

# Week 2 Historical Background of the New Testament

Topic: Understanding the political, religious, and philosophical context in which the New Testament was written

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## I. The Roman Empire

### 1. Pax Romana

The "Peace of Rome" provided political stability during the New Testament era

### 2. Roman Roads

Infrastructure that enabled the rapid spread of the Gospel

### 3. Roman Citizenship

Influenced Apostle Paul's missionary work(Acts 22:25–29)

### 4. Imperial Worship and Religious Pluralism

Background of persecution against Christians

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## II. Judaism and Its Sects

1. Pharisees– Law-centered, believed in the resurrection

2. Sadducees– Priest-centered, denied resurrection

3. Essenes– Communal and apocalyptic (associated with the Dead Sea Scrolls)

4. Zealots– Political freedom fighters

5. Sanhedrin– The highest religious court among the Jews

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## III. Hellenistic Culture (Hellenism)

1. Spread of Greek Culture after Alexander the Great– Unified language, philosophy, and worldview

2. Koine Greek– The common language of the New Testament

3. Platonism and Stoicism– Philosophies that interacted with early Christian thought

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## IV. Political Background

1. Herodian Dynasty– Puppet kings under Roman rule

2. Tetrarchy– Divided political control over regions like Galilee

3. Jewish Nationalist Hope– Political distortion of the messianic expectation

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#### V. Religious Atmosphere

1. Temple–Centered Faith– Rebuilt Temple by Herod the Great
  2. Emphasis on Law and Traditions– Dominated by Pharisaic influence
  3. Messianic Expectation– Hopes for a national liberator
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#### Conclusion

The New Testament is not merely a religious text; it is a revelation of God's redemptive history within a complex historical setting.

Understanding this background brings greater clarity to Jesus' teachings, Paul's gospel, and the birth of the early Church.