

A Brief History of the Kingdom of Heaven in the Earth

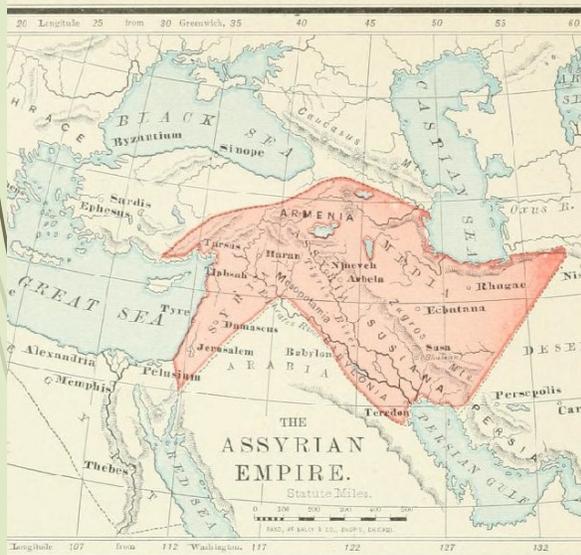
WEEK FIVE : THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS ESTABLISHED

During the rise of the most powerful Kingdom in history, the seed of the eternal Kingdom is planted.

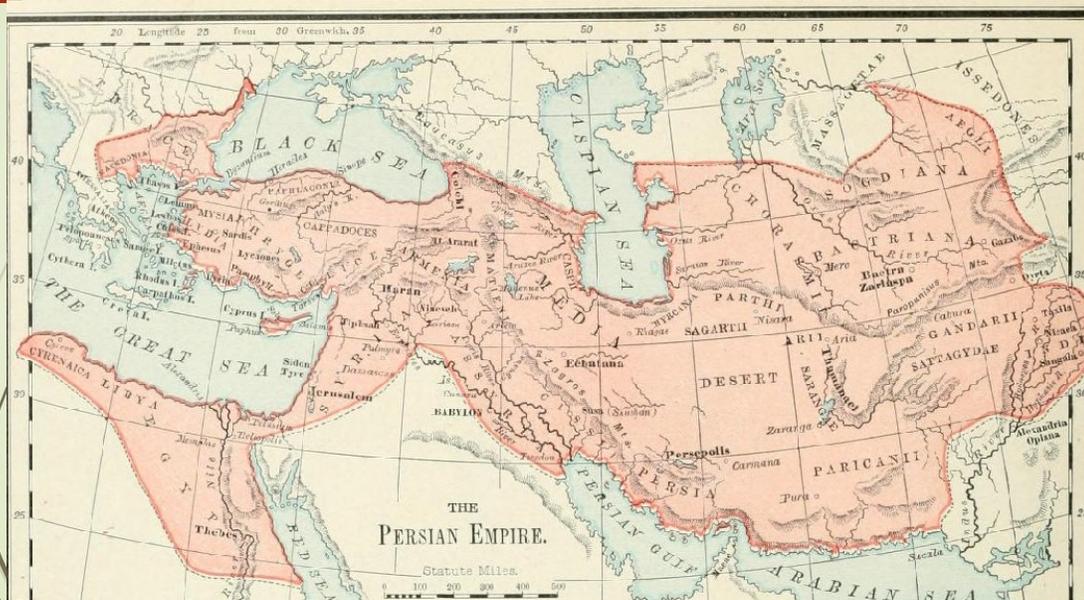
1: THE ROMAN WORLD OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

How God used Rome to pave the way for His coming Kingdom

Assyrian and Babylonian Empires (824-550BC)



Persian Empire (550-330BC)



The fall of Rome: The Prince of Peace confronts the "legs of iron."

- Nations which spread by force can never capture the hearts of the conquered.
- Began with the establishing of the Kingdom of Heaven in 30AD.
- Took three centuries of preaching in the midst of intermittent persecutions.
- Without lifting a sword, we conquered Rome, by converting the hearts of men!

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS ESTABLISHED (30-33ad)

Jesus Inaugurates a Kingdom which will never end

The Kingdom God has in mind...

...as I live, **all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD** (Num 14:21)

For **the earth will be filled With the knowledge of the glory of the LORD**, As the waters cover the sea. (Hab 2:14)

All the ends of the world Shall remember and turn to the LORD, And **all the families of the nations** Shall worship before You. For the kingdom is the Lord's, And **He rules over the nations.** (Psalm 22:27-28)

Jesus came to inaugurate the Kingdom

From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matthew 4:17)

- Jesus preached this first to the Jews – they had the rights of the firstborn
- By announcing a Kingdom, Jesus made His purpose and vision clear: *The sons of God will be restored to their rightful place as freeborn citizens of heaven, having dominion over the earth..*

The nature of Jesus' Kingdom

...My kingdom is not of this world...as it is,
My kingdom is not of this realm." Jn 18:36

- ▶ of this realm = originating in this realm
- ▶ The Kingdom comes from heaven to the earth – it does not find its origin in any kingdoms of men.
- ▶ Jesus' Kingdom will not be established by any of the methods used to build other kingdoms

The nature of the Kingdom

The Kingdom of Heaven is like...a
mustard seed...a bit of leaven (Matt 13)

- ▶ Everything in God begins small – it draws no attention to the earthly – minded person:
- ▶ "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed...[it is] within you." Luke 17:20-21
- ▶ The Kingdom of Heaven is the world's oldest grassroots organization!

The Kingdom of heaven is...like leaven

- ▶ **1 Christ → 120 disciples** (.00002% of the population of Roman empire)
- ▶ **Book of Acts:** 3000 → 5000 → multitudes
- ▶ By end of apostolic era, (70AD) churches on 3 continents, millions of believers.

The incredible growth of the Kingdom:



The truth: we are winning!!!

Pre 20th Century → today

Life expectancy: 30 → 71

Infant Mortality: 1/5 → 1/20

Chronic Undernourishment: 37% → 17%

Suffrage: 0 nations → 44% (+18% partial)

Slavery – abolished worldwide –
estimated 58million illegal slaves

The Kingdom in the First Century

The seed is planted in 3 continents, and infects a corrupt empire

Persecution marks the 1st century

First from the Jews (AD 33-70)

- “Jews” = Unbelieving Jews (the church was mainly Hebrew in the 1c!
- Persecution from council first – all apostles beaten and threatened (Acts 5)– then major one under Saul.
- Paul – sent to Gentiles, but chiefly persecuted by Jews of the diaspora
- *Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. (2 Cor 11:24)*

Persecution ALWAYS grows the church

Saul's persecution:

- *So then those who were scattered because of the persecution...made their way to...Antioch, Acts 11:19*
- Antioch – became Saul/ Paul's home church – launched him into the most fruitful apostolic ministry of the 1c!
- Like the Hebrews in Egypt, we thrive even better when the enemy seeks to devour. (Rev 12:1-12)

The Fire of Rome (AD 64) – results in first empire sanctioned persecution

- Nero successfully blamed it on Christians
- Responsible for the deaths of Peter & Paul plus tens of thousands of Christians
- First to make sport of Christian Martyrs: Impalement, Fed to the Wild Beasts, Burned Alive (used to light his gardens), cut in half, Decapitated, and Crucified
- Millions were martyred within the first century: (skeletal remains of 350,000 in one Roman catacomb crypt)

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE APOSTLES AND WHERE ARE THEIR REMAINS TODAY?

						
st. JAMES THE GREATER	st. JAMES THE LESSER	st. JUDE THADDEUS	st. PHILIP	st. THOMAS	st. PAUL	st. PETER
DEATH Stabbed with a sword	DEATH Stoned to death	DEATH Filled with arrows	DEATH Crucified by soldiers	DEATH Thrust with a spear	DEATH Beheaded in Rome	DEATH Crucified upside down
REMAINS St. James Church Compostela, Spain	REMAINS Holy Apostles Basilica Rome, Italy	REMAINS St. Peter's Basilica Rome, Italy	REMAINS Holy Apostles Basilica Rome, Italy	REMAINS Basilica of St. Thomas the Apostle, Ortona, Italy	REMAINS St. Paul's Church Rome, Italy	REMAINS St. Peter's Basilica Rome, Italy
						
st. JOHN	st. MATTHEW	JUDAS ISCARIOT THE TRAITOR	st. SIMON	st. BARTHOLOMEW	st. ANDREW	st. MATTHIAS
DEATH Died a natural death	DEATH Stabbed with a sword	DEATH Comitted suicide after betraying Jesus	DEATH Crucified	DEATH Flayed and beheaded	DEATH Crucified on X shaped cross	DEATH Crucified in Judea
REMAINS Basilica of St. John Ephesus, Turkey	REMAINS Cathedral of Salerno Salerno, Italy		REMAINS Altar of the Crucifixion Vatican City	REMAINS St. Bartholomew Church Rome, Italy	REMAINS Cathedral of Amalfi Amalfi, Italy	REMAINS St. Matthias' Abbey Trier, Germany

A tumultuous century: The Chosen People lose their land once again

6 - 70AD Israel under Roman Procurators (such as Pilate, Festus, Felix)

- Constant tension. Emperors growing weary of Judea & its two religions: Caligula (37-41AD) – insisted on a statue in the Temple
- Claudius (41-54AD) EXILED Jews from Rome: severe famine during his reign
