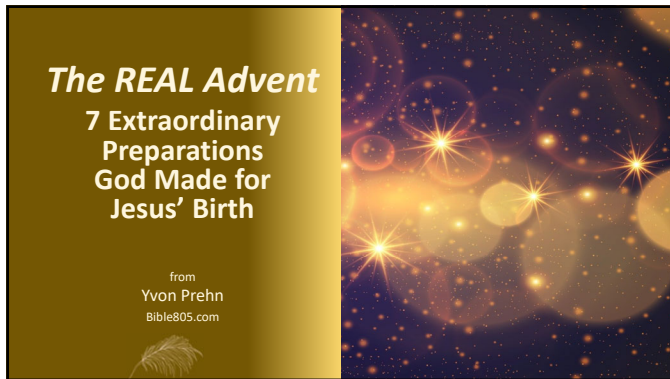


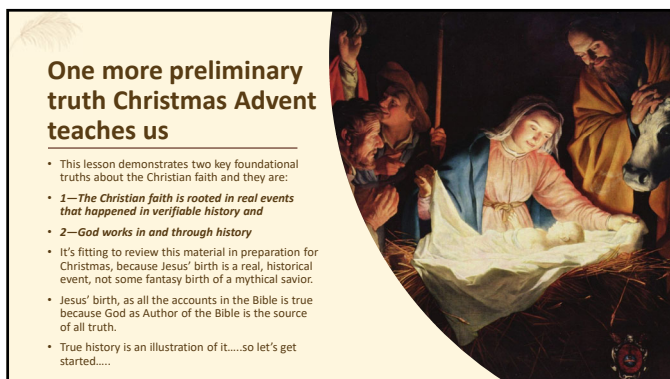
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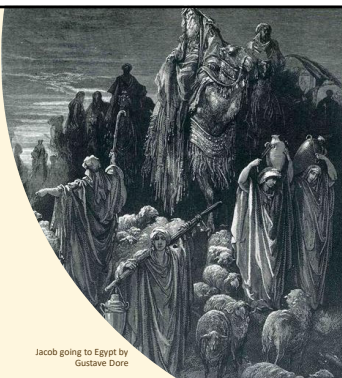


Foundational facts

- **Location:** the Mediterranean Basin
- **Primary Peoples:** the Children of Israel, God's chosen to be His light to the world and from whom He would send the Messiah and those who interacted with them.
- All the events and locations I'll be sharing can be extensively verified in secular history, no faith required—you can confirm any of them on Wikipedia or anywhere online.

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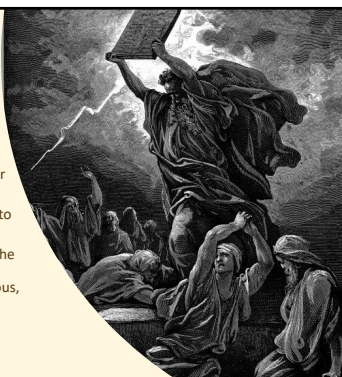


The story starts

- From their origins in Israel the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob became a nation when God redeemed them from slavery in Egypt.
- After He delivered them, God made a covenant, a contract with them at Mt. Sinai.
- *We'll all familiar with the 10 Commandments part of this, but the bigger picture of the covenant with God was that if they obeyed and worshiped Him, they would be blessed, kept safe, and in their land and if not, they would be punished by captivity outside the land.*
- Covenants are not to be taken lightly.

Jacob going to Egypt by Gustave Dore

7



More about the Covenant

- Not just for their sake.
- They were God's chosen people, not just for private blessings and protection.
- Were supposed to be a light and a witness to the nations around them.
- They were to do that by only worshipping the one true God and following his commands, which were very different from the idolatrous, immoral cultures around them.
- That was their covenant, you can read the details in Deut. 29.

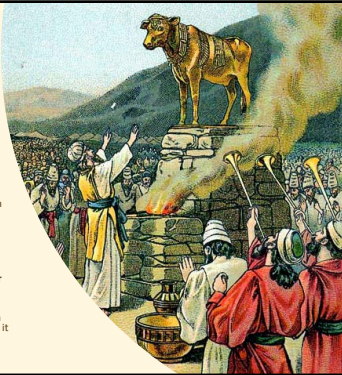
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Just as God keeps his word in blessings

- He also keeps his word in judgments.
- If they did not follow their part of the covenant, if they did worship other gods and live without following God's laws God said he would discipline them by sending prophets to remind them, by troubles, and ultimately, if they didn't repent, by removing them from the land (read the details in the OT historical books and prophets).
- They didn't obey and were judged. You may be thinking, what does this have to do with Advent?
- EVERYTHING!
- Though removal from the land was the ultimate horror for them it also initiated a series of SEVEN PREPARATIONS would culminate in the birth of Jesus.
- We'll now go through them—I'll identify each one and then I'll point out why each one was important and explain how it fit into God's plan.



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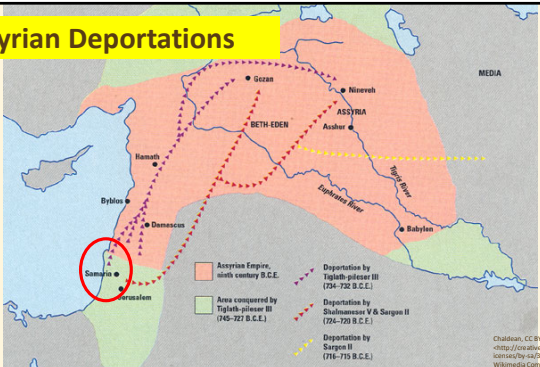
PREPARATION #1 A series of deportations

- The first major deportation took place 722 BC when Assyria conquered the Northern Kingdom of Israel and scattered the exiles throughout the middle east. They did not return.
- The second major deportation (actually, a series of them) took place in 576 BC, under Nebuchadnezzar when Jerusalem was destroyed and was primarily to Babylon.
- An opportunity to return to Israel after 70 years was offered to the people, but many did not and stayed in the land they were taken to as we see in Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther.
- Other migrations during Old Testament times took place for various reasons (trade, political, etc.) to Egypt, Rome, throughout the Mediterranean basin.
- **Why this preparation was important: Groups of Jewish people who worshipped the one true God were scattered throughout the Mediterranean World and where many retained their faith.**
- **They were blessed to be a blessing and God couldn't do that with them all huddled in Jerusalem.**
- Look at the maps.....



10

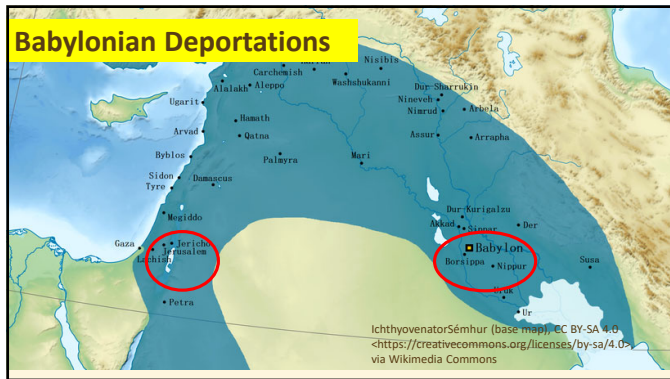
Assyrian Deportations



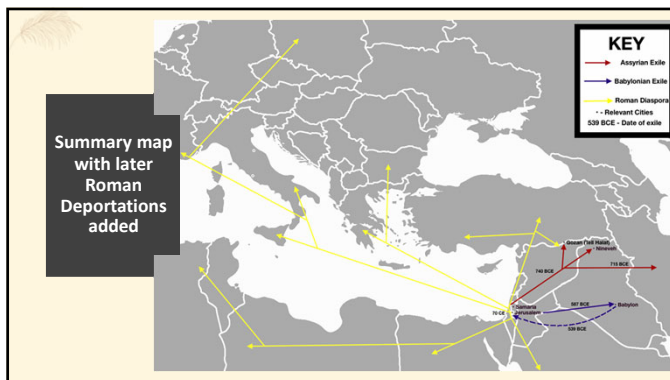
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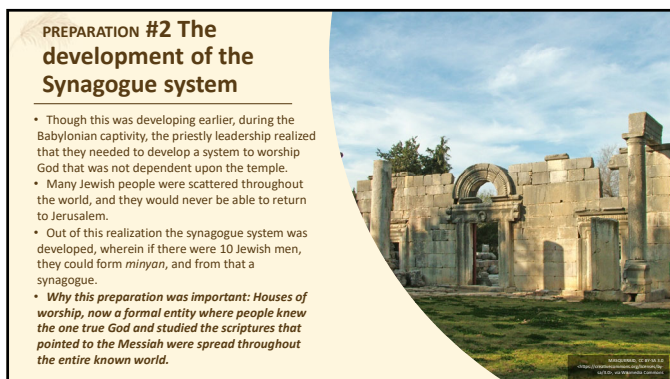
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PREPARATION # 3
Formalization of the Hebrew scriptures

- During approximately the same time as the synagogue was formalized, after the Babylonian captivity, members of the same group, known as the Men of the Great Assembly or Men of the Great Synagogue formalized what we know of as our Old Testament today.
- Ezra was one of the leaders of this group, he led one of the groups of exiles back to Jerusalem in 459 B.C.
- We don't know the exact process or the number of years until it was finalized, but from the Dead Sea Scrolls and other sources, we know that the books we have in our Old Testament are the same ones they had.
- More on this in the series of lessons on how we got our Bibles.

15



Why this preparation was important:

- Their scriptures told one consistent story; one consistent set of prophecies, which meant....
- The Jews all over the world studied the same scriptures including the many passages that predicted the coming of the Messiah.
- However, a problem was developing in that their scriptures were primarily in Hebrew when fewer and fewer people spoke Hebrew.
- From the time of the Assyrian captivity on, a majority of the people spoke Aramaic, which was the universal language of the world at that time.
- Aramaic uses the same alphabet as Hebrew, like English and Spanish, use the same alphabet, but like them they are two totally different languages.
- While this was going on another universal language was growing in use.....

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PREPARATION # 4 Adoption of a new universal language—Koine Greek

- Kione Greek (one of many dialects at that time) was adapted and spread by Alexander the Great.
- In addition to a great military leader, he was a brilliant scholar and philosopher in many areas, as to be expected as Aristotle was his tutor.
- As he conquered the entire known world at the time, he absorbed into his army soldiers from many lands and decided that Greek culture was important for them all.

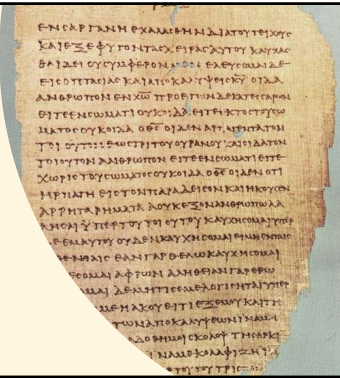
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Key part of that – making Kione Greek the official language

- Kione Greek was not a hidden, scholarly language, but was a dialect of the Greek language that Alexander the Great 336–323 BC developed and enforced its use for his armies and the people he conquered.
- It was common and PRECISE.
- What thrills scholars today (tenses, etc.) was a language designed to keep an army functioning well with no confusion over the meaning of commands and administratively to keep a vast empire of divergent people united.
- Why this preparation was important: *what the conquering army spoke, everybody learned to speak. Everyone in the entire known world now spoke, read, and wrote in the same language—Koine Greek. It may not have been their home language, but everyone knew it. Similar to how English is to many today, though they may speak another language at home.*



18

Alexander's Empire—all now Greek Speaking



Alexander conquered a massive area and required all of the people in it to adopt the Greek language. For purposes of trade, culture, and political expediency, even those outside his empire adopted Greek as the universal language also.

19

Good news/bad news about Kione Greek as the universal language

- The good part is everyone in this part of the world could communicate and it remained that way for over 500 years.
- The bad news related to the Jews.
- Remember the three significant events previously mentioned
 - The dispersion of the Jews all over this area
 - The development of the synagogue system where they all worshiped
 - The formalization of their scriptures—what we know as the Old Testament
- The bad news is that the Jewish scriptures were in Hebrew, but most of them now spoke Aramaic and now Greek.
- They couldn't read or understand God's Word in Hebrew any more than a Hebrew Bible would make sense to us today.



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Obviously, a problem

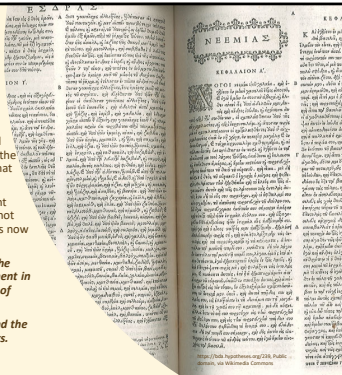
- God again uses Alexander and his influence to bring about the next step.
- Unlike many in the ancient world, Alexander held the Jews in high regard as did the one of generals who divided his empire after his death.
- This general was Ptolemy of Egypt and his son, Ptolemy Philadelphus was responsible for the next step in our progression.....



21

PREPARATION # 5 Translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek

- Ptolemy II Philadelphus (son of Alexander's general Ptolemy) lived from 281 to 246 BC decided to have the Hebrew Old Testament translated into Greet into what became known as the Septuagint.
- There is much moreore to the story of the Septuagint (many more, some quite fanciful) but the key thing not disputed is that the content of the Hebrew Bible was now available widely to the Greek-speaking world.
- Why this preparation was important: *Everyone in the entire known world could now read the Old Testament in the same language. It was no longer the language of primarily the priests, but of secular people as well.*
- It was a popular, easy to understand translation and the one quoted by Jesus and the New Testament writers.



22

So where are we? We have:

- **SO FAR:** God's chosen people representing the one true God,
- Were scattered all over the known world,
- They were all worshipping Jehovah and looking forward to a Messiah,
- While reading the same holy scriptures in the same language,
- **STILL NEEDED:** how to tie all of this together
- Provided by.....



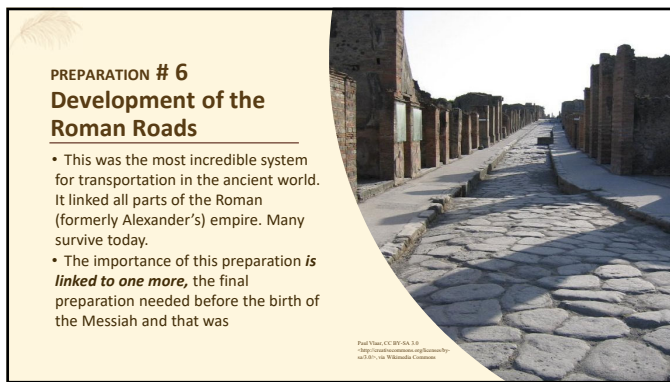
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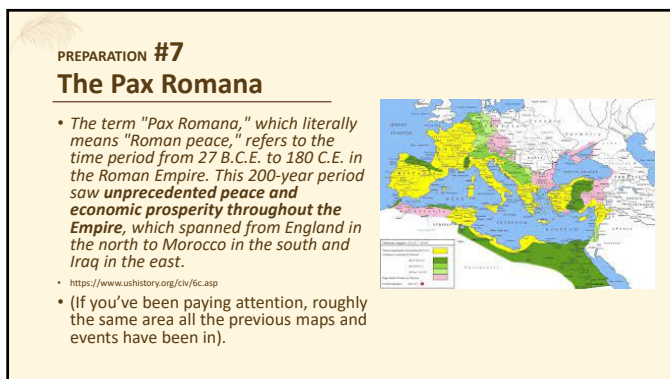
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Results of the Roman Roads and Pax Romana

- Historian Lionel Casson said, "THE FIRST TWO CENTURIES of the Christian era were great days for a traveler. . . . A planned network of good roads gave him access to all major centers, and the routes were policed well enough for him to ride them with relatively little fear of bandits. . . . Because of the Pax Romana (Roman Peace) of Emperor Augustus (27 B.C. – A.D. 14), . . . The Stoic philosopher Epictetus (d. about 135) declared, "There are neither wars nor battles, nor great robberies nor piracies, but we may travel at all hours, and sail from east to west."
- <https://christianitytoday.com/magazine/articles/for-the-road-with-gau>
- Why these 2 preparations were important: *Common people could use the roads and travel in relative safety.*


27



With all of this in place

- The fullness of time came, and Jesus was born in Bethlehem.*
- But of course, the Advent of Jesus is only the beginning of his story.
- Because He didn't stay a baby, but grew to manhood, taught, died, and rose again.
- And after His Resurrection, is when the extraordinary meaning of the Advent preparations becomes fully apparent on the day of Pentecost because....*

28



Jews from all over the world were able to travel safely to Jerusalem for Pentecost.

- Now when the day of Pentecost came. . . . there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—Acts 2:1, 5-11
- Look at a map of the Roman Roads, trace the names.....

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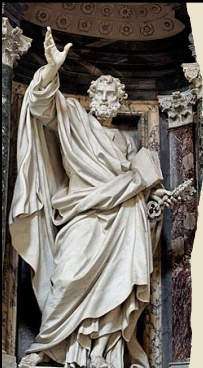
30

Thousands of years of history converged on that day

- Jews meeting in Jerusalem from all over the known world
- Because their Scriptures told them they should come at that time.
- All expecting a Messiah preached to them in their synagogues in far-off lands.
- All safely traveling on the Roman Roads under the Roman peace to get there.



31



Who could have imagined that day?

- Certainly not a captive who lived over a thousand years earlier shackled and starving who was force-marched away from Jerusalem into Mesopotamia would have had no idea that one day one of his descendants would travel safely to Jerusalem for Passover and Pentecost.
- Or a Jewish rabbi whose family stayed in Babylon over 500 years earlier but who could now travel in safety to Jerusalem for the Holy Days.
- Or the thousands of other faithful God-worshippers scattered throughout the ancient world for multitude of reasons who were now in Jerusalem.
- Who could have imagined that these men would hear a fisherman named Peter quote the OT fulfillment they had been taught about and prayed for and that through his sermon they would find Jesus.
- **As extraordinary as that day was the miracles of God's preparation don't stop with Pentecost.**

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This same preparations were used by the Apostle Paul to share the Gospel

- Into this world united by religion, language, culture and linked by safe and good roads, the Apostle Paul would go from place to place, as his pattern was.....
- First to Jewish people who were scattered all over the empire, many of them who arrived over a thousand years earlier...
- He goes into the Jewish synagogue, most likely organized in that place hundreds of years earlier...
- He reads the Old Testament scriptures to them in their common language (the Koine Greek) and shows them from their scriptures that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah and Savior.



33

Some areas of the Jewish Diaspora during the time of the Apostles



After the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities and other trade migrations, the Jewish people were scattered throughout the known world.

34


I wonder if Paul thought about all that had to come together for this to be possible?

- To review our 7 Preparations:
- The Jewish Diaspora, development of the synagogue, formalization of the Hebrew Scriptures, Alexander conquering the world and commanding everyone speak Greek, the Scriptures translated into Greek, the building of the Roman Roads and the Pax Romana.
- I imagine Paul didn't think about the history of it all as he did his work, any more than we are aware of all the things God brings together in our lives to protect us and accomplish His will.




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Our Application


- This lesson is a great reminder that nothing happens by accident—nothing is left to chance in the sovereign plan of God.
- It will probably take time, more time than we would like for God's plans to work out in our lives and our world, but they will.
- In closing I'm reminded of the words of Julian or Norwich who lived through the plague in her day and who said. . . .



36




37



The same God

- Who prepared for thousands of years for the birth of His son,
- Who got the people in Julian's day through their pandemic and many more of His people through trials, both horrific and painfully ordinary in past times,
- Is with us NOW and will work out all for our ultimate good and His glory.
- We may not see answers or understand the part our lives play in His eternal plan on this earth.
- But someday we will, and all truly and forever, will be well.



38
