

# Bible Study 2022-2023

## Class #13

1/3/23

# Historical Setup for the Synoptics

- **Geography**

- Palestine was a small Roman Province within the Roman Empire whose capital Jerusalem was captured by the Romans in 63 BC

# Historical Setup for the Synoptics (Cont)

- **Politically**

- The Roman senate declared *Herod the Great*, King of the Jews in 40 BC (succeeded by his sons *Archelaus*, *Antipas*, *Philip*)
- *Pontius Pilate* was the 5<sup>th</sup> governor of Judea from 26 BC to 4 AD
- The Romans allowed religious freedom as long as a populace paid their taxes and did not cause a disturbance of the peace
- The Jews were governed by the *Sanhedrin* (71 elders) led by a high priest (*Caiaphas* and Father-in-Law *Annas*)

# Historical Setup for the Synoptics (Cont)

- **Religiously** (Theocracy)

- Covenants:

- Abraham (circumcision)

- Moses (the Law)

- Ark of the Covenant in the Tent of Meeting (Glory Cloud)

- 3 Annual feasts in Jerusalem

- 613 rules

- Sacrificial system in the temple in Jerusalem

- Judges

- David (perpetual king) (Saul, David, Solomon-United Kingdom)

# Historical Setup for the Synoptics (Cont)

- **Significant Historical Events**

- Lives of the patriarchs
- Exodus (the Law of Moses)
- Wilderness wandering
- Promised Land
  - Judges
  - United Kingdom – Saul, David, Solomon – 1<sup>st</sup> temple
  - Divided Kingdom (civil war)
    - Assyrian assimilation of Israel (10 tribes in the North)
    - Exile of Judah to Babylon (destruction of 1<sup>st</sup> temple and Jerusalem)
  - Prophets – messenger with the Word of God
- The return and rebuilding of Jerusalem and the 2<sup>nd</sup> temple
- Hope for a Messiah (Anointed One) for 500 years

# Historical Setup for the Synoptics (Cont)

- **Key Players**

- **High Priests** Caiaphas, Annas
- **King Herod the Great** and sons
- **Pilate** – Roman governor of Judea
- **Sadducees** – Upper class religious party involved with the priesthood who denied the existence of spirits (life after death, and only accepted the written Law)
- **Pharisees** – layman led religious party who believed in the resurrection of the dead and the oral traditions as part of the Torah
- **Essenes** – Separatist group who formed ascetic monastic community near the Dead Sea
- **Zealots** – Aggressive political party who objected to any conciliation with the Roman authorities
- **Samaritans** - The remnant of the 10 lost tribes of Israel

Mark 1

# Mark 1

- **Mark 1:1-3** *“The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the son of God...Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight”*
  - As discussed, **Mark’s** Gospel does not have an infancy narrative, it simply starts off with the Baptism of Jesus’ story
  - But, just before that, he begins with a quotation from the prophet *Isaiah*: *“Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare the way”*
    - Unfortunately, the Prophet **Isaiah** never said this phrase
    - The first part was instead said by the Prophet Malachi (**Malachi 3:1**)
    - The next part is from **Isaiah 40:3**



# Mark 1 (Cont)

- It is important to understand this because some will say that Mark does not even know what he is quoting from!
- But, Father pointed out that of course he knows, if not why would he have quoted it?
- He did not say it was from Malachi and Isaiah, or just Malachi because he was not an American
- He was writing the way people wrote at that time; examples of which can be found in the Dead Sea Scrolls

# Mark 1 (Cont)

- You can hear **Isaiah 40** in the passage from **Malachi 3**, because **Isaiah** was behind it
- That was why Malachi was sent by God to prophesy
- God has said when He would restore His kingdom (Israel and Jerusalem) it would be under the voice of one crying in the wilderness like a new Exodus through the wilderness
- But, this did not happen as *Ezra* (a nice guy) was certainly not this
- They returned to Israel after Babylon, but it was not all that great

# Mark 1 (Cont)

- They rebuilt the temple, but it was far inferior to the old one
- There was no return of the “Glory Cloud”
- They rebuilt Jerusalem, but had no king as they were still ruled by a foreign power
- So, God sent **Malachi** to encourage them and let them know that the Lord whom they sought would suddenly come to His temple, and He was going to send messengers before Him to prepare the way

# Mark 1 (Cont)

- This meant that He was going to fight fire with fire, although He did not want to cause everyone to die
- Therefore, He said that He would send Elijah to prepare the way
- As we know, He sent John the Baptist to fulfill this mission
- This was what the Angel said, and what Jesus will later confirm, which we will see with the return of Elijah at the *Transfiguration*

# Mark 1 (Cont)

- This should lead us to see the parallels between the Baptism and Transfiguration stories
- First, we see the spirit of Elijah via John the Baptist and later we see the presence of Elijah at the Transfiguration
- This means that the two prophecies (Malachi's and Isaiah's) were fulfilled (we see these prophecies in the Old Testament and again in the New Testament)
- Violence will be the fulfillment of these prophecies

# Mark 1 (Cont)

- From these two events, we can see why Malachi was sent to say what he said
- We can also see “the way” in the Book of Acts where the Christians will be called the ones who have “the way”
- Father said that this helps explain why we sometimes find John the Baptist depicted in iconography with wings on his back

# Mark 1 (Cont)

- These icons remind us that John the Baptist was the fulfillment of this prophecy “Behold I send my *messenger* before to prepare the way”
- Messenger in Hebrew was *Malak* meaning Angel and in Greek *Aggelos*
- This does not mean that John was an angel but the word angel means a messenger
- Father ended this section by reminding us that Mark does not contain an infancy narrative and next begins his gospel with the baptismal story (which Luke picks up in **Luke 3**)

# Mark 1 (Cont)

- This means that the Old Testament prophecy of Malachi is very important
- We find references all over the New Testament, especially when talking about John the Baptist in his early stage
- Father pointed out that there are many Christians who have never heard of Malachi
- We will now continue our study of the Gospel of Matthew