

Jesus' Roots in Palestinian Judaism

Being human, Jesus was of necessity a person in history. To find the Jesus of history we must first face the scandal of particularity. Jesus did not exist in the abstract but was situated historically and geographically. The human Jesus was a Palestinian Jew from Galilee in the first century of the Common Era.

Judean History

Crisis and Exile (587-539 B.C.E.). In 597 B.C.E., the kingdom of Judah and the city of Jerusalem fell before the power of King Nebuchadnezzar (605/4-562) and the Babylonians; as was Babylonian custom following Assyrian practice, many of the conquered were transported and resettled. Because of ongoing agitation and rebellion in Jerusalem, however, an even greater blow was inflicted ten years later in 587. The city itself, including the Temple, was leveled to the ground and burned, and a second deportation took place. The impact of this sixth century B.C.E. experience on the Judean people was captured in Psalm 137.

By the waters of Babylon
there we sat down and wept,
when we remembered Zion

Judea was not completely depopulated with the two deportations of 597 and 587. Many remained behind and some fled to Egypt. Those who were deported were not completely deprived. Some acquired property and many entered trade. Not all returned when it was later possible to do so. With the exile Judaism came to be lived not only in Palestine, but also in the Diaspora, in centers like Babylon and Egypt, and Diaspora and Palestinian Judaism continued to co-exist after the exile as well. The exile was later interpreted as God's judgment on the infidelity of God's people, and so distinctive duties such as circumcision, Sabbath observance, regulations concerning ritual purity, became increasingly significant for the people.

The Persian Period (539-332 B.C.E.). The period of the exile lasted almost sixty years. In 539, Cyrus, King of Persia from 550 to 530, defeated Nabonidus, King of Babylon, and the Persian Empire was founded.¹ One year later, 538, an edict of Cyrus (Ezra 6:3-5) allowed the Jewish people to return home and to rebuild the Temple. The project was placed under the direction of Sheshbazzar and later Zerubbabel, both of the line of David. Jerusalem and the surrounding area were subject to the Persian king; but Persian policy allowed subject peoples a cultural autonomy. Sheshbazzar proceeded with the reconstruction of the Temple, but progress was slow. Jerusalem was thinly populated even after the return of exiles; harvests were poor. Neighbors, especially the Samaritans, were hostile; morale declined. But in 515 the new Temple was completed. This Second Temple Period is the immediate background for the Palestinian Judaism of the time of Jesus. We know little about the period following the completion of the Temple. However, we do know that the hope and fervor of the people again declined. Nehemiah (c. 445), a Jew in the court of Artaxerxes in Persia, obtained permission to go to Jerusalem and help. He facilitated the rebuilding of the city walls and

¹See *Oxford Bible Atlas*, ed. Herbert May and G. H. Hunt, second edition (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), 29 and 35, for the rulers of the Persian, Ptolemaic, and Seleucid empires.

provided administrative leadership. Ezra (c. 428)² provided spiritual leadership and came with permission to restore observance of the Law which he publicly read.

Aramaic was the language of western Persia. The Jews learned to speak it, and it gradually replaced Hebrew as the spoken language of most Jews. One of the significant effects of Persian administration was the political separation of Judea from Samaria. Cyrus had restored Jerusalem as a temple state, much to the dissatisfaction of the Samaritans. The returning exiles considered themselves the true Israel and thus also tended to separate themselves from the Samaritans. Political autonomy for Jerusalem increased under Nehemiah. When the Samaritans built their own temple on Mt. Gerizim later, estrangement was complete. The final blow came during the reign of Antiochus IV when Samaritans did not support Jewish opposition to his reforms.

The Hellenistic Period (332-63 B.C.E.): The Ptolemies (323-198 B.C.E.). In 336 Darius III (386-331) became the ruler of Persia and Alexander the Great (336-323) became the ruler of Greece and Macedonia. Alexander's conquest of Persia and of the East between 336 and his death in 323 B.C.E. at the age of 33 extended as far as India. His conquests began the era of Hellenization. By 332 he had taken Asia Minor, Phoenicia, Palestine, and Egypt. Jerusalem and Samaria gave little resistance. Later an uprising in Samaria led to the destruction of the city and the establishment of a Macedonian colony. Displaced Samaritans who survived centered their life around ancient Shechem.

Upon Alexander's death in 323, his generals attempted to parcel out his empire among them. Ptolemy I (323-285) took Egypt and established his capital at the newly built city of Alexandria, and Seleucus I took ancient Babylonia and Syria with capitals at Seleucia on the Tigris and Antioch in

²See John Bright, *A History of Israel*, third edition (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981), 391-402. F. M. Cross, "A Reconstruction of the Judaeen Restoration," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 94 (1975), 9-11, places Ezra c. 458 B.C.E., before Nehemiah.

Syria. Both claimed Palestine. By the end of the fourth century, however, with the battle of Ipsos (301 B.C.E.), Palestine fell under the rule of Ptolemy and remained under the Ptolemies for one century. During this period Alexandria grew and became a center for Judaism as well. Jews in Egypt soon became Greek speaking, and the Hebrew Scriptures were eventually translated into the famous Greek Septuagint translation, begun under Ptolemy II (285-246). The Ptolemaic administrative unit was smaller than that of Persia. In Palestine there were four such units: Galilee, Samaria, Judea and Idumea.³ Other than this the Ptolemies did not attempt any major changes.

The Hellenistic Period (332-63 B.C.E.): The Seleucids (198-63 B.C.E.) and Hasmoneans (167-63 B.C.E.) When Antiochus II, the Great (223-187), became king of the Seleucid Empire, he won back what the Seleucids maintained was theirs, Coele-Syria or Palestine, after defeating Ptolemy V Epiphanes in 198.⁴ Jews welcomed the change at the time, and Antiochus was considerate of the Jewish people. Greek culture in Palestine was on the move. In Palestine itself, there had developed a number of Greek cities since the time of Alexander's conquest: Sebaste (Samaria), Philadelphia (Amman), Ptolemais (Acco), Philoteria (south of the lake of Galilee), and Scythopolis (Bethshean). Antioch and Alexandria had also become Greek cities.

In 187 Antiochus III was killed, and was succeeded by his son Seleucus IV (187-175), who was assassinated and succeeded by his brother Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-163), whose rule became critical. His policies led to Jewish revolt. The tension at first centered around the high priesthood. The legitimate high priest for centuries had been of Zado-

³Idumea, a Graecized form of Edom, was the southern portion of Palestine south of Judea and the Dead Sea. The Idumeans or Edomites supposedly descended from the older son of Isaac, Esau or Edom, and thus were kindred to the Hebrews. During the reign of John Hyrcanus (135-104), the Idumeans were conquered and forced to accept Judaism. Several centuries before Jesus the Idumean territory south and east of the Dead Sea became Nabatean and Idumea was strictly limited to southern Judea west of the Dead Sea.

⁴For the rulers of the Seleucid Empire, see n. 1 of this chapter.

kite lineage. When Antiochus Epiphanes became king, the high priest was Onias III. But rivalry developed between two families, the Oniads (who were a priestly family and pro-Ptolemaic) and the Tobiads (an aristocratic lay family, pro-Seleucid and hellenist). Onias III's brother, Jason (a Greek name he preferred to Hebrew), an Oniad, but Tobiad ally and member of the Jewish hellenist party, bribed his way into the office of high priest and had himself appointed by Antiochus Epiphanes in 175. This brought a pro-hellenist into the high priesthood itself, but still an Oniad and Zadokite. Jason carried out many hellenist reforms in Jerusalem, which virtually became a Greek city with a gymnasium.

Three years later, in 172, Menelaus (Greek for Menahem) bribed his way to the high priesthood and Antiochus appointed him to replace Jason. Menelaus was neither Oniad, nor Zadokite, but a Tobiad and extreme pro-hellenist. The Tobiads were an aristocratic Jewish family, originally based in Amman, who had compromised their Jewish religion with Greek life. Antiochus' finances were in bad shape and Menelaus' sympathies were hellenistic, so Menelaus did not stand in the way of Antiochus' confiscating funds from the Temple in Jerusalem to pay debts. During Antiochus' invasion of Egypt in 168, the situation became worse. Antiochus was irritated by a command from Rome to return home. Hearing about opposition in Jerusalem, he sent a commander in 167 to enforce his policies. Because of resistance, the city was partly destroyed, walls torn down, people enslaved, and a military Greek citadel called the Acra was established. The cult of Zeus was introduced into the Temple - the abomination of desolation (Dn 9:27, 11:31, 12:1).

Loyal and pious Jews, the Hasidim, organized resistance (1 Mc 1:42, 7:13; 2 Mc 16:6). In the village of Modein, northwest of Jerusalem, where Mattathias of the Hasmonean family and his five sons (John, Simon, Judas, Eleazar, and Jonathan) lived, Mattathias was asked by an officer to offer sacrifices to a pagan god. He refused, killed a fellow

Jew who was trying to do so, then killed the officer. He and his sons and some of the Hasidim fled to the Hills. The revolt had begun (1 Mc 2:19-28). Shortly thereafter Mattathias died, and his third son, Judas called Maccabeus (the hammer), continued the revolution. This became known as the Maccabean War.

Antiochus was preoccupied with other problems. Within a couple of years, Judas took control of Jerusalem, cleansed the Temple (1 Mc 4:36-59) and in 164 the Temple was rededicated. Since then the feast of Hanukkah or Dedication has commemorated the event (which Jesus observed in John 10:17). This was the beginning of the Hasmonean period, the dynasty following Mattathias, a period of Jewish independence.⁵ Antiochus Epiphanes died in 163. The Jews, divided between the Hasidim and the hellenizers who sought Syrian Seleucid interventions, further aggravated the situation. But the Seleucid leaders were burdened with other problems and the Jews were granted religious liberty.

Conflict continued, now no longer simply for religious freedom but rather for political supremacy within Judaism. Practically speaking Judas was the leader of the Jewish people. Later, in opposition to the appointment of the helle-

⁵The word Hasmonean is derived from Asamoneus, the father of Mattathias, according to Josephus. The name Maccabees usually refers to Mattathias and his sons, and Hasmoneans to their descendants from 135-63 B.C.E., beginning with John Hyrcanus 1, son of Simon. The Maccabean and Hasmonean rulers were:

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| Judas Maccabeus | 164-161 |
| Jonathan | 161-143/142 |
| Simon | 143/142-135/134 |
| John Hyrcanus 1 | 135/134-104 |
| Aristobulus 1 | 104-103 |
| Alexander Jannaeus | 103-76 |
| Alexandra | 76-67 |
| Aristobulus II | 67-63 |

In 63 B.C.E. Pompey took Jerusalem. Cf., Emil Schurer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, revised by Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar, and Matthew Black, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, [1885] 1973-79), 1:125-42, 613.

nist Alcimus to replace Menelaus as high priest, Judas once again defeated the Seleucids in a battle in which the Seleucid general was killed. The Seleucid response, however, led to a Jewish defeat and the death of Judas in 161 B.C.E.

With the death of Judas, the Maccabean party was defeated, and the hellenist Alcimus remained high priest. Jonathan, the brother of Judas, was now chosen as leader (161-143). Another brother, John, was attacked and killed while attempting to transport their personal belongings out of the country. Later, in 160, Alcimus died. Jonathan consolidated his power. Hellenist Jews sought intervention but the Seleucid leadership made peace with Jonathan and the Maccabees remained in control. By 153 Jonathan was appointed high priest and so his party became *politically and religiously* supreme. Jonathan sought, however, complete liberation from the Seleucid empire and lay siege to the Syrian garrison, the Acra, still in Jerusalem. In a later battle with the Syrians, Jonathan was imprisoned and murdered. Simon, his brother, took over, the last left of the five. (Eleazar had been killed in an earlier battle while Judas was still in charge.) Under Simon the goal of Jonathan was completely accomplished, the Acra defeated, and the Jewish people became completely independent in 142. In the third year of his reign, Simon's ranks were made hereditary by the people, and a new hereditary high priesthood came into existence. Simon, however, died violently, murdered along with two of his sons by a plot on the part of a power-seeking son-in-law.

The royal and priestly offices had been declared hereditary for Simon, and so his third and surviving son succeeded him. With Simon, the rule of the Maccabees ended; and with his son John Hyrcanus I (135-104), the Hasmonean dynasty proper began. The Syrian empire became increasingly weak; Judea was able to maintain its independence. Hyrcanus I left five sons, and was succeeded by his eldest, Aristobulus, who ruled for a year (104-103), and who had put his mother in prison to prevent the rule from passing to her. Aristobulus' rule no longer reflected Maccabean spirit;

Greek culture became favored. When Aristobulus died, his brothers whom he had also imprisoned were released. The eldest was Alexander Jannaeus (103-76). His rule was marked by war, expansion, and alienation from a growing and popular party, the Pharisees. Upon his death, his wife, Alexandra Salome, ruled (76-67) with their eldest son, Hyrcanus, as high priest, years during which she overcame the Hasmonean estrangement from the Pharisees.

Upon her death her sons Hyrcanus 11 and Aristobulus 11 contended for the throne. The end result was the Roman occupation by Pompey in 63 B.C.E. Aristobulus 11 was taken prisoner. Hyrcanus 11 was recognized as high priest but not king. The seventy year interlude of Jewish independence had ended. From approximately 142 B.C.E. until 63 B.C.E. there had been a fairly independent Hasmonean Jewish state. Such independence would not exist again until the twentieth century.

| <i>The Roman Period</i> | (63 B.C.E.-324 C.E.) |
|-------------------------|---|
| 63 B.C.E. | Capture of Jerusalem by Pompey |
| 49 B.C.E. | Crossing of the Rubicon by Julius Caesar |
| 48 B.C.E. | Death of Pompey |
| 44 B.C.E. | Assassination of Julius Caesar |
| 42 B.C.E. | Defeat of Brutus and Cassius by Antony and Octavian |
| 37-4 B.C.E. | Reign of Herod the Great in Palestine |
| 27 B.C. E.-14 C.E. | Reign of Augustus (Octavian) as Emperor of Rome |
| 6 C.E. | Beginning of the Rule of Roman Procurators in Judea |
| 70 C.E. | Destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Temple by Titus |
| 132-135 C.E. | Second Jewish Revolt of Bar Cochba |

The traditional date for the founding of the Roman Republic was 510 B.C. E., about the same time as the beginning of post-exilic and Second Temple Judaism. By the middle of the third century, while the Ptolemies were in

control of Palestine, Rome was in control of all of Italy and emerging as a world power. In 146 B.C.E. Rome finally destroyed Carthage and thus controlled the western Mediterranean including Spain. Rome expanded toward the east. Macedonia had become a Roman province in the mid second century, c. 148 B.C.E. Greece became a Roman protectorate after 146, supervised from Macedonia.⁶ In 133 Pergamum came under Roman control and Rome had a foothold in Asia. By 62 B.C.E. Pompey had helped to stabilize the eastern frontiers of Rome. In 63 he had taken control of Jerusalem.

Pompey in the East and Julius Caesar in the West were the rivals as Palestine came under Rome's dominion, and they were the contenders for power in Rome's First Civil War which brought the Republic to a close. In 49 B.C.E. Julius Caesar crossed the Rubicon and became dictator. Pompey was defeated. After Pompey's death in 48 B.C.E., Hyrcanus II and an old friend, Antipater, (who was half Jewish and from Idumea or southern Palestine) befriended Julius Caesar, who in turn treated them well, establishing Hyrcanus II as ethnarch with some political authority and Antipater as procurator of Judea. Antipater had two of his Idumean sons, Phasaël and Herod, appointed to positions, the former over Jerusalem and the latter over Galilee, c. 47 B.C.E.⁷ In 43 B.C.E. Antipater was poisoned. On March 15, 44 B.C.E., Caesar had been assassinated. Mark Antony moved against the conspirators and Brutus fled to Macedonia and Cassius to Syria. Both were defeated in 42 B.C.E. at Philippi by Antony and Octavian, and Antony became ruler in the East and Octavian, Caesar's adoptive nephew, in the West. Antony was won over by Herod, Phasaël, and Hyrcanus. A Parthian invasion led to Phasaël's and Hyrcanus' imprisonment. Herod escaped, made his way to Rome, won

⁶Regarding these dates, see W. W. Tarn, *Hellenistic Civilization*, third edition (New York: New American Library, 1975), 37-39.

⁷Antipater had four sons and a daughter. Phasaël, Herod, Joseph, Pheroras, Salome. Herod was born in 74 or 73 B.C.E. He died in 4 B.C.E. Josephus says he was seventy when he died.

the favor of Octavian, and was declared by the Roman senate to be king of Judea. With Rome's support, and within three years, he established himself in Palestine.

Herod sought the favor of Rome, first of Antony and then of Octavian, and knew enough to rely upon it. He began his rule with many enemies. The Pharisees and the people only tolerated him. He was only half Jewish and was a friend of the Romans. In 32 B.C.E. war broke out between Antony and Octavian, and in 31 B.C.E., Antony was defeated at Actium off the west coast of Greece. Having returned to Alexandria, both Antony and Cleopatra committed suicide. Herod had consistently sought the approval of Antony, and now had to regain the confidence of Octavian.

Herod built palaces and fortresses, new cities with theatres and racetracks. In Jerusalem he had built for himself a lavish fortified palace (c. 24 B.C. E.) and a theatre, as well as having rebuilt the fortress north of the Temple which he named the Antonia in honor of Antony. The old site of Samaria was built up as a Roman city and named Sebaste. In 22 B.C.E. he began a new city on the coast which took twelve years to build and which he named Caesarea. He named two new fortresses after himself, the Herodia, and he restored and improved others, e.g., Machaerus east of the Dead Sea and Masada on the western shore, which he furnished with luxurious palaces. He also began to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem since the Temple constructed under Zerubbabel no longer was in harmony with the new magnificent buildings of his Herodian Jerusalem. To support his projects and campaigns, Herod imposed heavy taxes.

Herod lacked any strong interest in Judaism itself. He tended to promote Graeco-Roman culture, and yet remained conscious of the popularity of the Pharisees and

§ Ptolemy XI died in 51 B.C.E. and was followed by Ptolemy XII, Cleopatra's younger brother, who was also her husband. Cleopatra assembled her own troops in Syria, and in 49 with the help of Julius Caesar she overthrew her husband and brother, became the ruler of Egypt and the mistress of Caesar. After the assassination of Caesar in 44 B.C.E., Cleopatra returned to Egypt and began her liaison with Antony, c. 42 B.C.E.

other Jewish nationals. His many fortresses, new ones, restored ones, improved ones, were likely placed to protect him not only from foreign foe but also from domestic conspiracy and resentment over his increasing despotism. He decidedly had the favor of Rome and Augustus, who expanded his territory and allowed him the title of king, a title that no one within the Roman Empire could use without the approval of emperor and senate. The title was granted only to individuals and was not hereditary. Usually lesser titles, like tetrarch, were those given. The last years of Herod's rule were filled with family problems, jealousy, and plots. He changed his will several times, and in his final will named Archelaus king, Archelaus being the older son of a Samaritan wife, Malthace; and he named his son Antipas tetrarch of Galilee and Perea; and Philip, the son of a different wife, tetrarch of northeastern territories. ⁹

Herod died, hated in his own home, in 4 B.C.E., of an illness which had plagued him the last few years of his life. During his reign Jesus of Nazareth had been born. This Herod, called the Great, must be distinguished from his son, Antipas, known as Herod Antipas, who ruled as tetrarch in Galilee, the Herod ruling during most of the lifetime of Jesus. Both Antipas and Archelaus plotted against each other and pleaded for their causes in Rome, but Augustus decided in favor of the final will of Herod, except that the title of king was not given. Archelaus was made ethnarch, the other two tetrarchs. Judea, Samaria, and Idumea fell under the rule of Archelaus; Galilee and Perea under Antipas; Batanea, Trachonitis, Auranitis, Gaulanitis, and Paneas under Philip. Jesus grew up and preached around Capernaum within the territory of Herod Antipas, but also passed to places like the Caesarea and Bethsaida in the tetrarchy of Philip, and when he went to Jerusalem was within still another political district.

⁹For a discussion of some of the issues connected with the will of Herod the Great, see Harold W. Hoehner, *Herod Antipas* (Cambridge: University Press, 1972), 269-76. Hoehner concludes to six such wills. Schurer, however, refers only to three wills, vol. 1, 324-26.

Philip was tetrarch from 4 B.C.E. until 34 C.E. The people in Philip's territory were predominantly non-Jewish. They were Syrian and Greek. Philip himself, unlike the others, seems to have been a respected ruler. He rebuilt Paneas (today Banyas) at the source of the Jordan, north of the Lake of Galilee, and named it Caesarea Philippi, not to be confused with Herod the Great's famous Caesarea on the Mediterranean. Philip also rebuilt Bethsaida.

Herod Antipas was tetrarch from 4 B.C.E. until 39 C.E. (frequently called simply Herod despite the resulting confusion with his father). His districts were broken into two, Perea and Galilee. Young Herod Antipas took after his father - ambitious and clever. Jesus called him "that fox" (Lk 13:32). Like his father and like the other Herods, Antipas was a builder. His most splendid project was a new capital at one of the more beautiful places in Galilee, on the western side of the lake, which he named Tiberias for it had been built during the reign of Tiberius.

Archelaus was ethnarch from 4 B.C.E. until 6 C.E. Of all Herod the Great's sons, Archelaus seems to have been the worst. His rule extended to Judea, Samaria, and Idumea. He too was a builder. His reign was so corrupt that a Jewish and Samaritan deputation to Rome accomplished his dismissal and banishment to Gaul in 6 C.E. Antipas and Philip may have been a part of the delegation. ¹⁰ After that, his territory was placed directly under Roman rule with a Roman governor of its own. Thus in the adult days of Jesus, Galilee was under Herod Antipas and Judea under more direct Roman governance.

The ordinary title for a Roman ruler of the equestrian rank was that of procurator, which also indicated one of his

¹⁰Hoehner, 103-9. Hoehner suggests that it was upon this occasion that Antipas began to be called Herod: "One of the probable results of Antipas' voyage to Rome in 6 C.E. is that he then acquired the dynastic title of Herod. It seems that the name *Herod* became a dynastic title after Herod the Great's death. The first clue to this is in the context of Archelaus' deposition where Josephus specifically states that Antipas was now called Herod. Up to this time he is always called Antipas, whereas after this time he is always designated Herod" (105-6).

major responsibilities - finances.¹¹ In extreme situations the Roman procurators in Judea were subordinate to the governor of Syria. The procurator of Judea did not reside at Jerusalem but at Caesarea Maritima (Herod the Great's Caesarea). On special occasions, such as the major Jewish feasts when special surveillance was necessary, the procurator left Caesarea and resided at Herod's palace on the west side in Jerusalem. From 26-36 C.E. the procurator was Pontius Pilate. In addition to the financial administration, the procurator also commanded the troops and had judicial authority.

Within administrative, financial, military, and judicial limits, the Jews were self-governing. After Archelaus, during the period of the procurators, the Jewish aristocratic Sanhedrin was also a governing body. The procurator was overseer, but in many affairs the Jews were left to themselves. The high priest was president of the Sanhedrin, but the high priest was appointed by the Romans (at least until 41 C.E.). The Sanhedrin and the procurator both governed. Jewish courts made decisions according to Jewish law, even in criminal matters.

In 66 C.E. revolt broke out. By the end of 67 Vespasian had subdued Galilee and within the next year much of Judea. The death of Nero in 68 required Vespasian to return to Rome. The actual siege of Jerusalem did not begin until 70 C.E. and was conducted by Titus over a five month period. The city was taken, the Temple destroyed. Practically speaking it was the end of the Sadducees and Essenes. The future of Judaism lay with the Pharisees and their attempt to reconstruct Judaism which was now left with no

¹¹A. N. Sherwin-White has shown, in *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 7-12, that the technical title for the governors of Judea of equestrian rank prior to the reign of Claudius (41-54 C.E.) was that of "praefectus" rather than "procurator." Procurator came into use under Claudius. Yet I have retained the more commonly accepted designation here.

Temple. The year 70 C.E. ends the Second Temple period. The last stronghold was that of Masada which finally fell in 73 C.E.

The Political Situation

During the first century of the Common Era, under the Roman occupation, religion, politics and geography contributed to a division of Palestine into Judea (politically administered by Roman procurators, yet the religious center of Judaism), Samaria (also politically administered by the Roman procurator, yet religiously distinct from Judaism), and Galilee (under the administration of Herod Antipas, geographically separated from Judea, but religiously identified with Judaism).

Judea. Judea is a land of hills, many barren and stony. Its three chief towns were and are Beersheba, Hebron and Jerusalem. Hebron is the highest town in Judea and was David's first capital. Jerusalem also rises high, as one notices if one goes up to Jerusalem from Jericho.

In 6 C.E., with the banishment of Archelaus, Rome's presence in Judea became more evident. Coponius was appointed the first procurator. Quirinius became legate in Syria and took a census of the territory to determine taxes. Judas the Galilean led a resistance which was centered in Jerusalem and stirred the people to an unsuccessful rebellion.

The first procurators of Judea were: Coponius (6-9 C.E.), Marcus Ambivius (9-12 C.E.), Annius Rufus (12-15 C.E.), Valerius Gratus (25-26 C.E.), Pontius Pilate (26-36 C.E.), and Marcellus (36-37 C.E.). The Roman emperors during this time were: Octavian known as Augustus (died 14 C.E.), Tiberius (14-37), and Caligula (37-41). Because Pilate as procurator was not careful about respecting Jewish customs, his rule occasioned popular uprisings in Judea. Dur-

ing his rule as procurator Jesus of Nazareth was sentenced to death. The terms of both Valerius Gratus and Pontius Pilate were long: under Tiberius the procurators were allowed to remain for longer periods, in contrast to terms under Augustus. Valerius Gratus had appointed four high priests in his day: the last of these was Joseph Caiaphas (18-36 C.E.), son-in-law of Annas, who had been high priest when Valerius Gratus first came to Judea.

The procurators in Judea supervised financial, military and some juridical affairs; within limits the Jewish people were free to govern themselves. The highest Jewish governing body was the Sanhedrin, something of an upper class legislative and judicial body, presided over by the high priest. In the beginning the body was primarily Sadducean but gradually incorporated Pharisaic members as well. Its origin is difficult to determine. It was first mentioned around 200 B.C.E., and grew in importance under the Hasmoneans, but seems to have had little power under Herod the Great (who is said to have killed the majority of its members). After 6 C.E. it grew again in importance within Jewish and religious life. After the fall of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. and the consolidation of Judaism at Jamnia later, the Sanhedrin ceased to exist.

The Sanhedrin was composed of 71 members. There were the "elders," the lay aristocrats, heads of prominent Jewish families, "the principal men of the people" (Lk 19:47); then there were the scribes, the learned or those who had been taught (Jn 7:15), generally Pharisees first admitted around 75 B.C.E.; and finally the chief priests, mostly Sadducean. Thus the Sanhedrin was composed of both Sadducees and Pharisees, a lay and priestly aristocracy. The high priest was its head; it met in or near the Temple.

Samaria. To the north of the land of Judah is the land at one time occupied by the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, descendants of the two sons of Joseph. The territory extended north of Judea between the coastal plain on the west and the Jordan valley on the east. Its northern boundary is the important and fertile Plain of Esdraelon, also

called the Valley of Jezreel. In the time of Jesus, the central section of this region had become the land of the Samaritans. A small group of Samaritans in Palestine today are still centered around Nablus, worshipping on Mt. Gerizim at Passover time.¹²

The religious division between Samaritans and Jews is explained differently by each group.¹³ Jews trace the origin of the conflict to the Assyrian conquest of the northern kingdom and the destruction and repopulation of Samaria at that time, with its resulting syncretism. Antedating this, however, there was already a north/south rivalry. Samaritans trace the origin of the conflict earlier, to the period of Judges. Eli, desirous of the high priesthood, set up a sanctuary at Shiloh to rival an already existing one at Mt. Gerizim, the sanctuary and priesthood associated with Shiloh being rejected by the Samaritans. Samuel was affiliated with the sanctuary at Shiloh thereby manifesting an unaccepted and invalid lineage. Thus, even before the times of David and Solomon, a division existed between the Samaritans with their authentic worship at Mt. Gerizim and those who were later loyal to Saul who had been anointed king by Samuel.

Developments in the post-exilic period only aggravated and completed an already existing tension. After the return from Babylon, under Persian administration, Judea and Samaria were politically separated. Jews conscientious about fidelity to their laws naturally emphasized a purity and separatism. Zerubbabel's efforts to rebuild a Temple on Mt. Zion pushed another wedge between the worshippers at Mt. Gerizim and the Jewish community. A century later, Nehemiah rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem, reinforcing the separation. The Samaritan governor Sanballat tried to pre-

¹²A fairly recent discussion of the contemporary Samaritans is that by Shemaryahu Talmon, "The Samaritans," *Scientific American* 236 (January, 1977), 100-108.

¹³A thorough exploration of Samaritan thought is that of John MacDonald, *The Theology of the Samaritans*, The New Testament Library (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1964). For the two versions of the split between the Samaritans and Judaists, see 14-29.

vent the walls from being rebuilt. Such events deepened animosity on both sides. By this time there were also two versions of the Torah, the Samaritan and the Jewish. The Samaritans built a Temple on Mt. Gerizim to rival the Second Temple in Jerusalem sometime in the fifth or fourth centuries. Relations were probably at their worst during the Hasmonean and Herodian periods. Although the Samaritans were likewise struggling against hellenization, they did not support Jewish efforts to resist Antioches Epiphanes and his desecration of the Jewish Temple. John Hyrcanus destroyed the Samaritan temple after capturing Shechem in 129 B.C.E. The Roman era during the time of Augustus liberated the Samaritans from Hasmonean and Herodian oppression, and, as in Judea, they were allowed under Rome their own internal administration. During the time of Jesus an intense hatred existed between the Samaritans and the Jews.

Galilee had been a part of the northern kingdom of Israel but had never been a part of the rejection of Mt. Zion and Jerusalem's cultic leadership. Thus Samaria was also separated religiously from Galilee. This separation became political and was aggravated by the Assyrian conquest of the north which had taken place in two phases: (1) a setting up of the province of Megiddo (of which Galilee had been a part) and (2) the destruction of Samaria.¹⁴ The treatment accorded the provinces of Megiddo and Samaria differed radically. Samaria was leveled to the ground when defeated and organized as a separate province: people were deported, and foreigners from other parts of Assyria replanted. Thus Galilee and Samaria were administratively separated and treated differently. Samaria, a greater center of resistance, was treated more harshly and estrangement between Galilee and Samaria developed further.

Galilee. North of Samaria is Galilee, divided into Upper and Lower Galilee, the elevations of Upper Galilee reaching

¹⁴Sean Freyne, *Galilee from Alexander the Great to Hadrian, 323 B.C.E. to 135 CE, A Study of Second Temple Judaism* (Wilmington, Del. and Notre Dame, Ind.: Michael Glazier and University of Notre Dame, 1980), 23-26.

over three thousand feet whereas the hills of southern Galilee do not reach higher than two thousand feet. In northern Galilee rain is heavier, land more forested, and villages are smaller. It is the beginning of the Lebanon. Rain is a distinctive feature of all of Galilee. Lower Galilee was the land of Jesus. Today, Nazareth is the largest town in the area. In the time of Jesus it was only a small village, and the city of Sepphoris (Saffuriyeh) was the center. The ministry of Jesus primarily took place around the shores of the lake in the region of Capernaum.

At the time of Jesus Galilee was a region with an independent consciousness of its own. Stricter Jews in Judea regarded Galileans with some disdain (Jn 1:46; 7:41, 52). Interiorly, it is a hill country which contrasts with the plains on both sides as Galilee moves toward the sea or the lake. The majority of the settlements in lower Galilee are on the slopes of the hills and not the valley floors and this secludes them from neighbors. Life in the valley along the Jordan and around the lake was more cosmopolitan than in the inner hill country. Galilee is the most fertile, productive and agricultural region of Palestine. The central hill country was inhabited more by Israelites, whereas the older Canaanite population persisted on the coast and along the plain of Esdraelon which outer region then became the home of newcomers during the Hellenistic period.

Sean Freyne has raised questions concerning the common and mistaken assumption that Galilee was more revolutionary and nationalistic than Judea.¹⁵ In fact, the more direct Roman presence in Judea as well as the presence of the Temple made it the locus of greater resentment and resistance. Galilee comprised a significant Jewish and also Hellenistic population on the periphery of the major disturbances within Judaism. It seems to have suffered less from the Roman occupation. Hellenization and urbanization had set in, but the Jewish population was still primarily rural and peasant.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 208-55.

Prior to the foundation of Tiberias by Antipas, Sepphoris was certainly the most important city in Galilee. It was a strong fortress and also the seat of one of the five councils into which the Jewish nation had been divided in 57 B.C.E. It was the only such seat in Galilee. It was a Jewish city, and yet was pro-Roman during the Jewish Revolt of 66-70 C.E., probably indicating a cautious political stance within the city after a previous rebellion in 4 B.C.E. upon the death of Herod the Great in which the governor of Syria had destroyed the city. It was subsequently rebuilt by Antipas. Despite its importance, Sepphoris maintained a limited sphere of influence within Galilee. It was hated by the Galileans, but not because the Jewish population of Sepphoris was lax. It was, rather, the aristocratic seat of wealthy landowners.

Tiberias, ideally located in a fertile region on the lake with hot springs nearby, was the rival of Sepphoris during the thirty year period when it was Antipas' capital. It had been founded sometime between 18 and 23 C.E. and dedicated by Antipas to the Roman Emperor. It had a mixed population, a Greek minority, a Jewish majority, despite its location above tombs which was a violation of Jewish law. Galilean Jews had to be forced to live there. After Antipas the capital once again became Sepphoris, probably during the reign of Nero. Like Sepphoris, Tiberias had limited influence on the Galilean population and was also a hated city. It too was aristocratic and reflected the economic situation of the widening gap between the rich, aristocratic landowners living in Tiberias and Sepphoris, and the rural peasant population which was becoming more poor.

The Socio-Cultural Situation

In the encounter with Hellenism, which began prior to the conquests of Alexander the Great, Judaism became both hellenized and also intensely centered on Torah (the Law). By the time of Jesus, Palestine had been under hellenistic

cultural influences for over three centuries. The distinction between Palestinian and Diaspora Judaism cannot be equated with the distinction between non-Hellenistic and Hellenistic. Martin Hengel writes, "From about the middle of the third century B.C. all Judaism must really be designated 'Hellenistic Judaism' in the strict sense."¹⁶

During the post-exilic and especially Persian period, the classical pre-exilic Hebrew gradually gave way to Aramaic, the common language of the western Persian Empire. Both languages continued to exist, but by the first century Aramaic was the spoken language of the Jewish people. With the conquest of Alexander, however, and the surge of hellenization, Greek also became prominent and many Palestinian Jews began to speak or read Greek. The Jews who wanted to advance socially needed to know Greek. With the coming of the Romans, Latin was also introduced into Palestine. According to the Fourth Gospel, Pilate had the inscription on the cross of Jesus written in Latin, Greek and Hebrew (Jn 19:20). Latin was used by the Romans for official purposes and did not become a spoken language among the Jews. Greek had been a spoken language among the Romans and thus was a common language for communication in the Near East as a whole during the first century.¹⁷

It is difficult to determine the extent to which Greek was used in Palestine prior to Alexander the Great. In the first century, however, Greek was widely used and may well have been the primary language of even some Palestinian Jews. Joseph Fitzmyer follows C.F.D. Moule in interpreting the Hellenists and Hebraists of Acts 6:1 as two groups of Pales-

¹⁶Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism, Studies in Their Encounter in Palestine During the Early Hellenistic Period*, trans. John Bowden, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), 1:104.

¹⁷A good summary of the linguistic situation is provided by Joseph Fitzmyer, "The Languages of Palestine in the First Century A.D.," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 32 (1970), 501-31; also in *A Wandering Aramean, Collected Aramaic Essays* (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1979), 29-56. Also see Robert Gundry, "The Language Milieu of First Century Palestine," *Journal Of Biblical Literature* 83 (1964), 404-8; Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism, vol. 1*, 58-65; Harold Hoehner, *Herod Antipas*, 61-64.

tinian Jewish Christians.¹⁸ The Hellenists were Jews or Jewish Christians who habitually spoke Greek. Koine Greek was the bond that held the Hellenistic world together and its influence eventually surpassed that of Aramaic. According to Hengel, "We have to count on the possibility that even in Jewish Palestine, individual groups grew up bilingual and thus stood right on the boundary of two cultures."¹⁹ Most probably some of the immediate disciples of Jesus were bilingual. Andrew and Philip had Greek names. Simon Peter, Andrew's brother, later took missionary journeys into the Western Diaspora where only Greek was spoken. Evidence suggests that Jesus spoke Greek but this suggestion must be seen only as probable. He was from Nazareth which was rural and less hellenized, yet Greek was spoken quite extensively in Galilee as a whole and especially in the cities. Aramaic remained the primary language but Greek was widespread as a second language. The name by which we know Jesus himself is Greek (Iesous), a hellenized form of the Semitic Jeshua (*yeshûa`*).

Although Aramaic became the common language of Palestine during the post-exilic period, it never completely replaced Hebrew. Opinions vary as to the extent of its use, but Hebrew did not die out completely. There was probably a vernacular Hebrew of the first century which later became Mishnaic Hebrew. It is difficult to know whether Jesus actually used Hebrew or not. J. A. Emerton concludes that Jesus ordinarily spoke Aramaic, but perhaps also spoke some Hebrew.²⁰ He maintains the high probability that Hebrew was still used as a vernacular by some Jews in the first century C.E. and continued to be used well into the second century - in contrast to some who have maintained that it was simply a dead language at this time. Yet Aramaic

¹⁸Fitzmyer, "Languages," *CBQ*, 515. C. F. D. Moule, "Once More, Who Were the Hellenisms?" *Expository Times* 70 (1958-59), 100-102.

¹⁹Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, vol. 1, 105.

²⁰J. A. Emerton, "The Problem of Vernacular Hebrew in the First Century A.D. and the Language of Jesus," *Journal of Theological Studies* 24 (1973), 1-23; also the earlier "Did Jesus Speak Hebrew?" *Journal of Theological Studies* 12 (1961), 189-202.

was the vernacular of most Jews. The cultural situation was bilingual and trilingual. The use of Aramaic was predominant; there was a widespread use of Greek and possibly a continued use of Hebrew among some. With respect to Jesus our conclusions remain tentative. He ordinarily spoke Aramaic in its Galilean dialect, which was different in pronunciation from the southern dialect spoken around Jerusalem. He probably spoke some Greek and at least read Hebrew.

The urban as well as the linguistic situation was much affected by hellenization, and the urban centers were an important part of first century Palestine, providing a vehicle for hellenization. More and more cities had become hellenized. The Cisjordan coastal plain comprised eleven Greek city states as they were organized under the Ptolemies, old Phoenician or Philistine cities or ports organized into Greek states, most falling under Hasmonean dominion during the period of Jewish independence but regaining some autonomy under Rome.²¹ In addition to the coastal cities there were the Transjordan Greek cities as well; a league of these in Roman times was called the Decapolis, but they existed as states in the earlier Hellenistic period as well.

In addition to the Decapolis and the coastal cities, there were Greek cities in Galilee and Samaria. Philoteria was probably at the south end of the sea of Galilee, and probably dated from Ptolemaic times. In the far north, at the foot of Mt. Hermon, was Paneas, modern Banyas, the Caesarea Philippi of the tetrarchy of Philip. The city of Samaria had been settled with Greeks or Macedonians in Alexander's time, and was re-established under Herod the Great as Sebaste.

Thirty such Hellenistic or Graeco-Roman cities can be named, yet the heart of Palestine, especially Judah, remained Jewish, as one can see in the efforts of the pious Jews to resist the overwhelming hellenization around them during the Seleucid and Maccabean periods. Yet a Greek

²¹See Freyne, *Galilee, 101-54*; *Zondervan Bible Atlas*, ed. E. M. Blaiklock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1969), 250-55, 293-94, 360-86.

fortress and a gymnasium were even established in Jerusalem under Antiochus Epiphanes and a theatre and an amphitheatre under Herod the Great. At the same time that Greek civilization was penetrating Palestinian Judaism, especially in more urban areas and among the upper classes, Judaism was resisting it lest it lead to a loss of identity. It was the forced hellenization under the stubborn Antiochus Epiphanes which precipitated the Maccabean revolt. The encounter with Hellenism had precipitated an internal crisis over how inclusive Judaism could be. The religious perspective was influenced by the socio-economic reality, the small but wealthy upper urban class increasingly favorable to Hellenism and a larger group who resisted the tendency to compromise.

After the Maccabean success, hellenization met with a defeat. The Hasidim had been ready to throw their lot in with Mattathias and his sons. These Hasidim may have been an ancestor of the later Pharisees and Essenes. They were rigorous with respect to the Law and the antagonism between hellenists and Hasidim was focused on the Law.²² The encounter of Judaism with Hellenism became an encounter within Judaism itself, an encounter representing religious views, but also socio-economic ones, which views also had political implications. The success of the Maccabean and Hasidic revolt meant a continued sensitivity of Palestinian Judaism toward criticism of the Law, the tendency toward segregation from non-Jews, and a heightened national consciousness.

Hope and Eschatology in Judaism

Hope in pre-exilic Israel. Strictly speaking, the word "eschatological" refers to an end to history as we know it. Religious consciousness in Israelite and Judean history became eschatological; it was not that way in the beginning.

²²Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, vol. 1, 175-254, 303-14.

The eschatological perspective was a post-exilic phenomenon.

Throughout much of its history, Israel's consciousness was historical. Israelites were aware that the Lord had acted on their behalf in the days of old. Supreme among these acts, of course, was the exodus from Egypt with its promise from the Lord for a land of their own. The time of David (1000-961 B.C.E.) and Solomon (961-922 B.C.E.), the early monarchy, was also a time when the Lord seemed to favor the people. As the people looked back to these days and events, they saw the Lord close to them. Their history was a religious history, and this religious history was the basis for their identity. "The people" implied "the history," the major events of which were recalled and commemorated. The Moses-Sinai -Exodus tradition (especially in the north) and the David-Jerusalem-Zion tradition (primarily for the south) were essential to the self-understanding of the people.

The ideal of kingship which Judah set for itself was a religious ideal.²³ The king was the Lord's anointed one. The anointing signified his being chosen by the Lord and his function as an agent of the Lord. The king also acted as a priest during the great religious festivals. Thus great demands and expectations were placed upon the king. He was only human, "one chosen from the people" (Ps 89:20), dependent on the Lord, yet the Lord's own son by adoption (Ps 2:7). The king was expected to manifest the Lord's justice; he was to be an advocate for the oppressed, helpless, and unprotected; he had an obligation to provide for the poor (Ps 72). It was important that the king be faithful to this ideal so that the people would prosper and the Lord's favor remain with them. The king was anointed by another of the Lord's representatives, the priest.

The history of the kings of Israel and Judah, however, show that they fell short of the ideal. The kingship came to

²³See Sigmund Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, trans. G. W. Anderson (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1954), 56-93.

be associated with unfulfilled expectations which gave rise to a hope for their fulfillment with the next or a future king.²⁴ This hope for the future was not in the pre-exilic period an eschatological hope, but it was rather an imminent and historical hope. This future but still historical consciousness emerged in the southern kingdom along with and within the prophetic movement. Two important texts indicative of this hope for a future king are those of Isaiah 7:10-14 and 9:1-6. Both passages are pre-exilic and, in their original setting, not eschatological in the strict sense. Both are important christologically because of a messianic interpretation later given them.

Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz, "Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven." But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test." And he said, "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, a young woman shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." (Is 7:10-14)

The more probable interpretation of the original prophecy is that it referred to a future king of Israel soon to be born and in whom the hope and expectation of the people would be fulfilled. It was not looking forward to a far distant or final time. Indeed the young woman may have already been with child. The fact that the prophecy remained unfulfilled opened it to later re-interpretation, but originally it indicated a sign soon to be given to King Ahaz by the Lord. The woman would bear a son and give him the name Immanuel, and this would be a sign from the Lord to Ahaz. The sign would only be given, however, if the king showed trust in the Lord by refusing to negotiate with Assyria. If Ahaz was willing to trust in the Lord, a sign would be given him. Isaiah was thinking of an actual woman, possibly even the wife of King Ahaz.

²⁴Ibid., 96-102.

Isaiah becomes intuitively certain that the queen is with child, that she will bear a son, and that Yahweh intends this as a token that the promise stands secure, that the wicked designs of the enemy will come to nothing, and that all the good fortune and salvation which, in accordance with the covenant, are associated with the birth of a prince will again be realized. If the king dares to commit himself and the country to Yahweh's omnipotence, she will bear a boy whose birth is the fulfillment of all the thoughts and wishes which were associated with the king and the royal child. Then the new-born child will be the ideal king whose very existence is a guarantee that "with us is God."²⁵

There are, of course, other interpretations of this text. Most reject it, however, as a messianic prophecy in the sense that messianism came to be understood later in Judaism. Rather the text gives an example of the birth of hope in Israel as Israel looked forward to one to come. But at this period the one to come was to be a king of the Davidic line soon to appear.

But there will be no gloom for her that was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,
on them has light shined.
Thou has multiplied the nation,
thou hast increased its joy ;
they rejoice before thee as with joy at the harvest,
as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.

²⁵Ibid., 118. Also see Otto Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-12*, trans. John Bowden, second edition, Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1983), 151-72.

For the yoke of his burden,
 and the staff for his shoulder,
 the rod of his oppressor,
 thou hast broken as on the day of Midian.
 For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult
 and every garment rolled in blood
 will be burned as fuel for the fire.
 For to us a child is born,
 to us a son is given;
 and the government will be upon his shoulder,
 and his name will be called
 "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
 Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." (Is 9:1-6)

Here the awaited child was a king-to-be who would sit upon the throne of David and fulfill the expectations of the people: fidelity to the Lord and peace and justice in the land. The birth of the child itself would be cause for joy; the people look forward to his coming reign. Darkness has been turned to light. Again we cannot explicitly identify who the child or prince was. Nor can we be certain that this was a prophecy of Isaiah himself. It may well have come from the circle of his disciples. But this is not important. The text points to a hope within pre-exilic, eighth century B.C.E. Judah, not an eschatological hope, but simply a hope for the future. In addition to the gaze toward the historical past, the great days of old, the times of David and Solomon and the Exodus itself, there also emerged a gaze toward the imminent historical future when God's presence would again be felt by the people and God's anointed one would reign over a land with peace and justice.

Hope During the Exile. Judean hope was seriously challenged and transformed with the disasters of 597 and 587. Was there anything at all to hope for? The city of the cult and the Temple itself had been destroyed, the future of the royal house and Davidic line had become precarious, the people were exiled and scattered. Yet the hope of Israel was not destroyed. It developed and took the shape of a hope for

an eventual restoration.²⁶ The crisis helped to turn the eyes of the people even more to the future when the Lord would once again visit the people and restore them. This hope, unlike pre-exilic hope attached to a future king and his reign, was simply at first a hope for the defeat of Babylon and a return to Jerusalem. Exilic hope was not eschatological either. It looked forward to a future time in history, not to the end times as such. The future was still very much of this world - a political, national, as well as religious future.

The pre-exilic hope had been both prophetic and kingly. It was prophetic in that it arose within or was associated with prophetic or Isaian circles. It was kingly or royal in that the hope was fixed on a future king or royal figure. The fall of the northern kingdom had already created one crisis. Amos and Hosea had proclaimed it. In the south, Isaiah not only announced impending disaster but introduced the notion of a remnant who would be saved. The destruction in the south, however, was beyond belief. Yet even Jeremiah, who knew that disaster was coming, held up a hope for some.

For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Houses and fields and vineyards shall again be bought in this land. (Jer 32:15)

The hope for restoration ranged from a naive optimism (Jeremiah 39) to the prophetic hope against hope (Jeremiah 32). The task of reconstruction involved not only a political hope but a religious call to conversion, such as is found in Ezekiel. After the needed purification, the future day of the Lord would come. Although politics and religion can be distinguished, they cannot be separated in Israelite and Judean history. The religious convictions of the people gave birth to a hope which was both political and nationalistic. The basis for the hope was the promise of the Lord.

With Deutero-Isaiah the hope was sustained, the end of

²⁶Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, 133-54.

the exile foreseen, and the hope for the restoration was transformed into grandiose and cosmic proportions. Cyrus on the horizon and the imminent fall of Babylon were indeed good news.

How beautiful upon the mountains
are the feet of him who brings good tidings,
who publishes peace, who brings good tidings of good,
who publishes salvation,
who says to Zion, "Your God reigns." (Is 52:7)

The late exilic and early post-exilic Deutero-Isaian message was that the Lord of Israel had called and used Cyrus for his own purposes - to overcome Babylon and set God's people free. The royal house and temple would be restored; the Lord would give the ruler true righteousness; peace and prosperity would reign once again in the land.

A central feature in the late exilic or early post-exilic hope was the victory of the Lord and the Lord's coming reign in Zion. The Lord would rule. Although the aspirations remained national, the reign of God became central to the Jewish hope. But this reign was to be neither other-worldly nor eschatological. The Lord would make a new covenant with the people, and all the nations of the world would bow before God (Is 48:9-11). The expression which summed up this hope for the coming reign was "the day of the Lord." This great and glorious day contained several features: the political liberation of Israel, the restoration of the dynasty of David, the reunion of the north and the south, the return of the Diaspora, the religious and moral purification of the people, fertility in the land, peace among the nations, the restoration of Jerusalem as political and religious center of the world to which all the nations of the earth would give homage. It was a universalism and yet a nationalism.

The Emergence of Eschatological Messianism and Post-Exilic Hope. After the exile, prophecy in Israel died out. But there developed a role for the sage and wisdom, for the scribe and Torah, and for the high priest and Temple. It was during this period that Jewish hope became eschatological

and there emerged a messianic consciousness.²⁷ Pre-exilic and exilic hope had been prophetic, royal, and nationalistic. This nationalism continued with the development of messianism.

The Hebrew and Aramaic words for "messiah" mean "the anointed one." The Greek equivalent is "christos." This Messiah (or Christ), a post-exilic development, was an eschatological king associated with the end times. One does not find the concept of the eschatological Messiah as such in the Hebrew Scriptures. There messiah simply means the king. The concept of an ideal king as the Lord's anointed one is early in Israelite history, but this anointed, earthly king and representative of the Lord is not the same as the later expected Messiah. Centuries of development led from the concept of the ideal king to the expectation of an eschatological king or Messiah. The eschatological aspect arose out of the disillusion of the post-exilic hope: the restoration was in no way comparable to what was expected or hoped for. Thus the hope fastened itself further into the future; the day of the Lord may not be close at hand but will come. The Messiah was not only an eschatological figure but was a political and national figure as well, an expected king whose reign would be final.

The source materials for developing the concept of Messiah were the Scriptures, in particular the prophetic literature, especially as it had come to be interpreted or understood in the post-exilic period, not as it had been understood in the eighth or sixth centuries B.C.E. In addition, many of the prophetic and messianic passages in the Hebrew Scriptures were themselves of post-exilic origin. Exceptions to this would be at least Isaiah 7:10-14 and 9:1-6, but these came to be re-interpreted within a post-exilic world of messianic eschatology. The Messiah is, as Mowinckel indicates, "the ideal king entirely transferred to the future, no longer identified with the specific historical king, but with one who, one day, will come."²⁸

²⁷Ibid., 126-33.

²⁸Ibid., 123.

It should be clear, if for no other reason than to bring clarity into the complexity of eschatology, that not all hope was eschatological. The history of Israel's hope was not coterminous with the history of Jewish eschatology, although the former includes the latter. One can distinguish between prophetic hope (pre-exilic) and messianic hope or eschatology (post-exilic). There was a prophetic eschatology only in the sense that the prophets are re-interpreted, but eschatology was not in the consciousness of the earlier classical prophets themselves. One can well argue whether Deutero-Isaiah has eschatological elements, although he probably does not in the strict sense. His was a hope for restoration, and it was only the disillusion accompanying the actual restoration that produced eschatological hope. Israel's hope developed amid continued disillusionment. It shifted from the notion of the king as a national, political, historical figure and an anointed representative of the Lord to a king to come, to the king of the restored kingdom, to the final eschatological king (a national, political and historical figure but *the* anointed one). The kingdom was always both of this world and of God. The Messiah would be the future eschatological fulfillment of the ideal king who would reign on behalf of the Lord whose reign it truly was. This Messiah was to be a historical king of David's line.²⁹ Other expressions also connoted this messianic figure, such as the Son of David.

The messianic concept itself underwent development and variation. In the earlier post-exilic stage the Messiah was in the background; it was the Lord who would rule and gather the peoples together. The Messiah at first would not actually establish the kingdom but would rule once God's reign began. Gradually, however, varying and even inconsistent expectations developed. The dominant messianic conception was that of a political, national, this-worldly, historical figure of David's line.³⁰ Micah 5:1 led to the belief that he

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 155-86.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 280-345.

would be born in Bethlehem. In addition to the royal Davidic Messiah, there developed a less prominent expectation of a "priestly, Levitical Messiah." During the Maccabean/ Hasmonean times royal and priestly functions became united in one person. The *Book of Jubilees*, which was important to the Essenes, spoke not at all of a future for the house of Judah but only for the house of Levi. In the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*, a Levitical Messiah existed along with the Davidic Messiah of the house of Judah. Thus some expectations included that of a new high priest as well as a new king. Yet the dominant notion remained that of the Son of David.

The coming of the Messiah was known to God alone. Due to Israel's sins, the Messiah's coming was delayed; Israel needed to be cleansed. A period of repentance would precede the coming of the Messiah, and there would be forerunners to prepare his way and call the people to conversion. Malachi, the last of the biblical prophets, spoke of the return of Elijah. His prophecy formed the basis for the widespread belief in a prophet like Elijah as the forerunner of the Messiah.

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes, And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with a curse. (Mal 4:5-6)

Initially this was not so much a hope for Elijah himself as for an eschatological prophet anointed with the spirit of Elijah. The concept of a translated Elijah coming from heaven is probably a post 70 C.E. development.³¹

In addition to the Elijah expectation, Moses or a prophet like Moses was expected.

³¹James D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making. A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1980), 92-95.

The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brethren - him you shall heed - just as you desired of the Lord your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, "Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, or see this great fire any more, lest I die." And the Lord said to me, "They have rightly said all that they have spoken. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brethren; and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him." (Dt 18:15-18)

Enoch also gets mentioned as a forerunner, as does "the Prophet of the end times." Sometimes several forerunners were envisioned.

We can see the complexity and variety of messianic expectations and these have not included the later apocalyptic influences. We already see kingly (the Davidic Messiah), priestly (the Levitical Messiah), and prophetic (the forerunners) expectations with respect to the age to come, and sometimes but not often these get combined into one. The Messiah himself was to be endowed with the gift of God's holy spirit. He was to free his people, and his dominion was to include all the nations and he was to rule with justice. Not only did messianic hopes vary but not all the Jewish people were equally influenced by them. Messianism for some was a minor aspect of their faith.

Apocalyptic Eschatology. Jewish hope for the future eventually became an eschatological hope and a messianic hope. In the post-exilic period eschatology developed in other than strict messianic directions as well. Late in the post-exilic period eschatology became apocalyptic.

One of the influences in late Second Temple Judaism was a temporal and spatial dualism: the notion of two eras, "this age" and "the age to come," with an abrupt transition from one to the other. The present era was under the dominion of

the powers of evil, a "kingdom of Satan," and the age to come, a "kingdom of God."³²

The apocalyptic kingdom of God, however, was not the same as the messianic kingdom. The messianic kingdom was of this world; the apocalyptic kingdom was other-worldly. The two kingdoms represented different expectations with regard to the eschatological future. An apocalyptic dualism developed within Judaism during the Hellenistic period and manifested Babylonian and Persian influence as well as the influence of the "new learning" or "wisdom." This apocalyptic dualism gave rise to an other-worldly, transcendent side to eschatology. The "day of the Lord" was understood to be an age completely different from what we experience here on earth and a divine intervention from outside of history would bring it about. The "new eschatology" was not only a temporal and dramatic dualism. It also tended to be cosmic and individualistic - involving cosmic forces and calamities, and the object of salvation was the individual rather than the nation.

The apocalyptic view of the two ages presented the present order as evil and transitory, and the coming age as supernatural, eternal, and blessed. Also, in the final days, the satanic power would appear as an "Antichrist," sometimes envisioned more historically, sometimes more supernaturally, but always the powerful enemy of God who would be crushed in the latter days. Then the Lord, "the Ancient of Days," would sit in judgment over the living and the dead. The doctrine of resurrection, taught by the Pharisees, had its own history, and was not simply the result of apocalyptic thought, but apocalyptic influenced its way of being conceptualized as well. We must not think, however, that this apocalyptic speculation simply replaced the earlier speculation or that the two were always easily distinguished. The

³²Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, 262-84.

apocalyptic and messianic perspective continued together and were often mixed.

Many of the earlier, political, nationalistic expectations continued to exist along with the new other-worldly expectations. They not only continued but often mingled with each other as worldly and other-worldly elements blended. One of the ways by which the two perspectives were reconciled was the notion of the millennium.³³ Typical of millennial thought was the idea that there would be an interim age between the present age and the age to come, the present being followed by a period of a thousand years. The length varied, during which millennium or messianic age an earthly messiah would rule, then die. Then the end would come with its new heaven and new earth and new supra-terrestrial order. We find this eschatology in the Ezra apocalypse. It involves a first judgment prior to the Messiah's kingdom on earth, and a second judgment prior to the new creation. There were variations on this millennial theme where the glorious millennium was the conclusion of the present age rather than an interim period. In this variation the resurrection of the dead did not precede but followed the reign of the Messiah. There also developed the distinction between the kingdom of the Messiah on this earth and the kingdom of God in the new world. These interpretations exemplify the efforts to unite the conflicting "this-worldly" and "other-worldly" perceptions of the future.

The this-worldly messianism and other-worldly apocalypticism, although distinguishable and co-existing within Judaism between 200 B.C.E. and 100 C.E., interpenetrated and influenced one another. As George Foot Moore writes,

For orderliness we may distinguish between the national form of the expectation, a coming golden age for the Jewish people, and what for want of a better word may be called the eschatological form, [what we have been calling apocalyptic form], the final catastrophe of the world as it is and the coming in its place of a new world, which in so

³³Ibid., 168, 277, 324-27.

far as it lies beyond human experience of nature we may call supernatural. But it must be understood that in all the earlier part of our period the two are not sharply distinguished, but run into each other and blend like the overlapping edges of two clouds. ³⁴

Although the idea of Messiah varied, the prevailing expectation associated with him was that of a political and national savior for Israel. This form of the Jewish hope was popular with the people whereas apocalyptic eschatology was not. Apocalyptic was related to learned wisdom, priests, and oriental thought.

Apocalyptic eschatology emerged and spread within Israel between 200 B.C.E. and 100 C.E., a period of crisis and revolt, from the Maccabean wars to the Great War of 66-70 C. E. Between the two revolts there was the experience of political freedom gained (with the Hasmoneans) and of political freedom lost (with the Roman occupation) - a time of extensive religious self-reflection which was then formed into a new literature. The many roots of apocalypticism are difficult to pin down. H. H. Rowley's long accepted view was that apocalypticism was a development of ancient prophecy. ³⁵

We must be careful in our references to apocalyptic. As P.D. Hanson, and more recently J. J. Collins, have pointed out, we must distinguish the literary genre (apocalypse), an eschatological perspective (apocalyptic eschatology), and a socio-religious movement (apocalypticism). ³⁶ The word apocalypse refers specifically to a literary genre adopted by

³⁴George Foot Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era*, 2 vols. (New York: Schocken Books, [1927] 1971), 2:323. Material in brackets mine. Moore presents a good summary of messianic expectations and eschatology, vol. 2, 323-95. Also see Schurer, vol. 2, 488-554.

³⁵H. H. Rowley, *The Relevance of Apocalyptic* (New York: Harper and Row, 1955).

³⁶Paul D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 428-44, esp. 429-34. Also, John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination, An Introduction to the Jewish Matrix of Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1984), esp. 1-32.

apocalyptic seers to communicate their messages. In addition to apocalyptic literature, there is apocalyptic eschatology, a particular type of eschatology that is often contrasted with prophetic eschatology and exemplifies the difference between a historical, this-worldly perspective and a dualistic, other-worldly perspective. But eschatology itself is not necessarily the most characteristic trait of the literary apocalypses or the apocalyptic socio-religious movement. Nor can the apocalyptic eschatological perspective be identified with any one group or party within Judaism. Nor is it uniform; there are different types or strands of apocalyptic eschatology.

Besides referring to a body of literature and a type of eschatology, apocalypticism was a social and religious movement in which the disappointment and frustration connected with historical hopes became resolved. Such movements can be recognized in the early post-exilic period, in the second century Maccabean period, in the first and second centuries C.E., in the Middle Ages, as well as today. Apocalypticism involves an extra-historical reversal of the course of history. In history the righteous suffer and the unrighteous prosper. This situation was to be reversed by a divine intervention.

Hanson has directed much of his research toward showing that apocalyptic movements arise out of identifiable sociological settings: for example, a group experience of alienation and oppression or a group reaction against foreign domination, as found in the Maccabean response to Antiochus IV; or a group reaction against a dominating party within one's own nation, such as Hanson describes the early post-exilic conflict surrounding the rebuilding of the Temple. For Hanson, the origins of apocalypticism lay within this inner community struggle. After the exile there were two distinctive and rival plans for the restoration - a visionary program (Deutero-Isaiah 60-62) and a Zadokite program (Ezekiel 40-48).³⁷ Conflict between the proponents

³⁷Paul D. Hanson, 6-77, 89-100.

of these two programs was inevitable after the ascendancy and dominance of the Zadokite group returning from the exile and their disregard for the ideals of the Levitical group which had remained in Palestine during the exile. The Zadokite program of those returning left little or no room for the Levitical/ Palestinian group within the cult itself. The social situation at the time of the construction of the Second Temple excluded one group from a significant role in the cult and alienated that group from its oppressor. The alienated group translated its own hopes into a more visionary and apocalyptic perspective. This situation of polarization and conflict provided the social matrix for the development of prophetic eschatology into apocalyptic eschatology.

A group response to oppression or powerlessness, as Hanson points out, can take many forms: (1) effort at reform (the alienated priests in the rebuilding of the Temple); (2) the withdrawal and the founding of a new, more utopian society (Qumran Essenes); (3) retreat into a subculture or subsociety (some hasidic movements); (4) violent revolution (the Zealots).³⁸ The less the oppressed group looks to history for resolution, the more its eschatological perspective becomes apocalyptic. Apocalypticism involves a particular religious response to the contradictions of history when the solution to the polarizing, historically-experienced alienation is seen to lie beyond history.

Although apocalyptic eschatology manifested a continuity with prophecy, it is clearly distinguishable from what we have called prophetic eschatology. Apocalyptic eschatology also manifested a relationship to wisdom.³⁹ The apocalyptic notion of a divine world order was based in the wisdom tradition.

³⁸Ibid., 435.

³⁹See Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, trans. D. M. G. Stalker, 2 vols. (New York: Harper and Row, 1962-65), 2:263-315; *Wisdom in Israel*, trans. James D. Martin (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972), 263-319.