

# *Resurrection Life of Jesus Church*

## THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

RLJ-1779

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### PART 3: HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

#### **THREE FALSE MESSIAHS**

There were three men that claimed to be the Jewish messiah prior to Jesus. Since both the Kabbalah and Talmud teach that the “messiah will be a man anointed by God,” it was easy for these men to accumulate followers. The problem was that they were not “anointed by God” and they were subsequently executed by the Romans. These losses left the Jewish people feeling disillusioned. **Acts 5:34-40**

#### **THE CONDITION IN THE LAND OF JUDEA**

The living conditions in Judea were not good, especially so for the poor people outside of Jerusalem. Two Roman civil wars had devastated the local economy since the different warring factions had demanded additional tax to finance their war efforts.

Jerusalem was the political and religious capitol of the Jewish people. The rabbinical teaching that Jews should visit to the temple and make an atonement sacrifice once a year meant that millions visited the city every year.

According to Rabbi Solomon Grayzel, there were some 2.5 million Jews in Judea, a million in Asia Minor (Turkey), a hundred thousand in Rome, a hundred thousand in Cyrenaica (Libya), a million in Egypt, and a million Jews in Babylon.<sup>1</sup>

#### **RELIGIOUS TOURIST INDUSTRY**

Jerusalem was the epicenter of a huge religious tourist industry. People living within the city built large houses and rented out rooms to visiting Jews, collecting large amounts of money for food and lodging. Furthermore, visitors had to pay a temple tax and purchase special temple money that was used to buy animals and birds to be sacrificed. It was a huge business operation and Jesus opposed this system, causing a great stir when He cleansed the temple grounds. **John 2:12-17**

The last supper in the upper room was furnished by a man that was part of this industry. **Luke 22:7-12**

This room was large enough to hold 120 persons. **Acts 1:12-15**

Jerusalem was flooded with religious tourists every feast day and this was the occasion on the day of Pentecost. **Acts 2:5-12**

The religion of Ethiopia at this time was Judaism, and an Ethiopian government official had come to Jerusalem to worship. **Acts 8:26-28**

According to Rabbi Grayzel, the population of Jerusalem was around one million people. They were prosperous while the people in the surrounding area were poor.

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<sup>1</sup> Solomon Grayzel, A HISTORY OF THE JEWS, The Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia, 1948



There was a famine in Judea in 25 A.D. just before Jesus started His ministry. Herod was forced to purchase grain from Egypt. Judea was thrown into an economic crisis in 30 A.D., and in order to prevent an uprising, Herod lowered the taxes by 33%.

According to Rabbi Grayzel, Herod was an Edomite and did not care for the Jewish people. He only provided relief to hinder an insurrection against himself. Herod was a dictator and could do whatever he wanted to do as long as he kept the peace and fulfilled his tax obligation to the Roman government.

Herod spent large sums of money enlarging the temple in Jerusalem. His motive was purely financial. The more he improved the temple complex, the more he could charge the foreign Jews who came to worship at the temple.

He also loved chariot racing and built hippodromes outside of Judah so he could enjoy racing and the gambling with the upper class known as Herodians.

Herod also introduced a sales tax; his tax collectors (publicans) were ruthless in extracting taxes from the Jewish people.

A large number of Jews worked in the farming and ranching industries, particularly when it came to raising sheep. Jewish farmers also raised pigs since there were many foreigners working for the Roman government in Judea. When a herd of swine committed suicide, the people in town told Jesus He was not welcome in their community. **Matthew 8:28-34**

According to Rabbi Grayzel, unemployment was constantly high in the provinces of Judah and Galilee. People were hungry, and when Jesus fed thousands supernaturally, the masses rallied to a man like Jesus who could create food for them to eat. **John 8:26**

## **WHEN WAS MATTHEW WRITTEN?**

We know that none of the apostles recorded their experiences with Jesus until after He ascended. Jesus was incarnated in Bethlehem in year zero and was about 30 years old when He began His ministry. **Luke 3:23**

We know that this ministry time period lasted for 3.5 years and that Jesus was crucified one day after the Passover in 33 A.D. The Day of Pentecost took place 50 days after the Passover. **Acts 2:1**

The apostles all had one thing in common. They thought that Jesus would return during their lifetime and therefore did not immediately make a record of what Jesus had done. The apostles carried on an oral tradition, and since the rest of the people had also lived through the time period, they were informed of what had taken place.

Some 30 years after the Day of Pentecost, the apostles were now between 60-70 years in age, when they realized that Jesus might not come back in their lifetime. This is what prompted them to put in writing their eyewitness accounts of Jesus. This was the sentiment expressed by the apostle Peter. **2 Peter 1:12-18**

The smear campaign against the four Gospels for the last 100 years is now on the internet for any person to read. The consensus among the sceptics is that no one knows for sure if Matthew wrote his Gospel, and if he did, it would have been done around 80 to 85 A.D., some 52 years after the crucifixion.

This would make Matthew at least 80 years old, certainly old enough to witness the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 A.D. If this is true, why did Matthew not mention the destruction Jesus had prophesied? **Matthew 24:1-2**

The answer is simple. Matthew wrote his account before the Romans returned to put down the Jewish rebellion.

***Remember, it's not so important how you begin your life after salvation, but how you finish it!***

***Do you have an ear to hear with?***