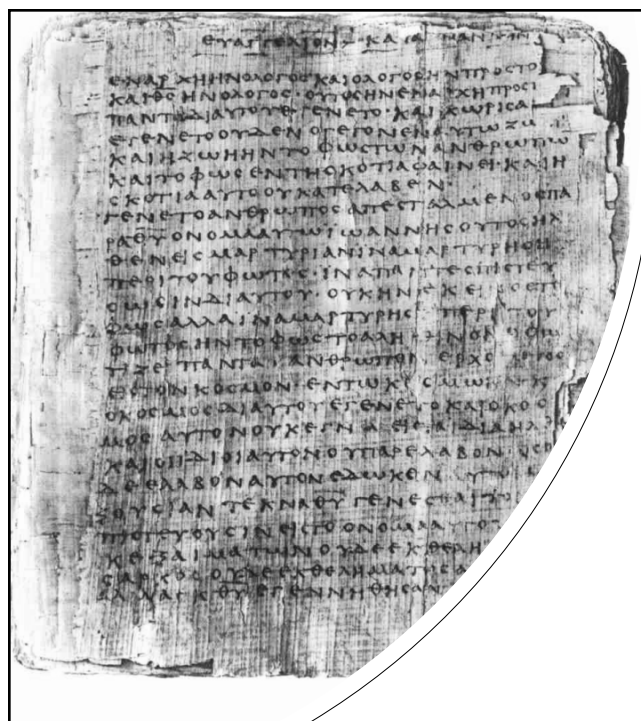


Understanding the New Testament

■ Getting to Know Some Folks...

- Name?
- From?
- Favorite book of the New Testament?



Understanding the New Testament

Opening Hymn

Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty!
Early in the evening our song shall rise to Thee.
Holy, Holy, Holy! Merciful and mighty!
God in three persons, blessed Trinity!

Holy, Holy, Holy! All the saints adore Thee,
Casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;
Cherubim and seraphim falling down before Thee,
Which wert and art and evermore shalt be.



Opening Prayer

- Day by day,
O dear Lord,
three things I pray:
- to see thee more clearly,
love thee more dearly,
follow thee more nearly,
day by day. Amen.

-Richard of Chichester, 13th c. / Godspell, 20th c.



Journalistic Questions

- Who?
- What?
- When?
- Where?
- Why?
- How?



The NT as a whole: What/Why?

- The second part of the Christian church's Bible
- The writings of the New Covenant
 - Testamentum = covenant
- A library of interpretations of the coming, ministry, death, resurrection, and significance of Jesus of Nazareth in light of:
 - the Scriptures of Israel
 - experience of the risen Jesus
- Texts of identity formation with two focal points:
 - Jesus (Christology)
 - Following Jesus (discipleship/mission)





The Contents of the NT: 27 Writings

- Gospels: 4
 - Acc. to Matthew
 - Acc. to Mark
 - Acc. to Luke
 - Acc. to John
- Acts: 1
 - Acts of the Apostles
- Letters: 21
 - of Paul: 13
 - to the Hebrews: 1
 - Catholic/General: 7
- Apocalypse (Revelation): 1
 - of John



The Contents of the NT: Letters

- Of Paul: 13
 - To churches: 9
 - Romans
 - 1-2 Corinthians
 - Galatians
 - Ephesians
 - Philippians
 - Colossians
 - 1-2 Thessalonians
- Of Paul (cont'd.)
 - To individuals: 4
 - 1-2 Timothy
 - Titus
 - Philemon
- To the Hebrews: 1
- Catholic/General: 7
 - James
 - 1-2 Peter
 - 1-3 John
 - Jude



Basic Timeline of NT History (approx.)

Roman Rulers

- Augustus 31 BC—AD 14
 - Herod the Great 37—4 BC
- Tiberius 14—37
 - Pontius Pilate 26—36
- Caligula 37—41
- Claudius 41—54
- Nero 54—68
- Vespasian 69—79
- Domitian 81—96

Some Key Events

- 4 BC = Jesus' Birth
- AD 30—33 = Jesus' Death/Res.
- 35 = Paul's Call/Conversion
- 64 = Rome burns, persecution
- 70 = Destruction of Temple



When was the NT Written?

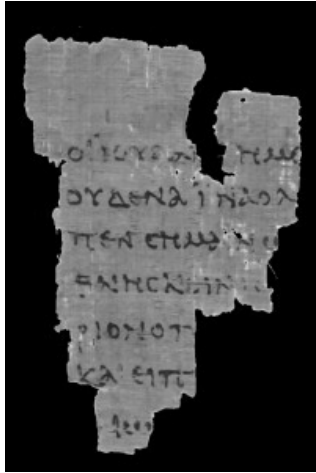
- Letters of Paul
 - Probably late 40s to early 60s; most prob. in 50s
 - Some possibly later
- Gospels: 60s?—80s?
 - Mark = earliest; late 60s?
 - Then Matthew, Luke
 - John = latest; 90s?
- Acts: soon after Luke

- Hebrews and Catholic Epistles
 - James: 40s or 50s?
 - Hebrews: just before or after 70?
 - 1-3 John: after Gospel of John
 - Others: late 1st century?
- Revelation: prob. 90s



How was the NT Written and Copied?

■ Papyrus originals



How was the NT Written and Copied?

■ Parchment books (codexes)



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ΕΝΑΡΧΗ Η ΝΟΛΟΓΟΣ ΚΑΙ ΟΛΟΓΟΣ
 ΠΡΟΣ ΤΟΝ ΘΕΟΝ ΚΑΙ ΘΕΟΝ ΟΛΟΓΟΣ
 ΟΥΤΟΣ Η ΝΕΝΑΡΧΗ ΤΗ ΠΡΟΣ ΤΟΝ ΘΕΟΝ
 ΠΑΝΤΑ ΔΙΑΥΤΟΥ ΕΓΕΝΕΤΟ ΚΑΙ ΧΩ
 ΡΕΙΣ ΑΥΤΟΥ ΕΓΕΝΕΤΟ ΟΥΔΕΝ
 ΕΡΕΓΟΝ ΕΝΕΝΑΥΤΩΣ ΩΝ ΗΝ
 ΚΑΙ Η ΖΩΗ ΗΝ ΤΟ ΦΩΣ ΤΩΝ ΑΝΩΝ
 ΚΑΙ ΤΟ ΦΩΣ ΕΝ ΤΗΣ ΚΟΤΙΑ ΦΑΙ
 ΝΕΙ ΚΑΙ Η ΣΚΟΤΙΑ ΑΥΤΟΥ ΟΥΚ ΕΤΕ
 ΛΑΒΕΝ ΕΓΕΝΕΤΟ ΑΝΘΡΩΠΟ
 Σ ΤΑ ΜΕΝ ΟΥΤΑΡ ΘΕΟΝ ΟΜΑΛΥ
 ΤΩ ΙΩΑΝΝΗΝ ΟΥΤΟΣ ΗΛΘΕΝ
 ΕΙΣ ΜΑΡΤΥΡΙΑΝ ΙΝΑ ΜΑΡΤΥΡΗ
 ΣΗΤΕ ΠΕΡΙ ΤΟΥ ΦΩΤΟΣ ΙΝΑ ΠΑΝ
 ΤΕΣ ΤΙΣ ΤΕΥΣ ΩΣΙΝ ΔΙΑΥΤΟΥ

GOD IS NOWHERE

The Witnesses to the Text of the NT



Manuscripts in Greek

- Almost 6,000 partial and complete mss. from the early 2nd c. on. Only 50 have all 27 books.
- Earliest complete ms. = Codex Sinaiticus and/or Vaticanus, ca. 350-375.

Quotations in the Fathers of the Church

- 2nd c. on
- More than 1,000,000

Early translations (versions)

- 2nd c. on
- About 14,000 mss. in Latin, Syriac, Coptic, etc.

Lectionaries (collections of texts for worship)

Why These 27?



- Various candidates; many now called NT apocrypha
- Main contents by c. 200
- A long process to finalize
- Basically a “closed” canon in late 4th century

Some Factors in the Formation of the New Testament Canon

Apostolic?

- *Was this document written by an apostle or someone closely associated with an apostle?*

Ancient?

- *Does this document date from the earliest days of the church?*

Orthodox?

- *Does this document comport with the emerging orthodoxy (the rule of faith) and orthopraxy of the great church?*

Catholic?

- *Is this document being used by, and serving the needs of, the global (“catholic”) church?*

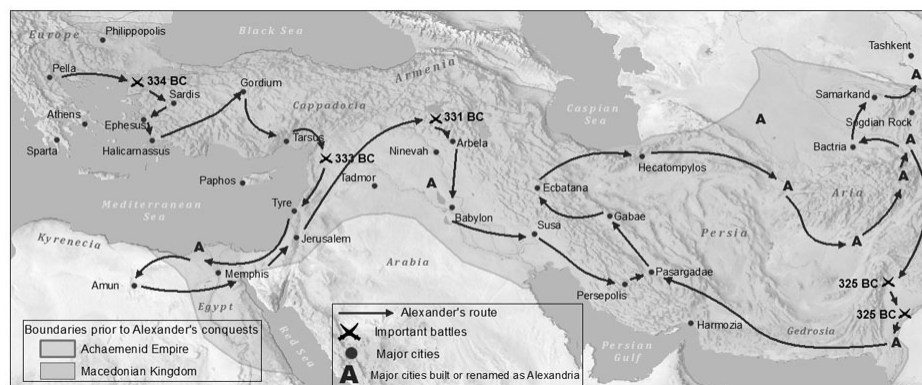
Aspects of the NT's Greco-Roman Context

■ Hellenization = "Greekification"

- Alexander the Great
- Greek culture
- Greek religion: polytheism
- Greek lifestyle
- Greek language

■ Greek language and the NT

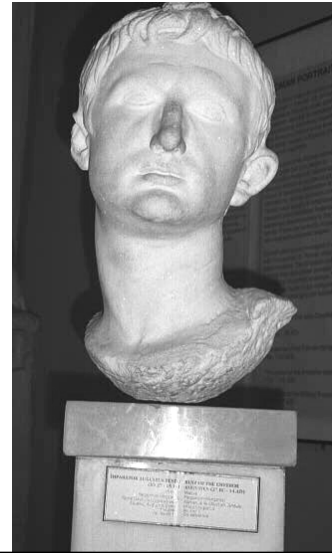
- OT in Greek = Septuagint (LXX)
- Lingua franca – common language
- NT in Greek



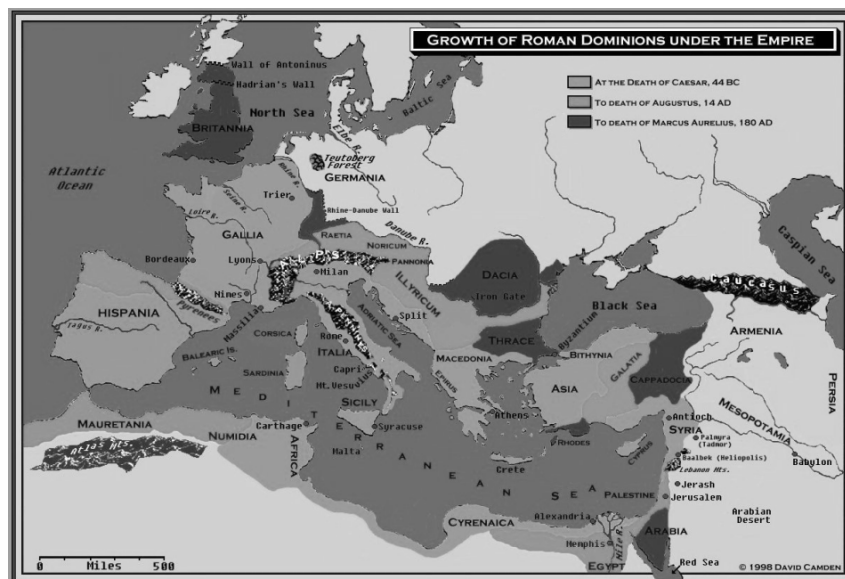
Aspects of the NT's Greco-Roman Context

■ Romanization

- Roman empire
- Roman peace = *pax Romana*
- Roman power: conquest, enslavement, crucifixion
- Roman religion: polytheism
 - Traditional gods + “deified virtues”
 - Emperors
- Roman lifestyle
- Religion ok unless it challenges status quo



Growth of the Roman Empire



A Tale of Two Saviors: 1



- Since Providence, which has ordered all things and is deeply interested in our life, has set in most perfect order by giving us Augustus, whom she filled with virtue that he might benefit humankind, sending him as a savior, both for us and for our descendants, that he might end war and arrange all things, and since he, Caesar, by his appearance excelled even our anticipations, surpassing all previous benefactors, and not even leaving to posterity any hope of surpassing what he has done, and since the birthday of the god Augustus was the beginning of the good tidings for the world that came by reason of him....

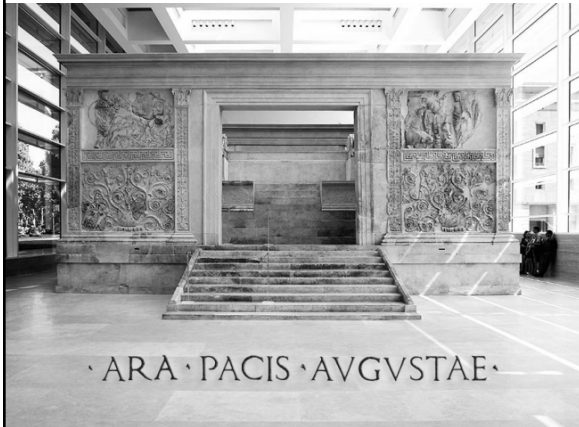
A Tale of Two Saviors: 2



- ⁸In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹²This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." ¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, ¹⁴"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

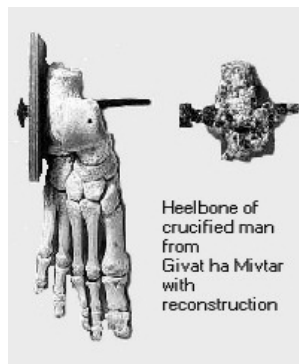
The Two Saviors Compared

Caesar's Means of Salvation

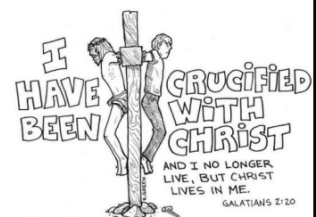


The Two Saviors Compared

Jesus' Means of Salvation



Graffiti,
Rome, ca.
200



Second Temple Judaism (ca. 537 BC—AD 70)

■ Various groups

- Palestine
 - People of the land: *am ha-aretz*
 - Pharisees: law, resurrection
 - Sadducees: priestly, temple
 - Essenes: probably Dead Sea
 - Herodians: political power
 - zealots/Zealots: anti-Rome
- Diaspora (dispersion outside Palestine): variety
 - also Gentile “God-fearers”

■ Many writings

- Apocrypha or Deuterocanonical writings (in RC and Orthodox Bibles)
- Pseudepigrapha
- Dead Sea Scrolls
- Philo and Josephus
- Rabbinic writings (later)



Jewish Commonalities

- Monotheism
- Torah
- Temple
- Synagogue
- Boundary markers/purity
 - Sabbath/calendar
 - Diet
 - Circumcision
 - Lifestyle

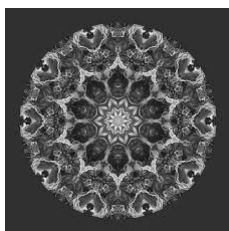


Some Other Aspects of Greco-Roman Culture

- Poverty
- Slavery
- Illiteracy
- Honor/shame



A Kaleidoscope: Unity in Diversity



- Centered on Jesus
- Shaped by Scripture
- Focused on discipleship
- Shaping an alter-culture
- Eschatological in orientation
- Expecting suffering
- An invitation to take our place as characters in the drama of God's great rescue project.

