

The Land Before Jesus Part 2

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Preacher: BK Smith

[0 : 00] you know, when we were young and we were learning about Daniel, you know, we learned about the story of Daniel in the lion's den.

We learned about his friends, right, who were thrown in this fiery furnace. We learned about just Daniel being able to interpret prayers, but I'm blown away or I'm always in awe of Daniel 9.

Just the prayers and petitions that a great man takes before the Lord.

There's no mighty deed here except for a prophet who loves his people, loves his God. And we see that return as we're getting into the historicity.

Daniel doesn't return to Israel. He's left to die in the land in exile, but his hope and his future hope is for the Redeemer who will come.

[1 : 14] And that moves my heart. It challenges me for what I pray about. All right, so we are in this series called The Life of Christ.

It's based on the prophecies that we learned from Daniel last week that are based in Daniel 2, 7, 8, and 9. And last week we kind of opened it up.

We looked at a little bit of the history, and apparently I didn't include enough maps. So today you guys are getting maps upon maps upon maps, okay? Because I really want you guys to see the color and the land as how it's constructed so wonderfully and perfectly under God's sovereign rule and how when Jesus walks the land, this will help us in our understanding of why Jesus did the things that he did and said the things that he said.

Two reasons why we are in this sermon series. One, it's to understand the humanity of Jesus Christ, that God actually indeed walked in this land.

He wore sandals. He dealt with hunger, sorrow, broken hardness, joy, desperate need for prayer that we just even see recorded by Daniel, just this kinsman redeemer who knew our trials, our sorrows.

[2 : 46] And secondly, I want us to see how it's lived out in history to give us confidence in the testimony of the Gospels, which are not only reliable, but incredible sources of information for the Lord Jesus Christ.

So I decided I'm going to use every section I'm going to use for this sermon. It's a little bit different. It's kind of on the repetition a little bit from last week.

But I want to use the headings of world events. So just to keep you guys focused on where we are and where God takes those world events. And for every world event, we'll drop a map so you can see what the lay of the land and what it looks like for us.

We all right with that? All right. Sabian is happy. That is good. He even wore a tie. So I'm excited about this. All right. So the baseline that I want to use for us is looking at Israel at probably the pinnacle of their time, the most influential time, which is 1000 BC.

It's around that time. It is the kingdoms of both Saul, David, and Solomon's United Israel Kingdoms. So we're going to see the map. So that is what is before us.

[4 : 05] If you look down at the bottom right corner, you see that little box. At that time, Israel went from the south, right just near the peninsula, the Sinai Peninsula, and went all the way north, almost into the land of Greece.

In that time, they had... It goes all the way up. You're going to see the only thing that's missing, if you see Phoenicia, they are the boat-faring people. They're on that part of the land.

But at this point, their expanse is great. Their trade routes go all over the Mediterranean. They're wealthy. They're powerful. They have a mighty army. So this is, when we consider Israel, the pinnacle of where they were, this is the time.

It was between 1,000 and 930 BC. So if you look at... I said Greece. I meant to say Turkey. Sorry. So if you see the color scheme, you see the purple.

That is the color of the country as it was under Saul's power in rain. The green is David's. David's. And at the very top, you'll see a little bit of olive greens, which was Solomon's.

[5 : 14] But Solomon's greatness was actually more incurred, not so much in his land expansion, but his trading empire. And I don't have a map for that. But there was...

He went all over the world, even the way down into the Red Sea and out onto Asia. It was quite incredible. So that was the 1,930.

So this is the first baseline that I want to use from here. The next world event we're going to see is the divided kingdom in 930 BC. And as we all know, Israel couldn't decide on a king.

So what happens is we saw this Israel to the north, which you'll notice includes the land of Samaria. And Judah is to the south, which includes the great city of Jerusalem.

Now what I want you to pay special attention to on this map is those red lines. Those red lines are the international routes of trade that flow through Israel.

[6 : 17] And that is going to be part of Israel's problem for the next 1,000 years. Because it is at the center of trade between Europe and Asia and all of Africa.

So those are the trade routes. And we're going to learn later that they actually gravitate. They all start in Damascus and then roll out. So that is where the beginning of where these international trade routes flow.

So if you notice to the north of the map is what we know today as modern day Lebanon. And as I said before, Phoenicia, which is right up against, it was a great nation, a seafaring nation, and they spent their time.

So the next world event happens is when Israel, in rebellion against God, God brings Assyria in to judge Israel.

And as you notice, this happens around 730 BC. So after about 200 years, you have this country that is unwilling to repent. Israel goes on to lose 10 of their tribes.

[7 : 25] And history doesn't tell us where they ended up. There's some interesting videos, documentaries speculating that some of the Jews ended up in as far as South Africa to Ethiopia to even into the northern parts of, or the southern parts of Russia.

So this is how big the Assyrian Empire, and you're going to notice at the bottom, that little purple scheme, that's what's left of Judah. Those were the ones that God had chosen to spare from that time.

Why does this matter to us? Right now, with the destruction of Israel, and I said this last week, this begins the creation of the Samaritan nation. Assyria's policy, when they went to war, is they would, when they took a nation out, they would bring other people to the land.

2 Kings 17, 24 actually lists for us all the different people groups that the Assyrians brought in. And while they were in that land, they populated, right?

Men and women need husbands and wives. Sometimes there's not enough people in your clan. You're starting to go outside of your clan, outside of your people. And another nation kind of gets started up.

[8 : 49] And it's got parts of Judaism, but parts of the secular tribes of the time. So 200 years later, we have another world event.

And it's the Babylonians. God has continued to reach out to Judah. They have not remained faithful. So what we see here is the path where Nebuchadnezzar came, took Israel, and brought them to Babylon.

And that's where they were to spend the next 70 years. Now, this story, we understand, is in 2 Kings, chapters 24, 25.

Jeremiah and Ezekiel will all record this. Why is this significant to us? One, there's no more Israel. Two, there's no more Jerusalem.

Three, there's no more temple. In fact, at that time, the best and brightest people are actually taken away into exile.

[10 : 01] And it remains the only two tribes, Benjamin and Judah. What's interesting is while they are in Babylonian, they will lose the Hebrew language.

The spoken language of the people will become Aramaic and not Hebrew. And some actually believe this is when the synagogues got created.

During the time in Babylon, the Jewish people needed a place to worship. They did not have the temple to go to. So what they did is they created this system where if they had ten men, they could bring people together and they would read from the Torah, which they had, their parts of the Old Testament, and read it amongst themselves to kind of keep that Jewish religious going.

And that's where God brings Daniel into play with these prophecies that he expresses. One day, you're going to be able to go back to the land. In fact, Jeremiah the prophet prophesied, after 70 years, I will bring you back.

And just think of how discouraging you are as a people. You've been completely wiped out militarily. You have this group, this nation, that believes in totally taking you into your people group.

[11 : 22] And there's no plans to send you out. But there's this prophecy that they have by Jeremiah, and that is the hope that God's people place in, that God will somehow rescue them.

Last week, we learned about this prophecy that Daniel had. And he talks about these four empires. Remember the statue?

And it had King Nebuchadnezzar was the head made of gold. Then there was a prophecy of these arms and chests made of silver, which would go on to represent the Medo-Persian Empire.

Then we would learn about these bronze legs, which would later become Greece, and we're going to learn about that today. And then the last empire upon which the Savior would come from would be the Roman Empire made of iron.

But what is so amazing about this is that even in this midst of despair, destruction, God still gives his people hope. Amen? He doesn't leave them hopeless.

[12 : 32] They're not without a prophecy of the coming Savior. The next world event is that Persia overthrows Babylon. And we read about that in Daniel chapter 5.

This occurs in 538 B.C. The Medo-Persian Empire would last for over 200 years. And as we read last week in both Isaiah and Daniel, but in Ezra and Nehemiah, the Persians' view of having foreigners was you create a vassal state.

So he takes their people, you know what, you guys go back home, make money, and send us money back. That's pretty much how. And we won't bother you if you continue in this relationship with us, things will go well.

The significance of the Persian Empire overthrowing Babylon is one, he sends them the means to reconstruct the temple. And he also sends them the means to reconstruct Jerusalem and the walls of Jerusalem.

So in the next slide, if you notice that purple part, that's pretty much all that's left of Judah.

[13 : 53] It's been total defeat. They have been wiped out. Now what's interesting here is that the government changes Israel's system of government forever.

They used to have a king which took care of civil matters and a high priest which take care of religious matters. The Persian Empire, knowing and understanding the influence of the religious priests, puts the power in them.

And they are the ones that correspond back with the rulership in Persia. So we've got a different set of leadership which will endure until the time of Jesus Christ.

as we all know, who had the power? The high priest. Remember the Sanhedrin? That was all the religious rulers that Jesus would have to deal with at that time.

So this is the significance of this Persian empire. A couple of other things I want to have you pay attention to. If you notice to the north in that green, that is Samaria.

[15 : 06] the Samaritans which will become a constant friction point in the life of Israel. And it's kind of funny. It's because the Samaritans kind of took on some of the faithful aspects of Judaism and they introduced other faith beliefs.

And we understand from the Old Testament that was not the thing to do. God had set up a system that they were to hold rigidly to. So to a Jew at that time it was almost acceptable to accept someone else's false religion than the one who came and dirtied your religion.

Do you know what I'm saying? Even though there would be some similarities there would be a greater hatred towards that than towards a total other pagan religion.

So what's interesting and we're not going to talk about it but they actually build their own temple on Mount Gerizim and the Samaritans believe that God is going to come down to their temple and not into Jerusalem but the Jews in about 100 BC took care of that.

They went out and burned down that temple so it wouldn't happen. So how else does this play into the life of Jesus? If you look at the bottom of the map it's yellow.

[16:30] That is the land of Edomia. This is where the descendants of Esau reside. You remember Esau? Brother of Jacob. Why is that significant?

Because that is the land where Herod the Edomite he's actually an Edomite will come from and rule Israel and he actually sells the Roman authorities that he's a Judean and he's the only person who can keep these Jews in line when the Romans later find out that the Jews are kind of a handful to rule.

So that's kind of the beginning there and if you guys were with us during our time in Ruth if you look to the right of Israel there's that land called Moab at the bottom right hand corner green.

That's where Ruth came from. So when there was poverty and famine in the land that is where some of the Jews went to sojourn. So the next world event we see is in 332 BC and this is the rise of the Greek Empire under Alexander the Great.

A couple things that I want to talk about there's three phases to the Greek influence. So what I told you a little bit earlier what this morning is a repeat or expanding what we learned this week this stuff is all new.

[17:53] So the three major events that occur under this Greek conquest one Alexander at that time is the largest world empire and what was amazing about Alexander is he was brilliant in his understanding that if we were going to have an empire to outlive all other empires we need to have something in common right because there's people groups there's different religious groups but his one thing is if we can get all of you speaking the same language we can all use Greek as the spoken word things will go a lot better.

Two everyone else has to accept the Greek culture as being superior to all others and if you don't know Alexander was taught by Aristotle who came after Plato and Socrates probably some of the world's greatest philosophers.

So the three components that he believed that would bring a unity to a conquered world was one a common language two a common culture and three a common citizenship.

So to say that you were a citizen of that empire gave you rights and a distinctive for lack of a better word superiority to any other type of citizenship.

So that was his main goal. Now the biggest country where he had the hardest time selling this whole Greek culture to was Israel right?

[19:36] Israel who knew they lost so much in Babylon so when they came back one of the things that they decided to do is the religious leaders is we have to protect our culture we have to protect our faith and our language better than anybody else we can't let any other foreign judgment come against us.

So what we see is the rise of the Pharisees during this time period the Pharisees we're going to hold true we are going to be the faithful we are going to be the righteous ones that are going to be right before God so judgment does not come again and this will become even when we get to the land of Jesus one of the most dominating issues is how much Greek do we accept into our culture so the phase two of the Greek Empire we're going to take a look at this next map is sadly or providentially Alexander dies he has no son he has no heir so they have to divide his vast kingdom and it's divided into those four colors that you see before you Macedonia and then you see Sparta and all that those are the two insignificant ones in the land of the

Bible but the other two the green and the burnt orange are the ones that will influence Israel the most and at this point it says the division of Alexander's Empire about 275 AD notice Israel is under the orange color okay now you've got two competing empires and you want to make money from taxes on transportation which land do you want to control Israel Israel is the land that you want to control more than anything else because that's where you have the trade coming up from Africa so we have this this situation that's going on where they are controlled by what's called the Ptolemaic Empire now the faith the third event that happens in history and

I'm going to have them switch to this in the next slide is you notice there's no more orange the Seleucid Empire decides in the battles that have gone on for years that they finally win the right to rule the land now what's really interesting is the Seleucid Empire wanted to get the Jews on their side so they went down and said listen guys if you side with us we will let you do your Jewish thing we're not going to interfere in your religious life you guys can go about but if you would support our rulership over the other rulership who you know they wanted to put more that Greek stuff on you

we're not going to do that anymore so will you guys support us so guess what they went on they supported them now what's interesting is that the leader of that the green side the Seleucids was quite brilliant he ends up passing away his name is

Antiochus the third and his rulership passed to his son named Antiochus the fourth Antiochus the fourth however you want to say it now this is significant in some major ways the first one is he's not as smart as his dad he decides to go against his dad's wisdom he decides to lead with a heavy hand and he wants to Hellenize Israel more than ever before and he gets to a point where he outlaws the Jewish faith and the Jewish way of life and many of you might have heard but he actually goes into the temple and he builds an altar to Zeus and things don't go well for him at this point so while he goes in to offer sacrifices and if you remember we also read about this is prophesized in Daniel that there is a sacrifice of a pig and to burn incense to this

[24 : 25] God and as far as bad ideas go you couldn't have done anything worse to the Jews what's interesting there's a story that the priest is told to take the Greek offerings and offer them he doesn't the Greek military official comes over to force him to do it what does he do he kills him he then flees to the woods and what happens is he ends up leading a revolt which was called the Hasmonean revolt or if you know your history the Maccabean war if any of you guys still have an old catholic bible you guys ever have one of those and they have the those books in between the apocrypha you guys know what I'm talking about no okay if you have a catholic bible they actually include 15 different books but there's two books in there which are actually quite valuable when it comes to history it's one and two

Maccabees and it actually records what happens during this revolt so this priest and his sons go out in the bush and they attract a whole bunch of Jewish zealots and guess what they become the world's first guerrilla warfare and they end up for the next 20 or 30 years railing on Greece and they end up doing quite well to the point that they're able to rededicate the temple and I'm going to have you put on the next slide so all those colors are all the land that these rebels were able to win back so they've now made far more means more greater territory than they had since David through this revolt what's interesting is that time we're going to be learning in the west Rome is rising and Greece is spending all their time battling with Rome that the Greeks end up telling Israel alright we're done we are now going to allow you to rule yourselves as an independent state so for over 100 years the Jews get their land and they get to rule as an independent state for like I said close to 100 years what happens however after that we see is the rule of Rome in the next slide this is when Rome becomes the dominant power in the Mediterranean and what's interesting Israel they're having problems with Israel again so Rome sends this general named Pompey and in case that name might ring a bell you guys remember the name Spartacus have you guys ever heard of Spartacus in history he led the slave rebellion in Rome that they couldn't put down guess who they called to put it down general Pompey he's the guy who puts it down so when Israel's rebelling who do they call Pompey like this guy was a military brilliant tactician he was ruthless and he went in and said enough is enough you are now are you're under us so this happens in around 63 B.C.

now what is the significance that comes from the influence of the Greece of the Greek Empire when the Hasmoneans were ruling they believed themselves to be royalty they believed that they were to take over the land they should be the kings and as with all type of kings there was a division one went with one brother and another went with another and that ended up becoming creating two political parties you might have heard of them the Sadducees and the Pharisees so they kind of grow out from all of this they both have Hasmonean princes supporting them but Rome decides to come in and settle the matter you're not going to have your own kings I'm going to tell you who your king is and that's where we have the next event is this is where Herod the Great is introduced into the scene at 36

[28 : 57] BC that red area is the section that Herod would eventually rule over Rome gave him an army and said you can use this army to win all the land back which he did so what's interesting about Herod is like I said before he's from the line of Esau and he sold himself to Rome saying hey I am actually one of the people there's a story that he actually converted to Judaism in order to win the people over and we see three phases to his rule all this red that you see happened between the years 37 and 25 BC and that was him reconquering all the rebellious Jews that lived in the area in 25 to 13 BC Herod's strategy was if I want these people to love me I'm going to build them something and we all know he went into Jerusalem and rebuilt the temple he made it beautiful he

spent much money on artisans bringing up almost getting it back to the glory that it was once under Solomon did that win him the love of the people no one of the things that he also did is he continued to build altars to other gods throughout of Israel so for his whole time together he never won the favor of his people in the third phase of Herod's life was his death which occurs between 13 to the time of Jesus' birth so what is Herod's rule have to do with the life of Jesus well a couple things that we understand about Herod he was an exceptional leader and that was done because mostly he was a brutally violent horrible man who would kill anyone who stood in his way the buildings that he built which he sought to win favor backfired on him because he also allowed pagan temples to live in the land of

Israel and it's important for us to understand every time a new people group comes into Israel Israel gets more obstinate stronger and entrenched they want the foreigners out and they want to have their own people but if you remember last week when does Jesus Christ come or when does the Redeemer come it's now so the land that Jesus is born into is a tinderbox it is dry kindling waiting for the spark that will overthrow Rome because they understand the prophecy that Daniel given so they are on their toes just waiting in anticipation who will be the Messiah and Herod understood this so much do you remember what he did when he found out when the wise men came and told about the king of kings who would come from

Bethlehem he just sends his army in and he sacrifices every child under the age of two that's how mad he was and how much he wanted to hold on to control but what it indicates to us even a pagan like Herod had access to the prophecies that he could make those political decisions based on what the Old Testament told him so if he could do it couldn't God's people be doing it would there not be some people waiting for that anticipation of the Messiah to come so the time that Jesus is born into there is this incredible tension that is bubbling up in the land in fact after Herod dies and before he dies he has to redo his will four times because he kept killing his sons that's that's the craziness that was going on at that time so what happens is he ends up becoming so cruel that the people complain to rule that he loses the favor of

Augustus he ends up dying and he's given control to three of his sons and Rome continues to rule so we're going to look at the next slide which ends up becoming the divided kingdom if you notice the red that is ruled by Rome the purple is read by Antipas so the red is actually given to one of his sons but his son goes out and kills 3,000 Pharisees at the time of Jesus when he walked the earth there was 6,000 whether they replaced him or not I don't know but that was a significant amount of people so Rome gets kind of ticked off with him that they remove him and that's where Pilate comes into play he ends up eventually ruling the red Antipas or Herod will read the purple and the green is the Gentile territory going forward and

[34 : 39] I'm just going to take you look at this last slide and this is when we start next week on the life of Jesus Christ this is the land and how it looked that Jesus walked couple things I want you to pay attention to notice the red roads they all flow from Damascus notice those roads do not go anywhere near Jerusalem if you're wondering where Jerusalem is Jerusalem is at the part right at the very top near the Dead Sea over to the west so all the foreign trade went away from where the center of Israel's power was so what do I want you to take away from this morning that gives us the tension to understand when Jesus ministered at that day first one is the Greek pressure of Hellenization and how the people accepted it when you have a foreign party that's ruling over you you know you have to compromise at some point right because you'll die there's no other choice you either go along or you die so what that creates is the

Sadducees which become the compromisers if you give us the high priest ship and we get to control things from there we're going to be happy and you won't have to deal with things as much the second one is to hold out and to reject all things that are foreign which is represented by the Pharisees that we see in the Gospels there's a reason why the Sadducees really only appear at the beginning of the ministry of Jesus Christ we're going to learn in John 6 that's when he cleans out the temple and then later on at the end which will lead to eventually to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ so we see those are the two main parties one compromises with Hellenism the other one doesn't want anything to do with it now the other thing

I want you to see is what did the Jew think of these groups one the Sadducees were known as the wealthy and the comfortable and their whole motivation was to keep the status quo if they were to profit financially and with power it's just to keep things easy peasy the Pharisees they actually lived amongst the people they identified with the common man and most were seen as a regular Joe a

teacher a rabbi what's interesting at this time there's synagogues throughout Israel as they've come back from Babylon and this is where the Pharisees power resides their whole political thrust is to overthrow the Romans and any foreign power any questions on what

I covered this morning yes Greek culture sorry so when I say that word Hellenism it's everything Greek that Alexander wanted to bring in Hellenism H E L L E N I S M Hellenism Greek culture yeah so any other questions all right I have some homework for you guys if you notice in your bulletin there's this white sheet of paper and it's got all these Bible verses I know these were probably for some of you probably the most two most painful sermons you've ever had to sit under all right if you don't care about history it didn't really matter but it's going to matter for us as we get into the life of Christ and as we understand why things were the things they are and I'll tell you I came to appreciate history later in life when we think about who we are as individuals we are sometimes ignorant of the fact that we believe we live in a vacuum that the decisions I make the reasons I make them are all independent of everything else around me do you guys ever think about that these kind of things if you ever start thinking about God's will and how much free will you have and all that kind of stuff it's amazing by how much our history affects us I'll share a little bit about my background my original family actually came over quite early in before even America was America it was a British colony at the time before 1776 my ancestors lived lived on the east coast the [40:14] Boston area and so on the Americans you know the Boston Tea Party my ancestors got in on that they were anti England so they fought on the side of the Americans in the American Revolution they end up getting captured all right apparently they didn't have the skills that I had but anyway they got captured and what the British people would do with the prisoners was they would take them up to Nova Scotia okay after the war is done hey you guys are all free to go apparently my people weren't too good with directions or a map and just or it could have been a really cute Acadian girl in that area they got out and decided to settle so all my ancestors of New Brunswick and that is why I'm Canadian because my dad ended up getting a job in

North Bay Ontario and that's where I was born because at the time my dad grew up there was no jobs for him where he grew up in New Brunswick so it's this interesting path right I had no choice in the matter but that has distinctly made me who I am and it's the same reason why I wanted to take you guys through this bit of history so you could understand why Israel is the way it is why aren't they the same thing they were 500 years ago why is there so much infighting why do they want to make Jesus the Messiah so badly why do we see some of them wanting to believe him so much and then reject him several days later it's amazing but all these things play an influence on why Israel is what Israel is so on the assigned readings that I'm giving and I'm going to take you through the harmony as we're going to be going into the birth of

Jesus I want you to read from different passages what I've done is I put the reading on and then you're going to have some details questions to ask yourself it's not going to take you long to do it but I would say just divide it up amongst your week check off there's a little box handy box to let you know when you've done it and these are all the things that I want on your mind as we start to go into this life of Jesus Christ sound good honestly if you do the work you will get riches upon riches from the text and it's going to create questions that you've probably never thought of before that I want to see you deal and we're going to deal with it together from the text itself and come to a greater understanding of our dear Lord and Savior amen I really believe this is going to augment your love for

Jesus and just give you a greater understanding of all those questions in regards to that check marks verses check marks questions all right we're good all right dear Lord Heavenly Father we just thank you for this time where we come together Father I'm asking you to bless this time just we're using to understand the history that you were sovereign over Father it's amazing how well you protected your people and how you conformed their personalities and molded their desires the things that they wanted and the things that they rejected we even get to see even in the life of these Pharisees who desired to be righteous they desired to lead a nation that would never be overthrown again by a foreign power because of unfaithfulness yet in their means and desires to do so don't even recognize you they represent us the desire that we always have wanting to rely on our works our righteousness when

Jesus Christ the time that he walked this earth was claiming that you do not trust in your righteousness but trust in me father I pray as we go through this series we see this tension in the humanity of Jesus that it will speak to all the individual stories that are in this church there's people

here from different backgrounds different countries different continents that there's going to be parts of your life that we're going to be able to identify more than some other people and there's going to be incredible power in that so we read those parts of scripture which talks about that you can identify with every one of our needs we will see it and know it and father I pray that we can become people like

[45 : 50] Daniel what a wonderful prayer that he just opens up every part of himself to you and he prays for other and he prays for your glory father we live in a time where we complain a lot we murmur we're frustrated that things aren't exactly going our way or the way we want our country to go we don't have the freedoms for all the things that we want father I pray that we would take our eyes off this world and place them firmly on you father I pray that we will be sack cloth and ashes type of people that we would be so willing to confess and repent of our sins as we see this story of how you go to the cross for us that it's not fictionalized but you go there bearing every part of us with you so

God I just pray that just through our readings your spirit would be with us to give us comprehension to give us conviction to give us understanding as we seek to know you more and more we ask these things in your great and glorious name amen