hope for resurrection from the dead was particularly attractive to the Greco-Romans.
  - A. True
  - B. False
  
14. The saying, "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die" is sometimes credited to the \_\_\_\_\_.
  - A. Roman traditional religions
  - B. Neo-Platonists
  - C. Skeptics
  - D. Epicureans



## DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR MENTOR AND PARTICIPANT

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**NOTES**

Be prepared to discuss the following with your mentor.

1. If you were going to start a worldwide organization, what would be the characteristics of an ideal setting to start this organization in?
2. What differences do you see between the pagan religions and philosophies of the first century and Christianity?
3. What similarities do you see?
4. Where do you think misunderstandings would develop in the communication of the gospel to these pagan Gentiles?
5. Do we have any similar problems in our modern situation? If so, what? If not, why not?
6. How would you characterize the political and social atmosphere of the first century AD? Relate this to:
  - the Jewish concept of Messiah.
  - Joseph's decision to return to Nazareth rather than Bethlehem.
  - the death of John the Baptist.
  - Peter and Paul's deaths in the mid-sixties.