

CONTENTS

Introduction to Teacher's Wraparound Edition	iv
Introduction: "Who Do You Say That I Am?"	2
1 The Historical Jesus	24
2 The New Testament World of Jesus	54
3 The Essential Jesus	82
4 The Gospel of Mark: Jesus the Suffering Servant	110
5 The Gospel of Matthew: Jesus the Teacher	138
6 The Gospel of Luke and Acts of the Apostles: Jesus the Savior	164
7 The Gospel of John: Jesus the Word of God	194
8 St. Paul's Letters: Jesus the Universal Lord	220
9 The Early Church: Jesus, True God and True Man	244
10 The Living Jesus Today: Constant Friend and Companion	266
Reproducible Pages	286

CHAPTER 2

The New Testament World of Jesus

Chapter Overview

Jesus of Nazareth

Palestine: The Holy Land

Language and Dialect of Jesus' Time

Religious Feasts and Practices of Jesus' Time

The Political Climate in First-Century Palestine

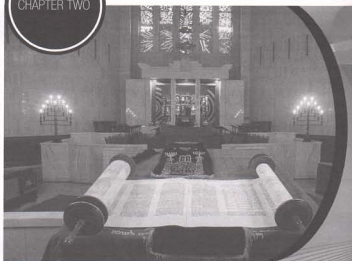
Jewish Beliefs and Practices

Religious Sects in Jesus' Time

Other People in the New Testament

The New Testament World of Jesus

CHAPTER TWO



He came to Nazareth, where he had grown up, and went according to his custom into the synagogue on the sabbath day. He stood up to read and was handed a scroll of the prophet Isaiah.

—Luke 4:16–17

Bibliography

Brown, Raymond E., S.S., Joseph Fitzmyer, S.J., and Roland E. Murphy, O.Carm. *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*. 3rd ed. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1999.

You simply must obtain a copy of this one-volume gold mine for your own use during the course. The background articles alone are worth the price of the book.

Charpentier, Etienne and John Bowden. *How to Read the New Testament*. New York: Crossroad, 1982.

An excellent introduction. You can use some of the ideas in teaching any course on the New Testament.

Coleman, Lyman. *Serendipity Youth Ministry Encyclopedia*. Littleton, CO: Serendipity House, 1985.

Many exercises can be used to apply the New Testament to the lives of your students. Permission to photocopy the exercises is granted by the publisher.

Fitzmyer, Joseph A., S.J. *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Christian Origins*. Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000.

Magisterial in scope. A collection of essays by one of the leading experts on the scrolls. Impressive scholarship.

Freyne, Sean. *The World of the New Testament*, New Testament Message 2. Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1980.

Harpur, James and Marcus Braybrooke. *The Collegeville Atlas of the Bible: A Visual Guide to the Word in Biblical Times*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999.

Jeremias, Joachim, C. H. Cave, and F. H. Cave. *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1975.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

JESUS OF NAZARETH

Truly knowing Jesus involves accepting him into our lives through the grace and interior help of the Holy Spirit.

PALESTINE: THE HOLY LAND

The Holy Land at the time of Jesus is described in its geography, major regions, and prominent cities.

LANGUAGE AND DIALECT OF JESUS' TIME

Jesus spoke Aramaic. This language, along with Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, helps us to appreciate certain aspects of the New Testament in a richer context.

RELIGIOUS FEASTS AND PRACTICES OF JESUS' TIME

The role of the Temple, the place of the synagogue, along with Passover and other Jewish religious feasts make up a key part of Jesus' life.

THE POLITICAL CLIMATE IN FIRST-CENTURY PALESTINE

Events like the Maccabean Revolt, rulers like Herod, and requirements under Roman law like paying taxes contributed to the life and ministry of Jesus.

JEWISH BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

The New Testament is deeply rooted in the Jewish people, their religious beliefs, practices, affiliations, and expectations for a Messiah.

RELIGIOUS SECTS IN JESUS' TIME

The Sadducees, Pharisees, Essenes, and Zealots were four important religious sects that were viable during New Testament times.

OTHER PEOPLE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Tax collectors, common people, Gentiles, and women were among special groups that had an impact on Jesus and the New Testament.

Advance Preparation

"Jesus of Nazareth," "Palestine: The Holy Land," "Language and Dialect of Jesus' Time"

Using the Section: The film *Where Jesus Walked* from Audio-visual Resource list

Extending the Section: poster boards, #2 pencils, colored markers or pencils; atlases of the Middle East; large wall map of the Middle East; rolls of newsprint or wide shelf paper

"Religious Feasts and Practices of Jesus' Time," "The Political Climate in First-Century Palestine"

Using the Section: Internet photo or photos of the Jewish synagogue of Capernaum; Bibles for each student; previewed segments of the film *Jesus of Nazareth* to illustrate the political climate of Jesus' day

Extending the Section: Bibles or New Testaments for each student; arrangements for a Jewish guest speaker (a rabbi or knowledgeable Jewish adult)

"Jewish Beliefs and Practices," "Religious Sects in Jesus' Time," "Other People in the New Testament"

Warm Up: half-sheets of paper—one per student; copies of Chapter 2 Handout 2, "Jesus the Messiah"; Bibles for each student

Extending the Section: Bibles for each student; printed copies of material from the Catholic Catechism (CCC, 328–336) on angels; printed copies of the Ten Commandments

Bibliography (continued from page 54)

Malina, Bruce J. *Windows on the World of Jesus: Time Travel to Ancient Judea*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993.

Fascinating glimpses into the world of Jesus on topics like honor and shame; interpersonal behavior; in-group, out-group, and intra-family relationships; loving-kindness; common values; and concept of time. Highly recommended.

Millard, Alan. *Discoveries from the Time of Jesus*. Oxford, England: A Lion Book, 1990.

This outstanding, popularly written book is lavishly illustrated. It makes the New Testament world come alive.

Murphy, F. J. *The Religious World of Jesus*. Nashville: Abington, 1991.

Osiek, Carolyn. *What Are They Saying about the Social Setting of the New Testament?* New York: Paulist Press, 1992.

Pilch, John J. *The Cultural Dictionary of the Bible*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999.

Sawicki, Marianne. *Crossing Galilee: Architectures of Contact in the Occupied Land of Jesus*. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000.

Draws on archaeology and anthropology to fix Jesus in his Galilean cultural context.

Introducing the Chapter

A primary goal of this chapter is to remind the students that Jesus actually walked the earth in a specific time and place in history as a historical person. From history, we know several things about Jesus—that he came from Nazareth, that he was a devout Jew, that he could read, and that he knew more than one language.

Chapter 2 looks at important parts of Jesus' world to help us to understand more about him.

Palestine, the Holy Land, is explored. Its four major terrains and major cities are named and described in the context of how the geography impacted the life and ministry of Jesus.

Jesus spoke a special dialect of Aramaic, a common language of his day. Because he studied in the synagogue, it is likely that Jesus also knew some Hebrew, the language of the Jewish scriptures.

The importance of the synagogue and Temple in the life of Jesus and the religious rituals and practices associated with each are discussed.

The chapter then moves into an overview of the political climate in first century Palestine. The harsh situation for Jews living under Roman rule in the time of Jesus heightened Jewish desire and expectations for a Messiah. When Jesus came, he met the expectations for some, but failed to meet the militaristic and expectations of power of many more.

To further explain the religious and cultural climate in which Jesus lived, more clarification is offered about the Jewish messianic expectations, the covenant and Torah, and beliefs about judgment, resurrection, and the spirit world.

As students move to deeper study of the New Testament, several names of Jewish sects will arise including the Sadducees, Pharisees, Essenes, and Zealots. Explanations of the origins and special beliefs of each of these sects are offered.

Finally, the chapter focuses on other people of significance in the New Testament: tax collectors, common people, Gentiles, and women.

This chapter offers a necessary prelude to the more detailed study of the New Testament, but it is merely a prelude. The students are very willing to absorb these details at the beginning of a course. Try not to let the details get in the way of the real purpose of the course: meeting the living Lord in the pages of the New Testament.

"To what shall I compare this generation? It is like children who sit in marketplaces and call to one another, 'We played the flute for you, but you did not dance; we sang a dirge but you did not mourn.'"

—Matthew 11:16–17

He spoke to them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed with three measures of wheat flour until the whole batch was leavened."

—Matthew 13:33

Jesus of Nazareth

Closely examine the two Gospel quotations above and the one on page 52. Though short, they reveal some important facts about Jesus' life. For example, we learn in the first two passages that Jesus was a keen observer of ordinary people. He watched the games of children and knew how a housewife made bread. Further, he used vivid images in his teaching. In the first passage, he compared those who refused to believe in him to whiny children at play. In the second, he compared the activity of God's Kingdom to the subtle effect of leaven (yeast) on bread. Finally, the third passage reveals several other interesting things about Jesus:

1. He came from Nazareth.
2. He customarily prayed in the synagogue on the Jewish day of rest—the Sabbath.
3. Jesus could read.
4. Further, Jesus could read Hebrew, since the Sacred Scriptures of the Chosen People were written in this language.

From this very brief passage, we can conclude, therefore, that Jesus was an educated, literate, observant Jew.

It is amazing the gold you can mine about Jesus by carefully reading even the briefest of Gospel passages. But consider this dialogue between a recent convert to Christianity and a non-believing friend:

"So you have been converted to Christ?"
"Yes."

"Then you must know a great deal about him. Tell me: What country was he born in?"

"I don't know."

"What was his age when he died?"

"I don't know."

"How many sermons did he preach?"

"I don't know."

"You certainly know very little for a man who claims to be converted to Christ."



"You are right. I am ashamed at how little I know about him. But this much I do know: Three years ago I was a drunkard. I was in debt. My family was falling to pieces. My wife and children would curse my return home each evening. But now I have given up drink; we are out of debt; ours is now a happy home. All this Christ has done for me. This much I know of him."⁵³

The new Christian in this story may not have known many facts about Jesus' life, but he really knew the Jesus who turned his life around. An important goal of reading the Gospels and learning background information on Jesus and his times is to get a clearer picture of this remarkable person who revolutionized human history. God desires that everyone come to knowledge of the truth, that is, Jesus Christ (see CCC, 74). This will require that we, like the new convert, accept—through the grace and interior helps of the Holy Spirit—Jesus into our lives.

Internet Resources

Bible History Online

Great links to wonderful graphics.

www.bible-history.com/bhodb/links.cfm?cat=2&sub=3

Chancey, Mark and Meyers, Eric. "How Jewish was Sepphoris in Jesus' Time?" *Biblical Archaeology Review*, July–August; 2000.

www.bib-arch.org. Then do a search for articles about Sepphoris.

Charlesworth, J.H. "Jesus and Jehohanan: An Archeological Note on Crucifixion." Originally published in the *Expository Times*, 1973; republished on the Internet by PBS Frontline.

www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/jesus/crucifixion.html

de Lacey, Douglas R. "Pharisees."

<http://ecole.evansville.edu/articles/pharisees.html>

Edersheim, Alfred. "Sketches of Jewish Social Life."

www.ccel.org/ccel/edersheim/sketches.html

FACTS ABOUT THE WORLD OF JESUS

Below are facts about Jesus and his times. Research and write about three other similar facts about Jesus. Plan to share them with your classmates.

- The population of Palestine in Jesus' day was about two million.
- We don't have a picture of Jesus dating from the first century because the second commandment forbade "graven images," which the Jews interpreted to mean portraits were forbidden.
- Jesus was not the only wonder worker of his day.
- The 33-foot long papyrus rolls used to record them determined the length of literary works in Jesus' day.
- The New Testament records that Jesus wrote only once.
- It was not considered unmanly for Jewish males of Jesus' day to outwardly show their emotions.
- In the Mediterranean-Jewish background of Jesus, the achievements of the son were seen as a very direct reflection on the merits of his mother.

FOR REFLECTION

How would you explain the difference between "knowing of" and "really knowing" him?

Palestine: The Holy Land

Jesus' public ministry took place in the geographic area the Jews of New Testament times called to as the Promised Land, the Holy Land, the Land of Israel, the Land of Judah, or simply the Land. The Greeks called this region *Palaestina* after the Philistines, the seafaring pirates who once lived

in the northern coastal areas. (Since the Philistines were great enemies of Israel, Jews hated this name.) Roughly the shape of a rectangle, Palestine stretches 145 miles north to south (from Dan to Beersheba) and from 25 miles wide in the north to its greatest width of 87 miles near the Dead Sea in the south.

Palestine has always held a strategic place in world history—the keystone of the "fertile crescent." It bridges two continents, playing a key international commercial, political, and cultural role. In the ancient world, it served as the crossroads for Egyptian, Syrian, and Persian expansions and later became an attractive target for the political conquests of Greece and Rome.

Geography

The geography of Palestine includes four major terrains. There is a coastal plain along the Mediterranean Sea from the Phoenician city of Sidon in the north to Gaza in the south. Jesus made only a brief visit to this region to Sidon and Tyre.

A second type of terrain is the dominant geographical feature in Palestine—a mountain range



The Road to Bethlehem

running north and south, paralleling the Mediterranean seacoast about fifty miles inland. On the crest of this chain the Jews built some of their principal cities, including Jerusalem and Bethlehem. West of

Jesus of Nazareth and Palestine:

(pages 54–55) The Holy Land (pages 55–59) and Language and Dialect of Jesus' Time (pages 59–61)

Objectives

The goals of these sections are to enable students to:

- uncover basic knowledge about Jesus from the scriptures.
- demonstrate a basic familiarity with Palestine, including the significance of Capernaum and Jerusalem.
- describe the Jerusalem of Jesus' day, including its relation to Samaria.
- identify Jesus' native tongue and other languages he may have spoken.

Summary and Background Information

Chapter 2 opens by examining some facts about Jesus that are revealed in the Gospels. A short narrative builds on these facts and encourages students to really think about what it means to really *know* Jesus.

Knowing about the world of Jesus helps us understand the Bible better and enables us to know the Lord at a deeper level. This section provides excellent background information on the land Jesus inhabited and the languages that he and his contemporaries spoke and understood.

The Holy Land at the time of Christ is described in its geography, major regions, and prominent cities. Maps invite students to acquaint themselves more deeply with Jerusalem and surrounding locales, and one activity encourages them to use both a map and Bible.

The end of this trio of topics provides students with additional information about Aramaic, the language Jesus spoke. Other languages pertinent for studying Scripture—namely Hebrew, Greek, and Latin—are also described and discussed. This brief focus on languages spoken during Christ's time will help students to appreciate certain aspects of the New Testament in a deeper, richer way.

Internet Resources (continued from page 56)

Into His Own: Perspectives on the World of Jesus

Good information on the political, social, intellectual, and cultural climate of Jesus' time.

<http://virtualreligion.net/ihw/>

Maps on the Historic Jesus

Some helpful maps provided.

www.historicjesus.com/maps/index.html

Meier, John P. "The Historical Jesus and the Historical Samaritans: What Can Be Said?" *Biblica* 81; 2000.

www.bsw.org/?l=71811&a=Comm05.html

Palestine in the Time of Jesus: Social Structures and Social Conflicts

Images and information provided to supplement K.C. Hanson and Douglas E. Oakman's text of the same name (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998).


www.kchanson.com/PTJ/ptj.html

Windows into the World of Jesus

www.columbusmennonite.org/Bible/default.htm

Warm Up

1. Use the For Reflection question on page 55 concerning the difference between “knowing of” and “knowing” Jesus as the platform for this Warm Up. Have students address this concept from their own lived experiences of getting to know someone well. Do they have friends they know extremely well? What was the process like in getting to know this person? Were there surprises along the way? Was getting to know this person scary at the beginning? Shift this discussion to focus on the Jesus question. What does it mean to *know* Jesus as opposed to *knowing about* him?

2.  Have students read and complete the Mind Logo Activity, “What Happened in the Holy Land?” on page 56. The Chapter 2, Handout 1 provides a format for this activity. Allow fifteen to twenty minutes for students to do the first part of this assignment. Call on students to answer the questions. Have students complete the suggested PowerPoint® presentation at home.

Using the Section

1. Show a previewed segment (fifteen to twenty minutes) of *Where Jesus Walked*, a 90-minute documentary, available through Ignatius Press, to give students a feel for the terrain and natural flora and fauna of the Holy Land.
2. Point out that (the Holy Land) at 145 miles long and 87 miles across at the widest, Palestine was about the same size, in area, as the state of Massachusetts. Although some people traveled by donkey, most people walked short distances in caravans. From Nazareth or Capernaum to Jerusalem was a distance of about ninety miles, a dusty walk that most Jews would have made several times a year. One writer suggests that Jesus—and his followers—may have walked an average of twenty miles a day during Jesus’ three years of public ministry. During his lifetime, Jesus may have walked as many as twenty thousand miles throughout Palestine.
3. Ask students if knowing a bit more about the geography of Palestine and the walking Jesus did helps them to understand the stories he told and the analogies he used. (*Jesus told many stories about farming, birds, trees, the weather, etc. because those who listened to Jesus lived more of their lives outdoors. They were sensitive to the lessons of nature.*) Can students recall any nature stories Jesus told?



WHAT HAPPENED IN THE HOLY LAND?

Check the following New Testament references and the accompanying map. Write the correct location where each event took place.

- Where did the resurrected Jesus eat a meal with two disciples? (Lk 24:13)
- To which city was the traveler in the parable of the Good Samaritan going? (Lk 10:30)
- To what did Jesus compare Chorazin and Bethsaida? (Mt 11:20–22)
- Where was the birthplace of Peter, Andrew, and Philip? (Jn 1:44)
- Where did the resurrected Jesus appear to the Apostles in John’s Gospel? (Jn 21)
- Where did Jesus give sight to a blind man? (Lk 18:35–43) and dine with Zacchaeus? (Lk 19:1–10)
- Where did Jesus meet a woman at a well and reveal that he was the living water? (Jn 4:5)

Now, do an internet search and download some pictures that illustrate different archaeological sites from first-century Palestine. Create a “Pinterest” presentation that uses at least seven pictures you found in your research. These resources to begin your research are:

- EBCN Image Database for Biblical Studies from Yale Divinity School: <http://search.yale.edu/EBN/EBNview/index.jsp>
- Holy Land Photos: www.holylandphotos.org
- BiblePlaces.com: www.bibleplaces.com



this mountain range were arable lands while to their east was a barren wilderness. The bulk of Jesus’ activities took place in this region.

East of the mountains is the third type of terrain of Palestine—the great Rift Valley, through which flows the meandering Jordan River. Rising in the northern mountains, this river winds into the beautiful freshwater Sea of Galilee (also called Lake Gennesaret or Lake Tiberias in the New Testament) and then narrows into a fertile valley on its way to the saltiest of all bodies of water in the world—the Dead Sea. John the Baptist’s ministry took place on both banks of the lower Jordan River where Jesus himself was baptized.

The fourth geographical terrain in Palestine is Transjordan—the hilly terrain east of the Jordan River and the Dead Sea. To the far north lies the famous Mount Hermon, which may have been the site of Jesus’ Transfiguration. In the area of the Decapolis, the Scriptures report that Jesus drove an army of demons into a herd of pigs that threw itself off a cliff (see Mark 5:1–13).

Important Regions and Cities

The regions of Galilee, Samaria, and Judea lay over prominently in Jesus’ ministry.

Galilee in the north was the center of Jesus’ earthly ministry. It was a relatively rich land of fertile, rolling hills, ruled in Jesus’ lifetime by Herod

Answers to “What Happened in the Holy Land?” (page 56 of the ST) and Handout 1 (page 295)

- Where did the resurrected Jesus eat a meal with two disciples? (Lk 24:13) *Emmaus*
- To which city was the traveler in the parable of the Good Samaritan going? (Lk 10:30) *Jericho*
- To what did Jesus compare Chorazin and Bethsaida? (Mt 11:20–22) *Tyre and Sidon*
- Where was the birthplace of Peter, Andrew, and Philip? (Jn 1:44) *Bethsaida*
- Where did the resurrected Jesus appear to the Apostles in John’s Gospel? (Jn 21) *Sea of Tiberias or Galilee*
- Where did Jesus give sight to a blind man (Lk 18:35–43) and dine with Zacchaeus? (Lk 19:1–10) *Jericho*
- Where did Jesus meet a woman at a well and reveal that he was the living water? (Jn 4:5) *Sychar in Samaria*

CHAPTER TWO • The New Testament World of Jesus 57

around 4 BC–AD 37). The farmers and fishermen were somewhat prosperous because of the fertility of the land. The Sea of Galilee provided a livelihood for many fishermen. Peter and his father and brothers would have been among these. The population of Galilee was mainly Jewish, but many non-Jews also could be found in the area. This made Galilee more cosmopolitan in outlook. Jesus tended to look down on Pharisees because of their more frequent relations with their non-Jewish neighbors to the north. Judean Jews considered that the Galileans spoke a unique Aramaic dialect. Still, Galilean Jews were very zealous about their religion.

Jesus and most of his Apostles were Galileans. Jesus grew up in Nazareth, a small town in Galilee of about 1,200 people. Nazareth lay about 10 miles off the main road through Galilee. Many of the picturesque details that color Jesus' parables are rooted in his keen observation of Galilean life: birds of the air, flowers withering under a heavy catch.

In recent decades, archaeologists have unearthed the Hellenistic city of Sepphoris, the former impressive capital of Galilee built by Herod Antipas. It was about an hour's walk from the small town of Nazareth and would have provided work for the carpenter Joseph and Jesus, although the apostle does not say so one way or the other. During his public life, however, Jesus may have avoided this city

since it was a power center for King Herod Antipas and others who opposed Jesus.

Other important cities in Galilee include Cana, Bethsaida, and Capernaum. Jesus performed his first miracle at Cana. He cured a blind man at Bethsaida and walked on water near this place. Capernaum served as the headquarters of Jesus' Galilean ministry. He most likely stayed at the house of the Apostle Peter. He frequently taught in Capernaum's synagogue. Jesus also performed many miracles in and around Capernaum and paid the Temple tax while residing there. A recent archaeological dig discovered a fourth-century synagogue in Capernaum. It most likely stood on the very location where Jesus once preached. Nearby, archaeologists have unearthed the fascinating ruins of a fifth-century church that may have been built on Peter's house.

Samaria was in the north-central region of the Holy Land, directly south of Galilee. The Samaritans descended from foreigners who intermarried with the old northern Israelite tribes at the time of Assyria's conquest of the northern Kingdom. Jews and Samaritans alike recognized Abraham as their common father. However, Jews viewed the Samaritans as foreigners, perhaps only a notch above the hated Gentiles.



The Sea of Galilee

Gentiles—A term for non-Jews.

- Have the students discuss how they perceive the differences to be between living in Jerusalem versus where Jesus grew up in the little Galilean village of Nazareth.
- Quiz students about what languages Jesus spoke or knew. Recap much of the material presented in the text about the primary language that Jesus spoke—Aramaic. Expand, if you can, on the Gospel examples of parallel statements, comparisons, and exaggeration that were common in Aramaic speech.
- Walk students through the six Learn by Doing projects suggested for this chapter on page 77. Have them choose one. Projects are due on the last class session spent on Chapter 2.

Extending the Section

- Divide the students into small groups to make poster-size maps of the Holy Land. Provide simple outline maps of ancient Palestine to each group. Ask them to use atlases to locate and include the following on their group map:

CITIES	BODIES OF WATER	PROVINCES
Bethany	Jordan River	Northern (location of Nazareth)
Bethlehem	Dead Sea	Middle
Bethsaida	Mediterranean Sea	Southern (location of Jerusalem)
Caesarea Philippi	Sea of Galilee	
Cana		
Capernaum		
Emmaus		
Jerusalem		
Nazareth		
Masada		
Tiberias		

- Display a current and detailed map of Palestine or Israel. Refer to contemporary political situations that have occurred there in recent years. Point out the four major terrains in this region—coastal plain, mountain range, Rift Valley, and Transjordan.
- Divide the class into small groups and give each group a long roll of newsprint or shelf paper along with art supplies. Over a week or so, each group should work together—perhaps at the end of the class period—to create a historical timeline featuring important events from 100 BC to AD 500. Outside of class, students

should do research to identify other historical events that should be included. Among those important in Christian history are:

- The birth of Jesus (6–4 BC)
 - The Roman occupation of Palestine (63 BC–AD 330)
 - Paul begins to write letters (AD 51)
 - The death of King Herod (4 BC)
 - Pilate becomes procurator of Jerusalem (AD 26–36)
 - The reign of Tiberius (AD 14–37)
 - The destruction of the Temple (AD 70)
4. Have students answer the four For Review questions for the section on Palestine on page 59, and the three For Review questions for the section on language and dialect on page 61. Weave the For Reflection questions from these sections into class discussion.

Like the Sadducees, the Samaritans accepted only the Law of Moses and thus considered sacred only the first five books of the Bible (the Pentateuch). Although monotheistic, they rejected the Temple at Jerusalem because they believed God chose Mount Gerizim as the proper place of worship. Jews looked on Samaritan worship as false. The Jews destroyed the Mount Gerizim Temple in 129 BC, thus increasing the hate between the two ethnic groups. Galilean Jews usually avoided Samaria if they could on their pilgrimages south to Jerusalem, as Samaritans would often swoop down from the hills to attack them.

Although Jesus did not allow his Apostles to preach to the Samaritans (Mt 10:5), he himself was very loving toward them, even using one of them as the hero of his Good Samaritan parable (Lk 10:30–35). Jesus was also kind to a Samaritan woman (Jn 4:1–42) and praised a Samaritan leper for coming back to thank him for his cure (Lk 17:16). Some of Jesus' enemies tried to insult him by calling him a Samaritan (see John 8:48).

When the earliest Christians began their missionary work, they turned first to the Samaritans. Interestingly, today there still exists a Samaritan church of between five and six hundred who meet on Mount Gerizim to offer sacrificial paschal lambs. Economically, Samaria was fairly prosperous. Its most important city was Samaria, a pagan city at the time of Jesus' ministry.

Judea in the south of Palestine was a dry, barren, craggy region. Its main inhabitants were the Jews who returned to the Holy Land after the captivity in Babylon. Many Jewish leaders settled in Judea, centering their life on the Temple. In the heart of Judea—lofted on two hills 2,255 to 2,400 feet above sea level—was Jerusalem, the political, economic, and religious center of Judaism. Most of the Judean population lived in this city or in Jericho.

As it is today in Israel, Jerusalem was the main city in Judea. The Jerusalem of Jesus' time featured many recently completed building projects. During his reign, Herod built a wall around

the New City and constructed a theater, an amphitheater, a hippodrome, and a beautiful palace for himself in the Upper City. His greatest accomplishment, however, was the rebuilding of the Second Temple, one of the building wonders of the ancient world. Jerusalem's population at that time is hard to determine. Some scholars put it at 55,000 to 70,000 people, with as many as another 120,000 Jews from around Palestine and the Roman Empire flocking to the Temple area for the major Jewish festivals.

Jews who lived in Jerusalem worked at many different trades: wool merchants, leather workers, oil processors, bakers and butchers, manufacturers of ointments and resins, building tradesmen, traders in grain, and other occupations involving the production of food. Since the Temple was a major cultural and religious center, many Jews worked in various trades associated with it, for example, as scribes who interpreted the Law.

Other Judean cities of interest are Bethel—the birthplace of Jesus, Bethany, the home of his friend Lazarus, whom he raised from the dead, and Jericho, a town where Jesus healed a blind man and met a famous tax collector, Zacchaeus.

Southern Judea contained a barren wilderness where Jesus retreated to after his Baptism (Mt 8:13). There you can also find the 53-mile-long Dead Sea, which, at 1,300 feet below sea level, is the lowest point on earth. Its salt content is as high as 35 percent.



The Dead Sea

Audio-visual Resources

Dead Sea Scrolls

Includes early footage on the discovery of the scrolls plus interviews with four current scholars. Fascinating and accurate documentary (50 minutes, Ignatius Press).

The Holy Land

"A journey to nearly forty major sites as they appear today . . . with a reminder of what happened there in Biblical history" (56 minutes, Reader's Digest).

Jesus and His Times

A three-part series produced by Reader's Digest. Very well-done and supportive of traditional teachings about Jesus. The segments are titled "The Story Begins," "Among the People," and "The Final Days." Each segment is approximately an hour long (173 total minutes, Critics Choice).

Jesus of Nazareth

The classic six-hour British television mini-series produced by Italian director Franco Zeffirelli that premiered in 1977. It has been aired annually during Lent or on Easter weekend in almost every Christian country of the world ever since. An all-star cast and a haunting musical score by Maurice Jarre added to the acclaim for this unique and powerful video presentation of the Gospels. This film is widely available through libraries and video stores.

continued on page 62

CHAPTER TWO: The New Testament World of Jesus 59

connect this with Utah's Great Salt Lake at 28 percent and the ocean's at 3.5 percent. It is impossible for a person to sink in this body of water. Finally, south of Judea was Samaria, which was brought under

Jewish control by John Hyrcanus in 125 bc. This area was absorbed into Judea under Herod the Great's reign. It did not figure into Jesus' life.

FOR REVIEW

- Where did Palestine get its name?
- What are the four geographic areas of Palestine?
- List two major cities that figure into Jesus' life that are located in Galilee and Judea.
- Who were the Samaritans? Discuss two of their beliefs.

FOR REFLECTION

Why do you think God chose the particular time and place that he did to be incarnated?

Language and Dialect of Jesus' Time

Jesus spoke Aramaic, a Semitic language closely related to Hebrew and originally spoken by tribes from areas of ancient Syria and Mesopotamia. More precisely, the Gospels hint that Jesus spoke a Galilean version of Aramaic, considered mainly as a regional dialect by Aramaic speakers in Judea. Note how Peter's language betrayed him when he denied knowing Jesus:

A little later the bystanders came over and said to Peter, "Surely you too are one of them; even your speech gives you away." (Mt 26:73)

Aramaic became the official language of Assyria and later of the Persian Empire. It supplanted the native languages of conquered peoples. When Jews returned to Palestine from

Babylon in the sixth century bc, they adopted Aramaic in place of Hebrew as the common language of their land.

Although the Sacred Scriptures were read in Hebrew, in Jesus' day many people did not understand Hebrew. So the Scriptures were translated into Aramaic paraphrases (known as *Targums*) when the sacred Hebrew texts were read aloud in the synagogues. The Gospels (written in Greek) retain several Aramaic sayings of Jesus like *Ephphatha* ("be opened") and *Talitha kum* ("Little girl, get up!"). The Gospels also contain Aramaic place names like *Gethsemane* ("Oil Press") and *Golgotha* ("Place of the Skull"). They also use the Aramaic word *for* "son of," as in Bar-Jonah, Bartholomew, and Barabbas. Perhaps the most important example is the Aramaic word Jesus used when he addressed God as "Father"—*Abba*.

Abba—An Aramaic term of endearment meaning "daddy." Jesus used this word to teach that God is a loving Father.

Homework Assignment

1. Remind students to read the next two chapter sections, "Religious Feasts and Practices of Jesus' Time" on pages 61–63 and "The Political Climate in First-Century Palestine" on pages 63–67 for the next class session.
2. Assign the "Facts about the World of Jesus" activity (page 55) as homework. Later, recruit a small team of students to compile the facts into a single list. Provide several printed copies for the classroom and, if possible, post the list as a research resource to the course website.

Palestine: The Holy Land For Review Questions and Answers

1. Where did Palestine get its name?
Palestine was named by the Greeks after the Philistines, the seafaring pirates who once lived in the northern coastal areas.
2. What are the four geographic areas of Palestine?
The four geographic areas of Palestine are coastal plain, mountain range, Rift Valley, and Transjordan.
3. List two major cities that figure into Jesus' life that are located in Galilee and Judea.
Jesus grew up in Nazareth of Galilee. Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea and worshipped and was tried in Jerusalem.
4. Who were the Samaritans? Discuss two of their beliefs.
The Samaritans descended from foreigners who intermarried with the old Israelite tribes at the time of Assyria's conquest of the northern kingdom. They only accepted the first five books of the Bible as sacred. They rejected the Temple at Jerusalem, believing God chose Mount Gerizim as the proper place of worship.

Creative Learning

1. Point out the letters INRI on a class crucifix (or one you have brought in for this occasion). Refer to the feature "INRI" on page 60 and ask students to follow through with the second For Reflection activity on page 61. It involves designing a titulus for a crucifix that would state the student's belief about Jesus. This project could be offered as an optional extra-credit assignment that is ideal for students especially interested in art and creative writing.
2. An extra-credit group project could be offered for students who are interested in cinematography. This group could tape student responses to the For Reflection question on page 59 about why God chose to become incarnate as Jesus. The videotaped interviews could be done spontaneously or after interview subjects have been given a day or two to consider their answers.
3. Invite students interested in Aramaic to consult several websites to show the rest of the class how the word Jesus looks when written in Christ's native language. They can also use pronunciation keys to share the pronunciation of "Jesus" and "Abba." Search the Internet for Aramaic pronunciation guides.

Scholars believe some Hebrew might still have been spoken commonly during Jesus' lifetime, especially in the southern province of Judea. It may be that Jesus himself knew a little Hebrew, learned in the synagogue, and spoke it on his visits to Jerusalem or in his debates with the learned scribes and Pharisees.

The common language throughout the Roman Empire at this time was a colloquial Greek known as *Koine* ("common") Greek. It became the favored spoken language in the Near East because of Alexander the Great's conquests in the fourth century BC. Jesus may have had a limited knowledge of this language, finding it useful in his trade as a carpenter, especially if he did any work in a large city like Sepphoris. He may have spoken to Pilate in Greek.

Finally, some Latin was probably used in Palestine because of the presence of the Roman occupation forces. But Latin was more likely spoken only by and for the Roman officials. Almost certainly, Jesus did not speak Latin. *Koine* Greek was the common language of the Empire—the language of commerce and education. Jews who dealt with foreigners most often spoke *Koine* Greek with them.

Whether or not Jesus knew any Hebrew or Greek is an ongoing debate among biblical scholars. What most do not question is that his native tongue was Aramaic, the ordinary, everyday language of Jews in the first century AD. Interestingly, some scholars have taken the Gospel words of Jesus—written in Greek—and translated them back into his mother tongue, Aramaic. Their studies reveal much about Jesus' use of Semitic speech

forms which are very poetic and memorable—using techniques like alliteration, assonance, play on words, and parallelism. Some examples include:

1. *Parallelist statements.* Aramaic, like most Semitic languages, often expresses an important thought a second time in a slightly different form. Both forms are complete, saying the same thing. An example:

Give to the one who asks of you, and do not turn your back on one who wants to borrow. (Mt 5:42)

2. *Comparisons.* Except for Arabic, the Semitic languages do not have a special way to express the comparative and superlative degrees. For example, they do not have the equivalents of our words "better" or "best." Therefore, if you want to say that Jesus is the best or greatest of all kings, in Hebrew or Aramaic you would have to say "King of Kings." Here's another example from Jesus' teaching, where he is quoting an Old Testament law:

You have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy." (Mt 5:43)

The Old Testament was not teaching that you must go out of your way to literally hate your enemies. What it was teaching was that the Jews should love their neighbor (defined as a fellow Jew) more than the enemy. Jesus took this teaching a step further:

But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you. (Mt 5:44)



INRI

Do you know what the INRI means on a crucifix? The meaning comes from the custom of Roman authorities of posting the crime of condemned criminals on their crosses. The idea was to advertise the crime to ward off others from ever thinking about committing something similar. In Palestine, Romans would have posted a sign in three languages: Greek, Hebrew, and Latin. At least one of these languages could be understood by visitors to Jerusalem during the religious holidays. INRI abbreviates the Latin words that would have been posted: *Iesus Nazarenus Rex Iudeorum*, which translates to "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews."

Audio-visual Resources (continued from page 60)

Jesus: The New Way

An excellent series produced by Dr. Tom Wright, noted British biblical scholar who accepts the basic gospel message about Jesus, unlike so many of those in the Jesus Seminar who have a particular axe to grind. Segments could be used successfully with students or could be purchased for teacher background (six 30-minute programs on two videotapes with script, teacher's guide, and student worksheets; Vision Video/Gateway Films).

Rome: Footsteps of Peter & Paul

The footsteps of these two early Apostles are retraced to landmarks like the Coliseum, Mamertine Prison, and Vatican City (60 minute video, Ignatius Press).

Steps into the Holy Land

Visual tour of the Holy Land including Bethlehem, Calvary, Nazareth, and Jerusalem (60 minute video, Ignatius Press).

Where Jesus Walked

A docu-drama that leads the viewer on a pilgrimage through the Holy Land from Christ's birth to his Resurrection (90 minute video, Ignatius Press).

Yeshua: The Land, the Promise, the Messiah

Presented by Dr. Oswald Hoffmann, Yeshua reveals ancient customs and beliefs with exceptional clarity and detail. Starts with Abraham and moves through Old Testament history to the time of Jesus. Though produced in the 1980s, it is still relevant and useful (5 programs approximately 50 minutes each, ChristianCinema.com).

CHAPTER TWO: The New Testament World of Jesus

61

Jesus calls on his followers to love everyone as a brother or sister.

Exaggeration. Use of hyperbole, or exaggeration, to drive home a point was common in Aramaic. Jesus uses this technique, too, when we say things like "This test is going to kill me" or "I could eat

a million of these." Exaggerated statements are to be taken figuratively. When Jesus said "Blind guides, who strain out the gnat and swallow the camel!" (Mt 23:24), he was saying that some of the teachers stressed others' small faults while ignoring their own sinfulness.

FOR REVIEW

- What was Jesus' native tongue? How do we know this?
- What other languages might have been spoken in first-century Palestine?
- What language did Jesus speak when dealing with foreigners?

FOR REFLECTION

- Read Matthew 5:29. What form of speech does this represent? Why can we be fairly certain that Jesus did not mean it to be taken literally?
- Design your own statue (small sign with a title) for a crucifix that announces to the world what you believe about Jesus of Nazareth. You can use abbreviations on the design. Separately, write out a short explanation of your statue.

Religious Feasts and Practices of Jesus' Time

Jesus' practice of his Jewish faith revolved around the synagogue, Temple, and religious feasts.

Synagogue

Jesus learned his Jewish religion from his parents and from praying and studying in Nazareth's synagogue. Synagogue comes from the Greek word for "assembly." Many larger towns had more than one synagogue, and Jerusalem may have had hundreds.

The synagogue served three main purposes:

- It was a house of prayer where Scriptures were read and Yahweh was worshipped.
- It was a place of discussion for legal settlements.
- It was the local school.

Synagogues were typically built in towns once ten or more men could be assembled. First-century synagogues were similar from town to town, but none were exactly the same. (Over one hundred have been

discovered in Palestine, mainly in or near Galilee.) Typically found near rivers or springs so worshippers could purify themselves in running water, the rectangular insides of synagogues had stepped stone benches on three sides, with higher seats set aside for those



Religious Feasts and Practices of Jesus' Time (pages 61–63)

and The Political Climate in First-Century Palestine (pages 63–67)

Objectives

The goal of these sections is to enable students to:

- distinguish between synagogue and Temple, including the role each played in religious feasts and weekly activities.
- describe in some detail the political scene of Jesus' day.
- explain the existence of slavery in Jesus' time and how his teaching applies to slavery.

Summary and Background Information

Politics and religion were as influential, controversial, and interesting in Jesus' day as they are in our own. Knowing about the political and religious atmosphere in which Jesus lived helps us to appreciate his life, words, and actions. Knowing Jesus more deeply helps us to understand how we too must live, work, and communicate in a complex culture. It helps us to think about our lives as citizens and as members of a community of faith.

Descriptions of the religious feasts, the Temple, and the synagogues open these two sections. As they read through the material, students will learn about Passover, Pentecost and the Feast of Tabernacles—the major Jewish feasts. They will also explore other celebrations and practices that were part of the everyday life of Jesus.

A fairly detailed account of the political scene is the major focus of the second section. Students will learn about Herod the Great, the Maccabean Revolt, the rule of Pontius Pilate, and the role of local tax collectors.

Consideration of the volatile issue of slavery wraps up this section. Students will finish by reading St. Paul's letter to Philemon in its entirety. This reading is good preparation for the rest of the Student Text. In fact, students will be challenged to read much of the New Testament, learning about it and its primary subject—Jesus Christ.

Language and Dialect of Jesus' Time For Review Questions and Answers

- What was Jesus' native tongue? How do we know this?
Jesus' native tongue was Aramaic. We know this because scholars agree that Aramaic was the ordinary, everyday language of Jews in the first century AD.
- What other languages may have been spoken in first-century Palestine?
Other languages of first-century Palestine included Hebrew, Greek, and Latin.
- What language did Jews speak when dealing with foreigners?
Jews doing business with foreigners spoke a colloquial Greek known as koine.

Warm Up

1. Ask students to name their three favorite celebration days of the year. As a follow-up, ask: "How has this list changed for you in the past five years?" Then engage students briefly in a discussion about the universality of some life celebrations. *(For example, birthday parties: Birthday parties for kids in the United States often mean party hats, games, blowing out candles on a cake and party bags for the guests. In China, the birthday child pays respect to his or her parents and receives a gift of money. Friends and relatives are invited to lunch and noodles are served to wish the birthday child a long life. In Denmark, a flag is flown outside a window to designate that someone who lives in that house is having a birthday. Presents are placed around the child's bed while they are sleeping so they will see them right away when they wake up.)* Lead students to name the common themes in these celebrations.
2. Poll students to rank the three "greatest" or most important Christian religious feasts and name what each celebrates. For the purposes of this discussion, it's okay to accept different responses, but generally the three greatest Christian feasts are Easter, Pentecost, and Christmas, with Easter being the most important since it celebrates the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

of a more prestigious position. The scroll containing the Law (Torah) and the scroll containing the writings of the Prophets were kept in a cabinet called an *ark*.

Synagogues were opened three times a day for those who wished to pray. There were special services on market days, Mondays, and Thursdays. The most important day for regular worship was the sabbath (Saturday). Once ten men over the age of thirteen assembled, the simple service could begin. Sacrifices were not offered, nor did priests or Levites play any special role. Ordinary townsfolk conducted the service, though a "leader of the synagogue" (e.g., Jairus in Lk 8:41) was appointed to maintain the building and organize the meetings. His assistant was in charge of the sacred scrolls, which he handed to the readers for the day.

Typically, the congregation stood, facing Jerusalem, and recited various prayers, beginning with the confession of faith known as the *Shema* (Dt 6:4). Other prayers included the Eighteen Benedictions—prayers of praise and thanksgiving to God. The key part of the service was the careful reading of the Torah in Hebrew, followed by selected readings from the Prophets, again in Hebrew. These readings were translated simultaneously during the respective readings. All of this was done in a standing position. Then, the leader of the synagogue invited one of the guests—preferably someone well-educated or well-traveled—to explain the meaning of the readings in a homily. On one occasion, Jesus was invited to preach in Nazareth. Also, St. Paul frequently proclaimed God's Word in synagogues. The synagogue service ended with a brief prayer by the leader. It was also the custom for synagogue worshippers to leave alms for the poor—in money or in other gifts—as they left the place of worship.

Temple

For Jews, the one and only Temple was in Jerusalem. The Temple was where the Jews offered sacrifices to God. It was the holy place where Jews believed God dwelled in a special way. Only the priests had a role in Temple worship. It was the priests who were able to sacrifice the unblemished lamb to Yahweh on a daily basis. Only the high priest could enter the most sacred space inside the Temple—the Holy of Holies—once a year, on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement.



Depiction of the Third Temple

The Temple stands during New Testament times was the third one constructed in Jerusalem. The first, Solomon's Temple, was destroyed by the Babylonians in 587 BC. The second Temple, that of Zerubbabel, was replaced by Herod the Great's magnificent Temple. Construction of the third Temple began in 20–19 BC (see Jn 2:20). It took ten thousand workers supervised by one thousand priests to finish building the Temple in ten years.

However, the work of decorating the Temple was still going on in Jesus' day. The Temple was completely finished in AD 63, only six short years before the Romans leveled it during the First Jewish Revolt (66–70).

The Temple was a marvelous structure, 225 feet in its perimeter, with eight main gates. Around the altar was a courtyard reserved for priests. Next were the courtyard of Israel (for males) and then the courtyard for women. Beyond that was the courtyard of the Gentiles. No Gentile could cross this courtyard under penalty of death.

The Law required Jews to pay a Temple tax and obligated Jewish men to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem on the three major feasts of Passover, Pentecost,

Religious Feasts and Practices of Jesus' Time For Review Questions and Answers

1. What took place in synagogues?

Synagogues were used for three different purposes. They were used as houses of prayer where Scriptures were read and Yahweh was worshipped. They were also used as places for discussion of legal settlements. Synagogues also served as local schools.

2. Describe a typical Sabbath service in Jesus' day.

During a typical Sabbath service, ordinary townsfolk conducted the service though a leader who was appointed to maintain the building and organize meetings. The congregation stood facing Jerusalem and recited various prayers beginning with the Shema. Then, other prayers were said, and the Torah was read in Hebrew. Selected readings from the Prophets followed that. Later, the leader of the synagogue invited a guest to explain the meaning of the readings in a homily. The Sabbath service ended with a prayer led by the leader.

3. List three facts about the Jerusalem Temple.

There was only one Temple, and it was in Jerusalem. Jews believed that God dwelled in the Temple in a special way. The Temple building standing during the time of Jesus was the third one built. The first one was destroyed by the Babylonians in 587 BC, while the second Temple was taken down by Herod the Great who initiated the building of the third Temple in 20 or 19 BC.

Tabernacles. However, not all Jews could make the holy city for all the feasts.

Jewish Feasts

As mentioned, Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles were the major Jewish feasts.

Passover (Pesach) was the most important Jewish feast because it celebrated the Chosen People's liberation from Egypt. The feast of Passover involved the slaughter of the paschal lamb and the eating of a seder meal in the holy city of Jerusalem to commemorate the Exodus. Jesus' Last Supper was around a Passover meal that he celebrated in Jerusalem. The Last Supper anticipated Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, the saving event that frees all people from sin and death.

Pentecost was a feast held fifty days after Passover. The word Pentecost means "fiftieth." Pentecost was originally a harvest festival. However, by New Testament times, it celebrated Yahweh's giving of the Law to Moses, the Sinai covenant.

Tabernacles (Booths) was a fall harvest celebration. Pilgrims to Jerusalem built huts out of branches to recall the time that Jews spent in the wilderness. They approached the Temple in procession waving branches while praising God. John's Gospel tells us that Jesus taught in the Temple during this feast (John 7:14–39).

The Gospel of John (10:22) also reports that Jesus traveled to Jerusalem for *Hanukkah* (Feast of Dedication), which was held in December to commemorate the Temple's rededication in 164 BC after it was profaned by the foreign ruler Antiochus IV.

Using the Section

1. If possible, display photos of the Jewish synagogue at Capernaum from the Internet. A variety of views can illustrate how this simple structure was used by the Jewish community of that village. Prompt students to add more details about the typical synagogue that they have learned from the Student Text. Ask students if they can identify similar multi-purpose buildings in their own neighborhoods or towns today. One website featuring a variety of views of the synagogue is Bible Places (www.Bibleplaces.com).
2. Call on students to describe the Temple in Jerusalem. How was it different than the synagogues? Ask for a show of hands from any students who may have visited a synagogue, perhaps for a bar mitzvah or bat mitzvah. Invite students to describe their experiences and this Jewish place of prayer and worship.
3. Help students to see some connections between synagogue services and worship practices the Catholic Church uses today.
4. Distribute Bibles and assign For Review number 5 on page 63. Note how the Pharisees and scribes parade their religious practice publicly and are criticized for that by Jesus.
5. Show a previewed segment (or several segments) from the classic television mini-series *Jesus of Nazareth* that illustrates the political climate of Jesus' day. Call on students for their reactions. Ask: "How is what you've seen in the film substantiated by information presented in the text?"

FOR REVIEW

- 1. What took place in synagogues?
- 2. Describe a typical Sabbath service in Jesus' day.
- 3. List three facts about the Jerusalem Temple.
- 4. Which were the three great Jewish religious feasts? What did each celebrate?
- 5. What is Jesus criticizing in Matthew 23:2, 6?

FOR REFLECTION

Describe the Shema (Ex 6:4) and the verse that follows (Ex 6:5) into your journal. Write a short reflection on what it would mean concretely for you to love the Lord "with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength."

The Political Climate in First-Century Palestine

Recall that when Jesus was born, Palestine was part of the Roman Empire. Romans considered their subjects to be the civilized world; outsiders were barbarians. The Roman Empire was large geographically. It extended as far north as Great Britain in western Europe to Egypt in the southeastern part of the Mediterranean basin.

With the empire came a state of peace and security—the famous *Pax Romana* (Peace of Rome) and

its other good effects: a common language, an intricate system of roads, a fair and just legal system, and a strong military force. Rome was intent on putting down piracy and banditry—a real problem in some parts of the empire, for example, in Samaria. Its aim was to guarantee workable trade and communication systems throughout the Empire. The relative stability brought by the Romans enabled Christian missionaries to evangelize peacefully throughout the empire, especially in the cities. This helps explain why Christianity spread so rapidly in the first few decades after Jesus' Resurrection.

Religious Feasts and Practices of Jesus' Time For Review Questions and Answers (continued from page 64)

4. Which were the three great Jewish religious feasts? What did each celebrate?

The three great Jewish feasts were Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. Passover celebrated the Chosen People's liberation from Egypt. Pentecost, held fifty days after Passover, originally celebrated the harvest. By New Testament times, however, it focused on the giving of the Sinai covenant to Moses by Yahweh. Tabernacles was a fall harvest celebration that also recalled the time the Jews spent in the wilderness before entering the Promised Land.

5. What is Jesus criticizing in Matthew 23:2, 6?

Jesus was criticizing the hypocrisy of the Pharisees who told others to follow burdensome laws but did not follow them themselves. They did not practice what they preached.

6. Summarize the rest of the section, "The Political Climate in First-Century Palestine" (pages 63–67).

Write the following names on the board:

- Caesar Augustus
- Caesar Tiberius
- Nero Claudius Caesar
- Herod the Great
- Archelaus
- Herod Antipas
- Philip
- Pontius Pilate
- Felix
- Festus

Have the students use the Student Text, reference books, and Internet resources to record information about each person. Allow several days to complete this work and then collect the assignment.

Most Jews, however, hated Roman rule, seeing it as another in a long line of oppression. For almost six centuries, the Jews had been under the thumbs of foreign rulers: Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, and Seleucids. This last foreign dynasty, the Seleucids, especially under the hated rule of Antiochus IV (175–164 BC), was loathed because of its attempts to impose Greek culture (*Hellenism*) on all aspects of Jewish life. Devout Jews saw Greek pagan practices and culture as a direct threat to Jewish traditions and identity.

Antiochus committed many atrocities against the Jewish religion. He robbed the Temple of its gold, massacred protesters, and outlawed the Torah. Tragically, he ordered the deaths of anyone who refused to eat pork, observed the sabbath, or circumcised their sons. These last edicts, in effect, outlawed the Jewish faith and resulted in many deaths. A final outrage was his placing a statue of the pagan god Zeus in the sanctuary of the holy Jerusalem Temple.

Antiochus's notorious actions led to the famous Maccabean Revolt under Judas Maccabeus and his brothers. Their family name meant "hammer." The Maccabean rebels recaptured the Temple in 164 BC and rededicated it to Yahweh. This event is celebrated today in the Hanukkah festival. Eventually the Maccabean family established an independent Jewish state in 142 BC, led by the Hasmonian kings. This was the first independent Jewish nation for centuries. But the later rulers of the Hasmonian Dynasty, though fiercely proud of their Jewish nationalism, acted much like the spoiled and corrupt Hellenistic kings who preceded them. They, too, were subject to political intrigue and the adoption of Greek customs. Their weakness led to the collapse of the Hasmonian Dynasty when the Roman general Pompey intervened and conquered Palestine in 63 BC.



HEROD

At first, Rome permitted conquered Jews to have some semblance of self-rule under the Idumean Herod the Great. Herod was called "half-Jew." He was a cunning, crafty, and heart-thirsty ruler. Matthew's story about Herod's slaying of the male babies born in two years of Jesus' birth (2:16), though not documented in contemporary sources, confirms Herod's character. The Jewish historian Josephus tells us that Herod slaughtered several of his sons, one of his ten wives, and several other relatives for fear that they might usurp his throne.

Herod curried the favor of the emperor by building many wonderful edifices throughout Palestine and then dedicating them to the emperor. He also erected pagan temples and supported emperor worship. This was an abomination to the Jews. Thus called "King of the Jews," Herod was no Jewish king. However, Herod redeemed himself somewhat in the eyes of his Jewish subjects by undertaking the construction of the magnificent Temple in Jerusalem. The Jews hated Herod the Great as a pagan, foreign ruler.

Herod died an agonizing death in 4 BC. Three of his sons, Philip, Herod Antipas, and Archelaus, divided the kingdom among them. Philip (4 BC–AD 34) controlled the lands to the north and east of the Sea of Galilee. The New Testament has little about him, though he is known as the fairest ruler of the three brothers. Herod Antipas (4 BC–AD 39) ruled Perea and Galilee, Jesus' home province throughout his life. Herod Antipas was the ruler who executed John the Baptist because John complained about Antipas's adulterous relationship with his half-brother Philip's wife, Herodias. Herod also spied on Jesus. Jesus revealed a lot about Herod Antipas's character when he called him "that fox" (Lk 13:32).

Archelaus (4 BC–AD 6) ruled most of Samaria, Galilee, and Judea. He was a bloodthirsty ruler, killing more than a thousand of his subjects within months of gaining power. Archelaus was extremely unpopular with his subjects, who badgered Rome to remove him. After nine years of hearing complaints, the emperor finally deposed him. In his place, Rome appointed a prefect (later changed to “procurator” during the reign of Claudius) who was directly accountable to the Roman governor in Syria. The New Testament mentions three Roman procurators: Pontius Pilate (AD 26–36), Felix (AD 52–60), and Festus (AD 60–62).

The Roman procurator’s main tasks were tax collecting, approving or denying the death sentences imposed by the Jewish tribunal, keeping the peace by commanding auxiliary forces of Roman Jewish residents of Palestine and Syria, and reporting to Rome about the general state of affairs. He also had the power to appoint and depose the Jewish High Priest. Jews greatly resented these powers. They especially hated Jewish tax collectors, the so-called *publicani* who collaborated with the Romans in exacting taxes.

Pontius Pilate figures prominently in the Gospels accounts because it was he who ordered Jesus’ death by crucifixion. He was a cruel, heartless, self-serving ruler who did nothing to endear himself to the Jews. Ruling from the seacoast town of Caesarea, he imposed military standards in Jerusalem bearing the emperor’s image. This act outraged pious Jews because Yahweh forbade graven images. Pilate also drained the Temple treasury of funds to build an aqueduct. When the Jews protested, he disguised some of his men and had them infiltrate a crowd of protesting Jews. At a predetermined signal, they drew their swords and slaughtered many of the defenseless Jews. According to one of his political enemies, Pilate was guilty of “graft, insults, robberies, assaults, constant abuse, constant executions without trial, unending grievous cruelty.” He was eventually recalled to Rome and probably exiled to Gaul.

Rome’s rule was harsh and hated by most Jews. However, Rome did allow the Jews considerable freedom in practicing their religion. Nevertheless, all Jews longed for the day when a Messiah would come to deliver them.

In 1961, Italian archaeologists discovered this broken limestone block at Caesarea on the Sea. The rock is engraved with these Latin words:

... S TIBERIVM
... [P]ONTIVS PILATVS
[P]RAE[]ECTVS IVDA[E]AE




The Pilate Inscription

The inscription is translated: “Tiberium, Pontius Pilate, Prefect of Judea,” which indicates that Pilate built and dedicated a temple to Emperor Tiberius. This discovery provides physical evidence that Pilate was in Palestine during Christ’s lifetime.

The Practice of Slavery

There were both Gentile and Jewish slaves in Palestine during the first century, but these slaves did not have to do the heavy work we associate with African slaves in the United States. Relatively few in number, the first-century Jewish slaves were mostly the servants of wealthy people and enjoyed many protections provided by Jewish law. For example, slaves working off a debt could not be made to work for more than ten hours a day nor on the Sabbath.

Extending the Section

1. Assign the For Reflection question on page 63 as a journaling project.
2. Review the subsection “The Practice of Slavery” on pages 65–67 and assign the activity, “The Letter to Philemon” on page 66. Distribute Bibles or New Testaments. Have students read the short letter and answer the eight questions in their journals.
3.  Review the Hands Logo Activity on page 66 with the class. Students could write essays for this exercise as editorial or viewpoint articles for the student newspaper or even for the local newspaper. In this way, they are actively engaged in helping other teens and other people who are “enslaved” by drugs, alcohol, peer pressure, unrealistic expectations placed on them, abusive relationships, etc.
4. Invite a rabbi or knowledgeable Jewish adult to class as a guest speaker to explain the observance of Jewish feasts in your local area. Alternatively, ask a local synagogue if they could welcome you and your students for a guided tour that would explain how Jewish feasts and celebrations are observed there.
5. Direct students to count off by twos. Have the “ones” answer the first four For Review questions on page 63 under “Religious Feasts and Practices of Jesus’ Time.” The “twos” should answer the six For Review questions on page 67 under “The Political Climate in First-Century Palestine.”
6. Arrange a debate on the For Reflection questions on page 67 about electing people to office who share your religious convictions. Provide basic, brief reading material on this question for all students several days before the debate. Ask for volunteers to open the arguments on both sides of the question. Ask other students to answer questions and offer closing arguments. Invite the class to vote for the team that presented their position most effectively.

Creative Learning

1. As an extra-credit option, have students play the role of a first-century Jew in Palestine who decides to write a letter of complaint to Roman authorities. These letter writers should describe specific Roman practices that are offensive to their Jewish beliefs. Allow a day or two for the completion of this assignment. Ask a half-dozen or more students to dramatically read their letters for the class. To help students adopt the persona of these ancient Roman letter-writers, suggest names from the website Behind the Name (www.behindthename.com/nmc/rom-anci.php).
2. Play some liturgical music that expresses equality within the Christian community. One excellent example is, "One Bread, One Body" by Jesuit composer John Foley, but there are many other songs written on this theme. Coax students to point out where the statements about Christian equality are made. Tell students—if the composer provided the information—what Scripture passages inspired lyrics for the song.
3. Invite students interested in extra-credit to form small "Research and Report" teams to investigate the role religion played in the nineteenth-century abolitionist movement in America. Reports could focus on individual abolitionists, the American abolitionist movement as a political force, the bestselling novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe, or a committed abolitionist to name a few ideas.

Homework Assignment

1. Remind students to read the next three chapter sections for class—"Jewish Beliefs and Practices" on pages 67–70, "Religious Sects in Jesus' Time" on pages 70–74 and "Other People in the New Testament," on pages 75–76.
2. Give students the due date for their Learn by Doing project(s). This will also be the date for the Chapter 2 Test.

THE LETTER TO PHILEMON

Read Paul's Letter to Philemon, a very short 335-word letter. It was written during one of Paul's imprisonments, perhaps in Ephesus around AD 55 or from Rome in AD 61–63. It is a personal letter from Paul to Philemon. However, it contains many elements of the style Paul used in all his letters.

- Greeting (vv. 1–3).
- Thanksgiving (vv. 4–7).
- Body (vv. 8–20).
- Closing (Greetings and Blessings (vv. 21–25)).

The subject of the letter involves Philemon's runaway slave, Onesimus. Paul captures Onesimus and then sends him back to his master. The wealthy Philemon had a slave to Philemon does not speak for the abolition of slavery, is firmly entrenched and widespread practice in the Roman world. But he did plant a seed that would, in future generations, blossom into a free Christ-like response to the major social issue.

Paul implicitly encourages Philemon not to punish his slave, he also hints that he should free him. For Paul, the key truth is that Onesimus is now the equal of Philemon. He is a brother transformed in Jesus Christ. Paul tells Philemon that he should welcome him as he would Paul himself.

Answer the following questions in your journal.

1. Who else is sending the Letter to Philemon?
2. What proof does the letter give that Philemon is a Christian?
3. What does Paul reveal about himself in the letter?
4. How does Paul want Philemon to receive Onesimus?
5. What does Paul promise to do concerning any possible harm Onesimus might have caused?
6. How does he try to convince Philemon that his offer is sincere?
7. What verse tells us that Paul hopes to see Philemon again?
8. What does Paul's letter to Philemon tell us about Jesus and his Good News?



Philemon face several forms of "slavery." For example, he was often enslaved by drugs, alcohol, poor nutrition, completely uneducated people on them, or abusive relationships. One could find of slavery lived by him. Capture it in a short essay. Include in the essay several practical steps he can undertake to escape the form of slavery.

At the time St. Paul was making his missionary journey in the middle of the first century, slavery was widespread throughout the Roman Empire. A person could become a slave as a prisoner of war, by kidnapping, through debt, or by being born the child of a slave. Many slaves did go backbreaking work in mines or as rowers on ships. Others had it much better as servants to wealthy and understanding owners. These slaves were well educated and even administered their masters' estate. Their faithful service often resulted in freedom.

The New Testament does not directly speak out against the institution of slavery, but rather attacks the principle of inequality on which one person owning another as property was based. Christian love, and unity in Christ, made believers realize that owning another human being was contrary to the Lord's message. Ultimately, this realization destroyed slavery, though it took many centuries for political entities to pass laws to ban it.

FOR REVIEW

- Identify *Pax Romana*. List several of its benefits.
- Identify: Antiochus IV, the Maccabean Revolt, the Hasmonians, Pompey.
- Describe Herod the Great. Who were his three sons who succeeded him, and what territories did they rule?
- What functions did Roman prefects like Pontius Pilate have?
- What was a debtor slave?
- In the letter St. Paul sent to Philemon, what did Paul want Philemon to do?

FOR REFLECTION

The political climate was an important fact in Jesus' ministry. Recall that the Roman leader, Pontius Pilate, was the one who condemned him to death. How important do you think it is to elect people into office who share your religious convictions, for example, on life and justice issues? Can you be a follower of Christ and not be involved in politics?

Jewish Beliefs and Practices

The New Testament is deeply rooted in the Jewish people, and their religious beliefs, practices, affirmations, and expectations. Jesus was a pious Jew who held many beliefs in common with his fellow Jews. Jesus' Apostles and many of the later first-century Christians were also Jewish. Their acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah set them apart from other Jews. These Jewish Christians considered their first missionary task to preach the Gospel to other Jews. They

believed that Yahweh had fulfilled his promises to the Jewish people in Jesus of Nazareth. The New Testament includes many references to Jewish beliefs and practices in the first century.

The Messiah

The New Testament period was high in messianic expectations. Most Jews strongly believed that Yahweh would send a Messiah very soon. The Hebrew word translates to the Greek word *Christos* (Christ), which literally means, "anointed one." At first, the title

Jewish Beliefs and Practices (pages 67–70) and Religious Sects in Jesus' Time (pages 70–74) and Other People in the New Testament (pages 75–76)

Objectives

The goal of these sections is to enable students to:

- briefly explain four Jewish beliefs important in Jesus' day.
- recognize that observance of the Torah is at the heart of Jewish life and practice.
- learn about the meaning of a Messiah in Jewish teaching.
- identify the four major sects within Judaism of New Testament times.
- comment briefly on the role that tax collectors, "common people," Gentiles, and women played in Jesus' society.

The Political Climate in First Century Palestine For Review Questions and Answers

- Identify *Pax Romana*. List several of its benefits.
The Pax Romana or "Peace of Rome," referred to the state of peace and security commonly offered in the Roman empire.
- Identify: Antiochus IV, the Maccabean Revolt, the Hasmonians, Pompey.
Antiochus IV was the Seleucid ruler who committed many atrocities against the Jews. The Maccabean Revolt was the Jewish effort to recapture the Temple. The Hasmonians were rulers of a brief independent Jewish state that followed the Maccabean Revolt. Pompey was the Roman general who conquered Palestine for the Romans in 63 BC.
- Describe Herod the Great. Who were his three sons who succeeded him, and what territories did they rule?
Herod was called a "half Jew." He was actually a despicable ruler and a ruthless man who murdered several of his relatives. His son Philip later controlled lands to the north and east of the Sea of Galilee. Another son, Herod Antipas, ruled Perea and Galilee. Archelaus, the third son, gained most of Samaria, Idumea, and Judea.
- What functions did Roman prefects like Pontius Pilate have?
The main functions of prefects like Pontius Pilate were tax collecting, approving or denying the death sentences imposed by the Jewish tribunal, keeping the peace, and reporting to Rome about the general state of affairs.
- What was a debtor slave?
A debtor slave was a person who could pay off a debt by working as a servant for wealthy people.
- In the letter St. Paul sent to Philemon, what did Paul want Philemon to do?
Paul encouraged Philemon not to punish his own slave and also binted to Philemon that he should free his slave.

Summary and Background Information

The section on Jewish beliefs provides basic background information for students on some of the major religious groups within Judaism during the time of Jesus. Some other notable people mentioned in the New Testament are presented in their respective section as well.

Before describing these groups, though, some important Jewish beliefs are explained and explored. Belief in the long-expected Messiah, for example, is presented in a way that will help students understand why many Jews simply didn't believe that Jesus was the Messiah. Jewish teachings about the covenant and law, the afterlife and resurrection, the spirit world and angels are also covered.

The "denominations" within Judaism during the time of Jesus are then presented. It will be helpful for students to get a closer look at what the historian Josephus called "the philosophies" within Judaism. The major groups—Sadducees, Pharisees, Essenes, and Zealots are profiled. This may be the first time many of your students have heard any details about these religious groups whom they've heard about so many times in the Scriptures.

These two chapter sections will further prepare students to delve into this encounter with Jesus and the study of his work and words in the Gospels.



Chi-Rho: The first two letters of the Greek word for (Christos), a symbol for Jesus Christ.

apocalypse—A word meaning "revelation" or "unveiling." Apocalyptic writings, usually written in times of crisis, use highly symbolic language to bolster faith by reassuring believers that the current age, subject to the forces of evil, will end when God intervenes and establishes a divine rule of goodness and peace.

Pentateuch—The name for the first five books of the Old Testament: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. It contains the Law (Torah).

Torah—The Law or divine teaching revealed to Judaism. It is the foundation of the Jewish religion and is found in the Pentateuch.

Messiah applied to the king of Israel, God's anointed leader. Since King David's reign (ca. 1000 BC), the Jews understood their covenant relationship with Yahweh to include the promise to send a king who would represent Yahweh's love and care for his people. Unfortunately, David's successors were weak and corrupt. Punishment befell the nation with the successive destruction of both the northern and southern kingdoms.

But the belief in God's promise to provide a messiah never died among the Jews. Following the Babylonian Exile, the Jews increasingly believed that the messiah would usher in God's Kingdom or reign. Various groups in Jesus' day had different expectations of who or what kind of person the messiah would be. However, most Jews expected a political and military leader like David who would lead Israel to a great military victory, reestablish the prominence of Israel as an independent nation, and help establish God's Kingdom.

By the first century, many Jews (including John the Baptist) fully expected the coming of the messiah to be accompanied by an apocalyptic event. This **apocalypse** would be dramatic, pointing to the Messiah's identity and a glorious establishment of God's Kingdom.

The Covenant and the Torah

Primarily, the Jews were a covenant people. They believed Yahweh chose them as his special people, rescued and preserved them, and used them to lead others to the worship of the one true God. For their part, the

Jews were to believe in and observe the Torah, or Law. The **Pentateuch**, the first five books of the Old Testament, contains the Torah, the heart of Jewish life. To the Jews, the Torah (derived from a word that means "instruction" or "guidance") is not a list of arbitrary rules. Rather, the Torah is God's Revelation of himself, which he expects as a response to his own covenant love. He had created Israel as a special people, promising to bless, guide, and protect them forever. In return they were to recognize Yahweh as the one true God and keep the Law.

Studying the Torah was a form of worship and a lifelong task for Jews. More importantly, they were to live the Law because of its moral foundation. The Torah influenced every aspect of Jewish history, culture, morality, and worship. To live apart from the Law was to draw judgment on oneself and the nation. Sects like the Pharisees and the Essenes believed that God allowed foreign powers to dominate the Jews because so many Jews were not living the Law. They tried to live the Law perfectly and taught others to do the same—the belief that Yahweh would have responded by sending a Messiah to rescue them.

Jesus had profound respect for the Law and instructed his followers to keep it. He said, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill it" (Mt 5:17).

The Torah remains at the heart of the Jewish religion today. It, along with the Prophets (*Nbim*) and Writings

...wisdom literature and the ... makes up the sacred Hebrew Scriptures included in the Old Testament. The Jews abbreviate their writings as TANAK (T=Torah; N=Nabim, K=Ketubim).

Resurrection and Resurrection (cc; Matt. 28:1-10)

A common belief of Jews since the second century BC is that Yahweh will raise the dead by rewarding the good and punishing the evil. The prophet Isaiah introduced the idea of the resurrection from the dead for those who served it, though some Jews do not believe in a personal resurrection:

Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some shall live forever, others shall be an everlasting horror and disgrace. (Dn 12:2)

As the Son of God, Christ himself believed that the dead will be raised. He was responsible about the final judgment in Matthew 25:31-46, making it clear that he will be the judge of the living and the dead, separating between the "righteous" and goats (evildoers). Catholics held this as a core doctrine of faith, that, at death, each person will be judged whether or not they will go to Heaven, Hell, or Purgatory. Catholics believe that their resurrection will take place precisely because they are with the Lord, who has conquered evil and death. See the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 668-682 and 1020-1040, for more information.

World

The New Testament records the common Jewish belief in the existence

of angels and demons. From the earliest days, Jews believed in heavenly messengers (angel means "messenger"). In the centuries between the writing of the Old and New Testaments, belief among the faithful in angels expanded. Some important literature produced in this era—books like *Jubilees*, *Enoch*, and the *Dead Sea Scrolls*—divided the angels into groups, gave them names, and described some of their functions. For example, the book of *Jubilees* tells how the angel Raphael appeared in human form.

The New Testament frequently mentions both angels and devils. Jews believed that various demons warred against God by being the sources of sickness, temptation, and sin. Jesus cast out many demons and saw his own suffering as a war against the evil one—Satan (Jn 12:31). Although Jews and Christians accepted the existence of demons, they believed that they were subject to God.

angels—God's messengers; angels are created beings that possess free will and intelligence but who are pure spirits, without bodies.

ANGELS

Read the following New Testament passages about angels and answer each question.

1. Who is the angel of the Annunciation? (Lk 1:11-22)
2. Which angel guards the people of Israel? (Dn 10:13, 21)
3. What did angels do after Jesus' temptation? (Mt 4:11)
4. What did an angel do after Jesus' agony? (Lk 22:43)
5. What function did the angels have at the Resurrection? (Jn 20:11-14)
6. What will they do at the Parousia? (Mk 13:27)

TRADITIONAL PRAYER TO ONE'S GUARDIAN ANGEL

Angel of God,
My guardian dear,
To whom God's love commits me here,
ever this day be at my side,
to light and guard, to rule and guide.
Amen.

Compose your own prayer to your guardian angel.



Warm Up

1. Hand out half-sheets of paper with the printed phrase "I believe . . ." and three to four blank lines where students can write out a strongly held belief of their own. Remind students to limit their beliefs to issues of a more enduring and important nature. (No statements like "I believe that Big Macs are the best hamburgers ever invented," "I believe the Yankees will win the World Series next year," etc.) Statements should also be limited to one or two sentences. Give students ten to fifteen minutes to write their credos. Then, ask for volunteers to read their creedal statements for the class.
2. Focus in on the legalism that slowly developed and made its way into Jewish beliefs and practices. Explain that even today, Orthodox and some Conservative Jews observe thirty-nine categories of activities that are forbidden on the Sabbath. This list of thirty-nine categories is called *melachot*, or *lamed tet avot melachot*. Cite some of these Jewish Sabbath laws to give students an idea of how limiting they were: On the Sabbath, observant Jews could not tie or untie a rope, put out a lamp, start a fire, sew two stitches, use medicine, walk more than three thousand feet, go out while wearing an artificial leg, and more. Have the students discuss why they think Jesus would have been frustrated and tested by such legalistic concerns.

Answers to "Angels" (page 69 of the ST)

1. Who is the angel of the Annunciation? (Lk 1:11-22) *Gabriel*
2. Which angel guards the people of Israel? (Dn 10:13, 21) *Michael*
3. What did angels do after Jesus' temptation? (Mt 4:11) *ministered to Jesus*
4. What did an angel do after Jesus' agony? (Lk 22:43) *strengthened Jesus in time of prayer*
5. What function did the angels have at the Resurrection? (Jn 20:11-14) *they tell Mary about the risen Jesus*
6. What will they do at the Parousia? (Mk 13:27) *angels will help to gather the elect*

Using the Section

- Referring to either Warm Up activity on the previous page, make sure students understand that it is important (and truly Christian) to respect the deeply held beliefs of others. Jesus may have been frustrated by the legalism promoted by the Pharisees, but he understood that the little laws governing what a person could or couldn't do on the Sabbath were not deeply held beliefs. Open up this topic with students—the difference between theological beliefs (i.e., belief in the Trinity or the Resurrection of Christ) and religious practices (i.e., Church laws). Ask: "As Catholics, what are our most important beliefs?"
- Recap the basic points made about Jewish beliefs in this section, covering the theology of the Messiah, covenant and Torah, judgment and Resurrection, spirits, etc. Point out, as you go along, how Jewish beliefs match up with Catholic belief and teaching.
- Distribute copies of Chapter 2 Handout 2, "Jesus the Messiah" (in the back of this TWE). Distribute Bibles to students and allow them to work together in small groups of two or three to find, read, and summarize the six Old Testament passages about the Messiah. Students should also read and complete the question about Mark's reference to the Messiah at the bottom of the handout.

FOR REVIEW

- What was the common first-century Jewish belief concerning the Messiah?
- Identify the Torah and explain what role it played in the Jewish religion.
- What is the meaning of the word "angel"?

FOR REFLECTION

Read the Catechism of the Catholic Church, 328–336. Write three interesting facts you learned about angels.

Ark of the Covenant—The portable shrine built to hold the tablets on which Moses wrote the Law. It was the sign of God's presence to the Israelites. King Solomon built the Temple in Jerusalem to house the Ark.

Sanhedrin—The seventy-one-member supreme legislative and judicial body of the Jewish people. Many of its members were Sadducees.

Religious Sects in Jesus' Time

The historian Josephus describes four important religious sects that were viable during New Testament times. Josephus refers to these sects as "philosophies" within Judaism. They are the Sadducees, Pharisees, Essenes, and Zealots. More information on each follows.

Sadducees

The Sadducees' name derives from Sadok, the priest whom Solomon appointed to take charge of the **Ark of the Covenant** (1 Kgs 2:35). Because the Sadducees were mostly priests and aristocrats who cared for Temple practices and worship, they centered their activities in Jerusalem. They collaborated with the Romans to stay in power.

Theologically conservative, the Sadducees accepted

only the Torah as inspired Scripture. The Sadducees also refused to accept the oral traditions and legal rulings of the scribes and influential Pharisees who attempted to apply the Torah to everyday life.

Josephus reported that the Sadducees stressed human free will and responsibility over trusting Divine Providence. Also, they did not believe in the resurrection of the dead, the immortality of the soul, or in angels. All these were important beliefs of Jesus and the Pharisees.

Many Sadducees, along with a few Pharisees, made up the seventy-one-member **Sanhedrin**, the supreme lawmaking body and supreme court of Judaism. It was this group that judged Jesus a threat and accused him of blasphemy.

We do not hear anything about the Sadducees after the destruction of the Temple in AD 70. Without the Temple in which to center their power and influence, the Sadducees lost both political and spiritual authority over their fellow Jews.



The Ark of the Covenant

Jewish Beliefs and Practices For Review Questions and Answers

- What was the common first-century Jewish belief concerning the Messiah?
Most Jews believed Yahweh would send a Messiah very soon. They expected the coming of the Messiah to be accompanied by an apocalyptic event.
- Identify the Torah and explain what role it played in the Jewish religion.
The first five books of the Bible contain the Torah. It is the heart of Jewish life, the revelation of God and what he expects as a response to his covenant love.
- What is the meaning of the word angel?
Angel means "messenger."

CHAPTER TWO: The New Testament World of Jesus 71

Pharisees, though, were perhaps too rigid in their application of the Torah to daily life. They developed an elaborate system of oral interpretation of the Law, which they held to be almost as sacred as the Law itself. These oral traditions sometimes missed the spirit of the Law. Jesus held the Law sacred, but he freed his followers from blind observance of man-made laws that superseded the needs of people. This is why some Pharisees did not like Jesus. He influenced people to do good without recourse to an elaborate system of minute observance of religious customs.


Although the Pharisees fulfilled the proper worship required for the Jerusalem Temple, their center of influence was the synagogue, where their scholarly study of the Law, and their pious attempts to live it, gained for them influence over the common people who looked up to and admired them. Many Pharisees were, in fact, scribes and experts in the Jewish Law.

Jesus criticized some Pharisees because they thought they could "earn" Heaven by keeping all their religious customs. Jesus taught that God's love and Kingdom are pure gifts, bestowed on saint and sinner alike. Conflict between these two approaches to God's goodness was inevitable. Nevertheless, Pharisees should not be viewed negatively because their intention was to be very thoughtful and good Jews. Two outstanding Pharisaic scholars of the first century were Rabbi Shammai (a conservative) and Rabbi Hillel (a liberal). Also, some Pharisees became disciples of Jesus, most notably St. Paul.

Hasmonean Dynasty—Descendants of the Maccabees who ruled in Judea after the ousting of the last of the Syrians in 141 bc until the establishment of the Roman authority in 63 bc. John Hyrcanus was the first ruler in this dynasty and ruled until 128 bc.

4. Talk a bit further about the Torah that Jews see as the "heart of the law." Have a student check their Bible to read the name of the first five books of the Bible from which the Torah is drawn. (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy). Sample students to see what they say are the fundamental teachings of the Torah—in contrast to the little regulations and observances to which Jesus and others objected. (*The Torah teaches that there is only one true God; God loves and blesses his people; God sees Israel as his special people; God wants a covenant with his people and wants them to keep the law.*)
5. Read or summarize the brief text section "Judgment and Resurrection" (page 69). Connect this material with a more in-depth study of the Church's belief about the Resurrection (see the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, especially 988–1014).

Extending the Section

1. Switch gears and have students do the exercise "Angels" on page 69. Distribute Bibles to each student and allow fifteen minutes or more to allow students to locate and read the six Scripture passages on angels. Briefly discuss what students have learned. Query students for their own opinions about angels, especially guardian angels. "Do you believe you have a guardian angel?"
2.  Read aloud the Heart Logo Activity "Traditional Prayer to One's Guardian Angel" on page 69 and tell students that many children have been taught this prayer as a bedtime prayer. Ask students to settle in silence for several minutes and then compose their own guardian angel prayer.
3. Follow this activity by adapting the For Reflection topic on page 70. Ask students to review what the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* has to say about angels. Provide copies of *Catechism of the Catholic Church* numbers 328–336 that summarizes historic Church thinking and teaching about the angels. Solicit student comments and responses. What interesting facts have students learned about the angels?
4. This may be an excellent opportunity to review the Ten Commandments—a fundamental part of the Torah. Have students copy the Ten Commandments into their notebook or journal. Ask them to work in pairs to practice memorizing the commandments. Check their competency in a friendly game or quiz format.

JESUS DEBATES WITH THE PHARISEES AND SADDUCEES

Jesus engaged in debates with the Pharisees and Sadducees. Read about two of these debates. Answer the questions that follow each reference.

Read Mark 7:1–23.

- What did the disciples fail to do? (vv. 1–2)
- Why did the Pharisees think this was a problem? (vv. 3–4)
- What commandment does Jesus say they try to avoid? (vv. 8–10)
- How do the Pharisees excuse their obligation to keep this commandment? (vv. 11–15)
- From where does evil come? (vv. 14–20)
- List several actions that come from evil intentions. (v. 22)

Read Mark 12:18–27.

- What case do the Sadducees put before Jesus? (vv. 19–23)
- Who established the law quoted by the Sadducees? (v. 19)
- Was the question to Jesus sincere? Why or why not? (vv. 18–19)
- Jesus responds to the Sadducees by giving them a two-part answer. First, he answers their question on its own merits. What does he respond? (vv. 25–26) (Second, Jesus shows that he believes in the resurrection by quoting the same person as the Sadducees.)
- What is Jesus' argument in support of the resurrection? (vv. 26–27) [Hint: The Book of Moses = Torah = Pentateuch]



Source: The Bible

Finally, it was the Pharisees who helped to preserve Judaism after the destruction of the Temple by the Roman general Titus in the year AD 70. Under the famous rabbi Jonathan ben Zakai, some Pharisees regrouped at Jamnia (present-day Jabneh near Tel Aviv). First, they formed a canon of sacred books, accepting only those written in Hebrew. They also established a liturgical calendar and unified synagogue worship.

However, significantly for Christians, the gathering at Jamnia ultimately separated Christians from the Jewish religion. Tension between Jews and Jewish Christians had been growing for decades. When Christians refused to fight the Romans in the First Revolt, the surviving Jews felt it was time to break with the Christian sect. They did this by introducing a petition in the synagogue prayer known as the Eighteen Benedictions. This addition cursed "heretics,

apostates, and the proud," a direct reference to Christians. Matthew's Gospel, especially chapter 23, reflects some of the animosity Jewish Christians felt toward this move by the post-Revolt Pharisees.

Essenes

The Essenes were an apocalyptic group. Like the Pharisees, they believed God would usher in his Kingdom through a dramatic, even catastrophic event. The Essenes carefully read and produced commentaries on the Jewish Scriptures, hoping to find signs of the coming event. They lived strict, pure lives believing that they would be on Yahweh's side when the great day would come. Like the Sadducees, the Essenes disappeared from Jewish history after the destruction of the Temple. They probably hid their sacred writings in the caves in the Judean desert around the time the Romans came through the region in AD 67–68. Their

CHAPTER TWO: The New Testament World of Jesus 73

the **Dead Sea Scrolls**—the first discovered in 1947 by an Arab shepherd boy when he was tossing stones into the caves and heard a rattling.

The founder of the Essenes was known as “the Teacher of Righteousness,” who taught that the Jewish priesthood and Temple worship were impure and that most were called to live the Law. To better live a life of holiness, many Essenes withdrew to **Qumran** near the northwest shore of the Dead Sea. Communities who did not marry, the Essenes at Qumran shared goods in common and tried to remain ritually pure by frequent washings throughout the day. Many of their ritual texts have been discovered in the archaeological remains of the Qumran community. Other Essenes resided in separate religious groups in towns and villages, living disciplined lives of avoiding luxuries, sharing communal meals, doing pious works for the poor, and engaging in acts of ritual purification. The total number of this sect was never more than about four thousand during Jesus’ time.

When the day of crisis came, the Essenes expected three leaders to appear on the scene: a prophet predicted by Moses (Dt 18:18–19); a kingly messiah in the line of King David; and, most important, a priestly messiah, who would establish pure worship and a reformed Temple.

JESUS

In his *Jewish Antiquities*, Josephus writes of a certain Judas the Galilean who led a revolt against the Romans

for their taking a census (for the purpose of taxation) in the province of Judea (ca. AD 6–7). Judas believed that no foreign power had the right to collect taxes from the Jews who were given the Holy Land by God. To pay taxes would be equivalent to slavery. Acts of the Apostles tells us that he was killed and his followers scattered (5:37). Josephus credits Judas the Galilean, hailed as Messiah by his followers, as being the author of “the fourth branch of Jewish philosophy”—the Zealots.

Jesus had an Apostle known as Simon the Zealot. But the Apostle Simon did not belong to an organized revolutionary movement. There simply is no evidence to suggest that the Zealots were organized, active, and armed during the public ministry of Jesus.

However, an organized revolutionary faction known as the Zealots

Dead Sea Scrolls—Ancient scrolls containing the oldest known manuscripts of the books of the Old Testament in Hebrew. They were unearthed near Qumran on the Dead Sea between 1947 and 1953.

Qumran—An ancient Essene monastery on the northwestern shore of the Dead Sea. Near it were found the ancient Dead Sea Scrolls.



The Caves at Qumran

- Refer students to the exercise, “Jesus Debates with the Pharisees and Sadducees” on page 72. Assign half the class in small groups to the Mark 7:1–23 passage and questions and the other half in small groups to the Mark 12:18–27 passage and questions. Before the groups begin, review the basic profile of the Pharisees and the Sadducees with them (Pharisees—Jews who were religiously liberal with a pious commitment to the law; would not compromise with Roman rulers, written about harshly in New Testament. Sadducees—priestly class of Jews who often compromised with Roman power; conservative in religion). When the two groups have finished, briefly question them about their findings. Collect written reports from all the groups.
- Ask students what they learned about the tax collectors, common people, Gentiles, and women with respect to Jesus. How was the attitude of Jesus toward these groups different than that of the Jewish leaders? Can students think of any Gospel stories in which Jesus reached out to the marginalized?

- Have students work on the For Review questions for "Jewish Beliefs and Practices" on page 70, "Religious Sects in Jesus' Time" on page 74, and "Other People in the New Testament" on page 76 in class. Collect all the Learn by Doing projects that have not yet been turned in.
- Schedule the Chapter 2 Test and spend most of a class session reviewing with the students. Use the For Reflection questions, the Chapter Summary Points, and the vocabulary terms in the sidebars to help. Conclude the review with the Prayer Lesson on page 78 that focuses on Romans 8:31–39.
- Assign students to do work in teams on the "Dead Sea Scrolls Online" feature on page 74. Tell students that instead of handing in a written team report, they may wish to prepare an illustrated poster or a short PowerPoint® program on the Dead Sea scrolls to show and share what they have learned.

74 Encountering Jesus in the New Testament

was in full swing by the time of the First Jewish War, 66–70. This revolutionary party despised Roman rule and fomented violence to overthrow it. A symbol of Jewish pride today is their famous stand at Masada, a fortress near the southeastern shore of the Dead Sea. Although the Romans defeated the Jews in AD 70, a pocket of Zealots resisted until 73 at this mountaintop fortress. Rather than surrender and be taken in chains to Rome, the Zealots at Masada took their own lives.

A second revolt spearheaded by the Zealots against Rome took place in AD 132–135 under a strong leader, Simon bar-Kokhba, whom many Jews thought was the Messiah. This Second Jewish Revolt ended in total disaster for the Jews; from that time on they were forbidden to set foot in the holy city of Jerusalem.

DEAD SEA SCROLLS ONLINE

Read more about the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Essenes at one of these Internet sites. Prepare a short report related topics you discover.

- Scrolls from the Dead Sea:
www.biblio.org/lepro/deadseascrolls/publish/Intro.html
- The Essenes and the Dead Sea Scrolls:
www.ptsi.org/lepro/pages/Portline/Views/religion/contrast/essenes.html
- Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls:
<http://www.orioncsc.org/>
- Dead Sea Scrolls at the West Semitic Research Center:
www.wscs.edu/dept/LAS/wscs/educational/_studies/dead_sea_scroll
- The Dead Sea Scrolls:
http://www.ancient.org.uk/dead_sea_scroll_2.html



Researchers study the Dead Sea Scrolls

FOR REVIEW

- Identify these Jewish sects: Sadducees, Pharisees, Essenes, and Zealots. List several of the beliefs of each.
- What was the Sanhedrin?
- Identify Jonathan ben Zakkai.

FOR REFLECTION

Imagine you are a Jew of the first century who belongs to one of the sects described in this section. Write a short letter to your parents explaining how you have reconciled your particular Jewish faith with a newfound belief that Jesus is the Messiah.

Religious Sects in Jesus' Time For Review Questions and Answers

- Identify these Jewish sects: Sadducees, Pharisees, Essenes, and Zealots. List several of the beliefs of each.
Answers will vary. For example, the Sadducees only accepted the Torah as inspired scripture. The Pharisees believed in strict observance of the Law and avoided Gentile influence. The Essenes were an apocalyptic group that believed God would usher in his kingdom through a dramatic event. The Zealots believed in violence to overthrow the Romans.
- What was the Sanhedrin?
The Sanhedrin was the major law-making body and supreme court of Judaism.
- Identify Jonathan ben Zakkai.
Jonathan ben Zakkai was the rabbi who, with some Pharisees, regrouped the Jewish faith at Jamnia (present-day Jabneh near Tel Aviv) after the destruction of the Temple in AD 70.

The People in the New Testament

The following groups mentioned in the New Testament are also of significance in a study of Jesus.

Pharisees

Many Jews hated any fellow Jew who would stoop down to work for the Romans. The tax collectors were often cheaters who tried to line their own pockets at the expense of their fellow Jews. Jesus associated with this despised group of people and included one of them—Levi (Matthew)—to be an apostle (Mt 2:14–15).

Common People

Most of Jesus' contemporaries were the common people who lived their daily lives removed from the intellectual disputes of the major sects. Some of them struggled to follow the Law, pray, and participate in the synagogue services. Others, including the Pharisees, were often called "the people of the land,"

a name Pharisees gave to those who were ignorant of the Law. The Pharisees thought the common people's ignorance kept them from holiness. Jesus had his greatest appeal among these simple people. They were open to hearing and responding to his message of conversion, repentance, and salvation. By extension, some common people were characterized by Jesus and his disciples as "common people."

Because they did not strictly follow the oral tradition, regard to fasting (Mt 23:23) and washing (Mt 23:25).

Jesus divided people into two classes: Jews and Gentiles.

Two classes of people who were

not circumcised. Some Gentiles did convert to Judaism and were then known as *proselytes*. Other Gentiles, called "God-fearers," accepted many Jewish beliefs but did not undergo circumcision.

Pious Jews avoided contact with Gentiles. The Acts of the Apostles reports how the early Christian missionaries turned to the Gentiles only after most Jews rejected the Gospel. An early Church debate took place in Jerusalem around AD 49 and concerned whether Gentiles had to follow the whole Mosaic Law before becoming Christian. At first, a compromise resulted: Gentile Christians had to accept some Jewish dietary laws. Eventually, however, the Church became populated with more and more Gentiles and lost much of its Jewish influence.

Women

Women generally had a lowly position in first-century Palestine. In almost every way, Jews considered women inferior to men. Jewish men looked on women as property and too weak to follow the religious requirements of the Law. Jewish law allowed a man to divorce his wife for any reason as long as he gave his divorced wife a legal document saying she was free to remarry. It was much more difficult for a woman to divorce her husband.

Women were also segregated during synagogue and Temple worship and had few political rights. Their domain was the home, where they played a central role in child rearing. Motherhood was esteemed, while a childless woman was scorned and pitied. It was especially tough to be a widow, left alone in the world with no means of support. One protection widows had was that if a man died without children, his unmarried brother had to marry the widow and take care of her.

Women were also segregated during synagogue and Temple worship and had few political rights. Their domain was the home, where they played a central role in child rearing. Motherhood was esteemed, while a childless woman was scorned and pitied. It was especially tough to be a widow, left alone in the world with no means of support. One protection widows had was that if a man died without children, his unmarried brother had to marry the widow and take care of her.



The Pharisees question Jesus

Homework Assignment

Tell students to read the first two sections of Chapter 3, The Essential Jesus, by the next class meeting. These two sections are "The Light of the World," on pages 82–83 and "Mysteries of Christ's Life," on pages 83–91.

Creative Learning

1. Early in the study of these last three sections of Chapter 2, assign students, in groups of two or three, to create crossword puzzles using vocabulary terms from these three sections—"Jewish Beliefs and Practices," "Religious Sects in Jesus' Time," and "Other People in the New Testament." The crossword puzzles should include at least ten to twelve terms each. After the groups hand in their puzzles, photocopy and distribute the as a different tool for reviewing. Make sure that students do not get the puzzle they created.
2. Note the Chi-Rho symbol on page 68. Ask students looking for extra credit to research and duplicate—through some art medium—other symbols for Christ.
3. Invite students interested in angels to prepare a presentation on how angels have been portrayed through the years. This could be a dramatic reading of people who believe they have encountered an angel, a PowerPoint® presentation about the way angels have been portrayed in art or an original artwork. Refer students to any one of several popular books on angels by Joan Wester Anderson.



Mary Magdalene by Carlo Dolci

Jesus elevated the position of women, treated them as equals, and instructed husbands to love and cherish their wives. Many women were Jesus' disciples and were the most faithful to him at the end of his life. Jesus first appeared to a woman (Mary Magdalene) after being raised from the dead. Mary, the Mother of Jesus, is the first disciple and perfect Christian. Jesus' attitude toward women was, in many ways, revolutionary.

FOR REVIEW

1. From the point of view of the Pharisees, who were "the people of the land"?
2. Who were the Gentiles?
3. Describe the situation of women in New Testament times and how Jesus revolutionized it.

FOR REFLECTION

Jesus went against the societal norms of his day and numbered women among his most important friends. Write a profile about the most important woman in your life. What makes her so special? What qualities do you most admire in her?

CHAPTER SUMMARY POINTS

- Palestine, the Holy Land, gets its name from the Philistines, a traditional enemy of the Jews. Palestine has always played a strategic role in world history.
- The three major regions of Palestine are Galilee, Samaria, and Judea.
- Galilee was the locale of most of Jesus' public life. He grew up in Nazareth, performed his first miracle at Cana, and used Capernaum as the base of his ministry.
- The Samaritans were descendants of foreigners who intermarried with northern Israelite tribes at the time of Assyria's conquest of the northern Kingdom. They accepted only the Pentateuch as inspired Scripture and worshiped God on Mount Gerazim.

- Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and the Dead Sea are located in Judea.
- Jesus spoke Aramaic, a Semitic language closely related to Hebrew. He may have known a little Greek and perhaps have been able to understand Hebrew, the language of the Sacred Scriptures.
- There were many synagogues in the Holy Land in Jesus' day. Synagogues were houses of prayer, places of meeting, centers for legal discussions, and often served as the local schools.
- The Temple was located in Jerusalem and was the center of Jewish sacrifice to Yahweh and the destination for the celebration of various religious festivals. The Temple Jesus worshiped in was built by Herod the Great.



Other People in the New Testament For Review Questions and Answers

1. From the point of view of the Pharisees, who were "the people of the land"?
The Galileans were often called "the people of the land."
2. Who were Gentiles?
Gentiles were the nations of people who were not circumcised; they were the non-Jews.
3. Describe the situation of women in New Testament times and how Jesus revolutionized it.
Women generally had a low position in New Testament times. Jesus elevated the position of women, treated them as equals, and instructed husbands to love and cherish their wives. Many women were Jesus' disciples.

CHAPTER TWO: The New Testament World of Jesus 77

- The three major Jewish feasts in Jesus' time were Passover, which celebrated the Exodus; Pentecost, which celebrated the Sinai covenant; and Tabernacles, a fall harvest festival.
- Politics dominated Jewish life. *Hellenism* (the love of Greek culture) was imposed by the Seleucid ruler Antiochus IV (175–164 BC).
- After Herod the Great's death, Palestine was ruled by his sons Archelaus (Samaria, Idumea, and Judea), Herod Antipas (Galilee and Perea), and Philip. Herod Antipas (4 BC–AD 39) was king during Jesus' lifetime.
- Slavery was a fact of the ancient world and the Roman Empire, though not that widespread in Palestine. Christ's teachings on the fundamental dignity of persons, after centuries, eventually led to the abolition of slavery throughout most of the world.
- Most Jews of the first century expected the Messiah to come very soon. They typically interpreted the coming Messiah as a Davidic figure, a military leader who would throw off

Roman rule and establish God's Kingdom, restoring Israel's glory.

- The Chosen People responded to God's covenant by studying and trying to live the Torah (Law). The Torah is found in the first five books of the Old Testament known as the Pentateuch. Along with the Prophets and Writings, it makes up the Jewish Sacred Scriptures.
- Since about the second century BC, many Jews believed in the resurrection of the body and a judgment where God would reward the good and punish evildoers. The Jewish sect of the Sadducees, however, did not hold such a view.
- Most Jews believed in the existence of angels (divine messengers) and demons who warred against God.
- Four major sects (parties or philosophies) of New Testament times were the Sadducees, the Pharisees, the Essenes, and the Zealots.

LEARN BY DOING

- 1. Research and report on one of the following sets of Jewish feasts:
 - Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles
 - Yom Kippur and Hanukkah
- 2. Prepare a PowerPoint presentation on Herod's Temple. You may wish to consult this website: www.bible-history.com/jewish/temple
- 3. Visit a synagogue and report on the Sabbath service held there. Interview the rabbi on the sacred objects used in the service. Take pictures of the synagogue and of the religious items to illustrate a talk you will prepare for your classmates.
- 4. Research the life of Pontius Pilate. Investigate the legend that he converted to Christianity and died a martyr.
- 5. Research several branches of modern Judaism, for example, Orthodox, Conservative, or Reformed Judaism. Note some major differences in their beliefs. Report on what each believes concerning the Messiah.
- 6. Do an Internet search to learn more about modern-day Samaritans. Prepare a brief illustrated report.

4. Students interested in dramatic presentations or role-playing might consider gathering in a group to portray a discussion among Sadducees, Pharisees, Essenes, and Zealots about the Messiah. Another option is for students to develop a role-play with the tax collectors, common people, Gentiles, and women discussing their impressions of Jesus and how he treats them.
5. Have students choose one of the For Reflection topics on page 74 or page 76. One topic invites students to put themselves "in the sandals" of first-century Jews by writing a letter to their parents about their faith and this new teacher, "Jesus." The other offers students the chance to write about the most important woman in their lives. Encourage students to "unlock" their creativity in these writing projects.