

4) The Roman Trials Of Jesus Christ

- A) Jesus is first taken to the Praetorium (John 18:28), Pontius Pilate's official residence in Jerusalem, built as a great palace by Herod the Great. The Jews avoid entering the palace to keep themselves ritually clean (18:28).

- B) Pilate interrogates Jesus Christ (18:33-38a) regarding the charge of 'sedition and rebellion' (claiming to be King, inciting the populace to rebel (Luke 23:14), placing him in direct opposition to Emperor Tiberius, the successor to Augustus).

- C) Pilate finds no fault in Jesus Christ (John 18:38b), but does discover that Jesus is from Nazareth, a town in the Galilean region, governed by Herod Antipas. Herod is also in town for the Passover festival, so Pilate sends Jesus to Herod in hopes that Herod will deal with this "regional" issue (Luke 23:6-12).

- D) Herod Antipas is not interested in interrogating Jesus, but rather wants Jesus to perform a miracle for his amusement (Luke 23:8-10). Jesus doesn't speak with Herod, so Herod sends Him back to Pilate (23:11).

- E) Pilate, knowing the religious leaders have selfish motivations, and under pressure from his wife not to harm Jesus (Matthew 27:18-19) decides to attempt two 'last ditch' efforts to save Jesus Christ from death.
 - i) Pilate has Jesus flogged to near death (John 19:1-5).
 - ii) Pilate attempts to barter for Christ's life with a known and hated criminal, Barabbas (Luke 23:18-25).

- F) Under direct political pressure to support Tiberius Caesar (John 19:12), Pontius Pilate "washed his hands" of Jesus Christ (Matthew 27:24) and sentenced him to death by crucifixion (John 19:13-15).

Jesus Was A Lousy Politician

Long Beach Alliance Church • October 23rd, 2005 • Pastor Chris Lankford

**WHEN PILATE SAW THAT HE WAS ACCOMPLISHING NOTHING, BUT RATHER THAT A RIOT WAS STARTING, HE TOOK WATER AND WASHED HIS HANDS IN FRONT OF THE CROWD, SAYING, "I AM INNOCENT OF THIS MAN'S BLOOD; SEE TO THAT YOURSELVES."
~MATTHEW 27:24 (NASB)**

1) The Religious Milieu Of Jesus Christ

- A) At the time of Christ, there were several different religious groups which had power and influence in Jerusalem*. The Pharisees were the most condemned by Christ (Matthew 3:7, 5:20, 23:13-29; Mark 8:15; Luke 11:37-54; John 9:41).

- B) Jesus was also critical of the Scribes (the Jewish equivalent of lawyers) and the Sadducees (Matthew 3:7, 16:6), but did not associate with these groups as often as the Pharisees because of their connection to wealth and aristocracy.

- C) Jesus doesn't comment much (or at all) on the other groups who were 'on the scene' at the time of His ministry (Essenes, Herodians, Zealots, etc.).

- D) The Jewish leadership was led by the High Priest, a man named Caiaphas (cf. Matthew 26:3). The Roman government required a 'rotation' of the Jewish High Priest, so that no one High Priest could become too powerful.
- E) Despite Caiaphas' power as the acting High Priest, his father-in-law, Annas, was recognized as the actual High Priest. Caiaphas had the power, but Annas had the influence (cf. John 18:13-14).

2) The Political Milieu Of Jesus Christ

- A) At the time of Christ's birth (Luke 2:1-5), most of the civilized world was under the rule of Rome[†] and Caesar Augustus, who instituted the famed *Pax Romana*[‡].
- B) Under *Pax Romana*, Caesar Augustus established different provinces which were ultimately answerable to the Roman Senate, the center of the Roman governmental system.
- C) The province of Palestine was initially ruled by Herod the Great^Ω (from 37-4 B.C.). He was named King of the province by the Senate (40-39 B.C.), as long as he could subdue the area by force (which he was able to secure by 37 B.C.).
- D) Herod placed his sons in control of Palestine as he neared his death, dividing the Roman province into three separate areas.

† The Roman Empire was a sprawling domain which extended from modern-day Ireland and Great Britain down to Northern Africa, up through Israel and extended North to Azerbaijan and then West again toward Poland and Germany.

‡ *Pax Romana*, Latin for "Roman Peace," was the period from 27 B.C. (Caesar Augustus) through 180 A.D. (Marcus Aurelius) when Roman rule was its most stable. It was the vision of Rome, through *Pax Romana*, to bring peace to the world and a better, more stable lifestyle for all Roman citizens.

- E) Fearing Archelaus (the ruler over the Judean/Samaria area of Palestine -- Matthew 2:22-23), Joseph and Mary return to Nazareth from their Egyptian exile, settling in the Galilean region ruled by Herod Antipas (another of Herod's sons).
- F) Archelaus was so inept at ruling, that Caesar Augustus removed him from power (6 A.D.) and replaced him with a Roman governor. Some years later, Tiberius Caesar appointed Pontius Pilate (26 A.D.) as the governor of the Judean region.

3) The Arrest And Trials Of Jesus Christ

- A) The plot of the Pharisees and Sadducees, already approved by the Sanhedrin (John 11:47-53) was combined with the security of Roman troops to seize Jesus Christ (John 18:12).
- B) Jesus is taken through two series of trials (one series is religious, the other series was Roman/political). The result of both series of trials is that Jesus is sentenced to death. The Roman trials determine that Christ should die by crucifixion.
- C) Remarkably, Jesus is sentenced to die by crucifixion, despite being found innocent by Pontius Pilate (John 18:38, 19:6)!

Ω Herod the Great was an Idumean (an Edomite, descended from Esau, the elder brother of Jacob). Jacob is referred to as 'Israel' in the Bible (Genesis 32:28), portraying the close relationship of blessing which was to pass to all nations through Jacob's line. Jacob's line becomes the Jews, Esau's line becomes the Arab's. Herod the Great was hated by both sides! The Jews hated him because he was their "king," but was not from the Davidic line. Non-Jews hated him because he had converted to Judaism and its practices, but mainly for political motivations. On top of all of this, Herod was a jealous and brutal leader. Herod killed two of his own wives and three of his own sons out of suspicion of their interests. Herod ordered the slaughter of Jewish boys under two-years old in and around Jerusalem fearing the King which the Magi had reported had been born in Herod's region (Matthew 2:16-18). Despite all of these horrible evils, Herod also provided aid to the poor and often relieved taxation during times of drought/famine. He was an avid builder in Palestine, with a particular focus on the Jewish Temple, which he rebuilt in the 15th year of his reign. Josephus noted about the Temple reconstruction, "the expenditure devoted to this work was incalculable, its magnificence never surpassed."

* **The Sadducees** were a religious and political party, perhaps dating back to the time of King David under Zadok, the high priest. The Sadducees controlled the temple, and held the sacrificial system in the highest esteem. They were steeped in the happenings of the temple, which made them a political, as well as religious, powerhouse. They were a party of wealthy priests with many friends in the aristocracy of Jerusalem. They combined conservative religious attitudes with power politics. The Sadducees relationships with foreign overlords tended to diminish their religious devotion and produced a rather ossified orthodoxy with few guiding principles except *quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus* (that which has been believed everywhere, always, amongst all people). Bottom line, they were, because of their comforts and relationships, attempting to maintain the status quo. If the Pharisees were well known for "adding" innovations to an ever-expansive practice of the Law, the Sadducees were known for their conservative simplicity of only accepting the written law of Moses as authoritative. They had their own set of traditions, but rejected the Pharisees oral tradition and were more clear than the Pharisees in defining that their traditions and interpretations were not Torah, and thus, were not as binding. This, however, created a strange mixture of liberal politics mixed with conservative, even limiting, interpretation of Scripture (much like liberal Christianity of our modern setting). An illustration of this can be found when Jesus responded to the Sadducees about the resurrection (Matthew 22:23-33). Christ responded with a passage from the Pentateuch (Exodus 3:6) answering their questions on their own theological turf. More obvious passages from Daniel or Isaiah would have been more natural, but with the Sadducees, those passages would have carried no real conviction. The Sadducees had a great deal of dominance in the Great Sanhedrin (the supreme court amongst the Jews at the time of Christ), possibly being a ruling influence by majority. Clearly, there were Pharisees in the Sanhedrin, but the Pharisees were not very interested in the politics of the Sanhedrin. Because the temple was destroyed in 70 A.D. (after the death of Christ), the Sadducees ceased to exist (since their power was in the temple/priesthood).

The Pharisees were a religious party, dating from the time of John Hyrcanus and Alexander Jannaeus (around 130-105 B.C., roughly around the time period which surrounds the Maccabean revolt of the intertestamental period). They seem always to have represented the ordinary people against the aristocracy, and pure religion over against the ecclesiastical policies so characteristic of the Sadducees (see notes on that political party above). The Pharisees made a great deal out of the study of the Law. But, they tended to surround it with a mass of their own interpretations. In practice this meant that the keeping of their traditions loomed larger than the Law. On occasion, as Jesus pointed out, the traditions hindered the people from living in accordance with the spirit of the Law (Mark 7:6-13). Some of the Pharisees were men of noble spirit, but all too often their numerous regulations led to an emphasis on the outward, and often, to spiritual pride. This was accentuated by the fact that ordinary people did not have the time (nor the inclination!) to learn, let alone practice, the host of traditions that the Pharisees valued so highly. The Pharisees and their belief systems produced the basis for orthodox Jewish belief to this day.

The Essenes were another religious party, but even more conservative and legalistic than the Pharisees. The Essenes often lived in cloistered monastic communities to maintain their purity from the rest of society (e.g. the Qumran community, which produced the Dead Sea Scrolls, was an Essene community). They did not participate in temple sacrifices because they considered the temple polluted by a corrupt priesthood (NOT friends of the Sadducees). They were freakishly committed to ritual purity, even avoiding bowel movements on the Sabbath. The Essenes probably did not contribute much to the development of Christianity, mainly because of their withdrawal from all of society. (Collected from various sources).

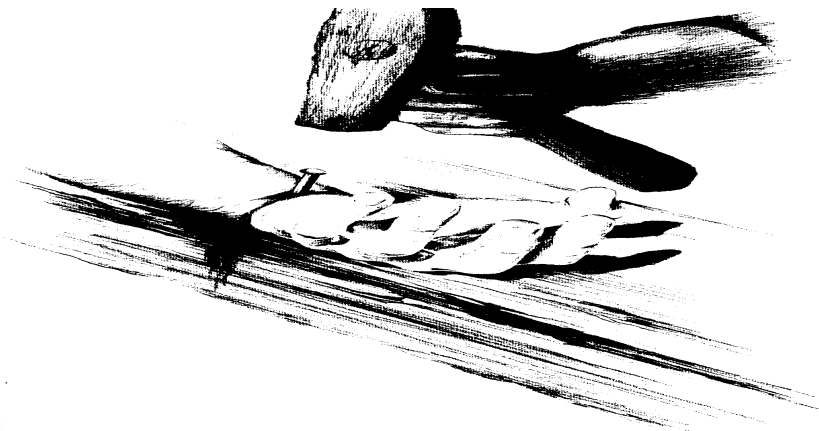
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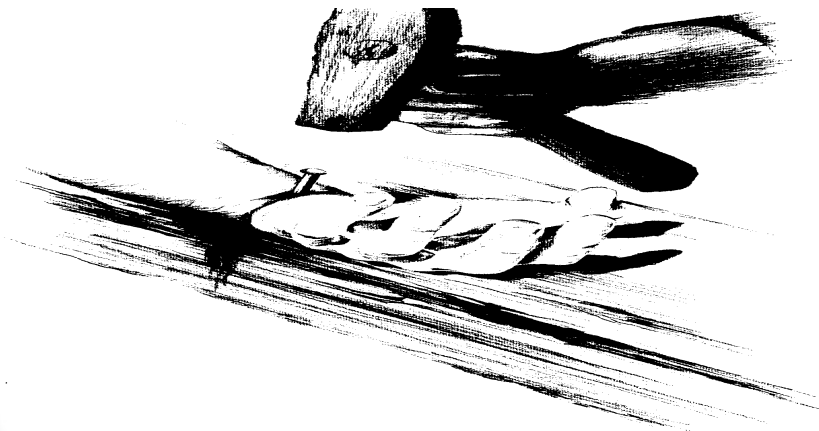
The Trials of Jesus Christ

Trial #?	Judge or Jury	Why?
Trial #1	Annas, the Ex-High Priest	Influential man and rightful High Priest in the eyes of the Jews.
Trial #2	Caiaphas, the High Priest	To gather evidence for the Supreme Court of the Sanhedrin.
Trial #3	The Sanhedrin, The Jewish Supreme Court	A Jewish death sentence.
Trial #4	Pontius Pilate (Roman Authority)	Only Rome could legally kill a man for a crime.
Trial #5	Herod Antipas (Galilean Ruler)	Herod wanted to see a miracle.
Trial #6	Pontius Pilate	Pilate condemns Christ to die via crucifixion.



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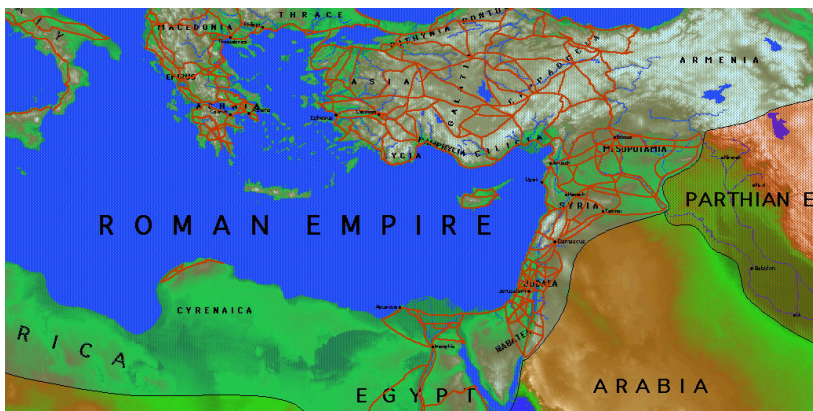
The Roman Empire



The Roman Empire



The Roman Road System



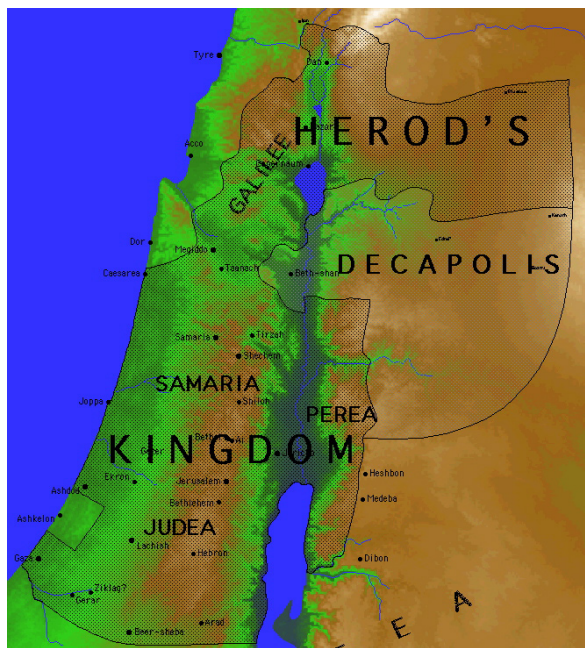
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The Roman Empire was at its largest around 115 A.D. under Emperor Trajan. The empire was held together for many years because of the advances in engineering (the road system), commerce (taxation and public improvements), government (the Roman Senate), military (most advanced in the world), and social structure (with special rights for Roman citizens).

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The Kingdom Of Herod The Great



Herod's Reign ~ 37 B.C. - 4 B.C.
Jesus was born around 3 B.C. - 2 A.D.

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