

# The End of the Age

## The Transition from the Old Covenant To the New Covenant

- Introduction
  - Christianity is a historical religion
    - There is a coherent story from Adam to the Return of Christ
    - It is being played out in the real events of history
  - God has a relational interaction with his creation
    - Relation = covenant
  - Covenants
    - With Adam and all men
      - Reestablished with Noah (with additional promises and conditions)
      - Still in effect with all men being “in Adam”
    - With Abraham – identifying a special people
      - Abrahamic Covenant
        - Earthly children
        - Children of promise
    - With Moses and a national people
      - Mosaic Covenant (later the Old Covenant)
        - Earthly Israel
        - Israel of promise
    - With David – promising a coming Messiah King
      - Davidic Covenant
        - Fulfilled in Christ
        - Now but not yet
    - With all of His Elect People
      - New Covenant
        - Old Covenant has passed away
        - The New Covenant has come
        - The complete (realized) New Covenant is yet to come
- Purpose
  - The purpose of these lessons is to give the historical background to the change between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant
    - To see how God has transitioned from a National People to an International People of God
  - Our goal is to see how God worked through history
    - To help us better understand His Scriptures
    - To help us better apply the Scriptures
    - To give us hope and joy at the marvelous
  - Definitions
    - Preterism – “past” – all of Jesus’ prophecies were fulfilled in our past
    - Futurism – all of Jesus’ prophecies will be fulfilled in our future
    - Partial Preterism/Partial Futurism – Some of Jesus’ prophecies have been fulfilled and some are still to be fulfilled (at His 2<sup>nd</sup> coming)
  - The end of the Old Covenant Age (Era)
    - Took place over a period of years
    - Beginning with the Birth of Jesus
      - Luke 1:68 – “the LORD has visited us and accomplished redemption for His People”
    - Ending with the complete destruction of Zion
  - The New Covenant
    - Began at the Last Supper
      - The “covenant sacrifice” took place at the Cross
    - Will end with the complete destruction of the heavens and the earth

- When the perishable shall put on the imperishable
  - A new heavens and a new earth (where righteousness dwells)
- Just prior to the ascension of Jesus to His throne in heaven
  - His disciples asked, “Is it at this time (*chronos*) you are restoring the kingdom to Israel” – Acts 1:6
- Jesus responded (Acts 7-8)
  - Not yours to know time (*chronos*) and seasons (eras – *Kairos*)
  - Your job is to be my witnesses (*martus*)
    - Jerusalem
    - Judea
    - Samaria
    - Uttermost parts of the earth
- Structure of Acts
  - The Book of the Acts of the Apostles has a purpose
  - Luke’s record is more than just a historical account
    - Luke records a transition from an ethnocentric gospel
      - Matt 15: 22ff – “I was sent only to the household of Israel”
    - To a complete international/interethnic gospel
      - Matt 28: 16-20 – “go, therefore, into all nations, making disciples . . .”
  - The structure of the Book of Acts shows this transition
  - Each section shows the Gospel going to a new category of people
    - Geographically expanding
    - Ethnically expanding
  - Each section shows a new working of the Spirit of God
    - Witnessed by apostolic authority
    - Demonstrating that this “is no fluke”, but the sovereign working of God
  - Each new change is confirmed by the miraculous demonstrations of Spiritual power
    - Apostolic laying on of hands
    - Speaking in tongues
    - Prophesying
- Book of Acts
  - The Gospel goes to God’s Old Covenant People (Jews)
    - Acts 2 – Pentecost
  - The Gospel goes to the Samaria (the “half-Jews”)
    - Acts 8 – Peter confirms Philip’s work in Samaria
  - The Gospel goes to God-fearing Gentiles
    - Acts 10 – Peter is compelled to go to Cornelius
  - The Gospel goes to all Gentiles
    - Acts 19 – Paul meets with Apollos and the John the Baptist Sect
- Historical Characters in the Story
  - Roman Emperors
    - Julius Caesar (49 – 44 BC)
    - Augustus Caesar (31 BC – 14 AD)
    - Tiberius (14 – 37 AD)
    - Caligula (37 – 41)
    - Claudius (41 – 54)
    - Nero (54 – 68)
    - Vespasian (69 – 79)
    - Titus (79 – 81)
  - Judean Rulers
    - Herod the Great (37 – 4 BC)
    - Herod Archelaus (4 BC – 6 AD) – Judea/Samaria

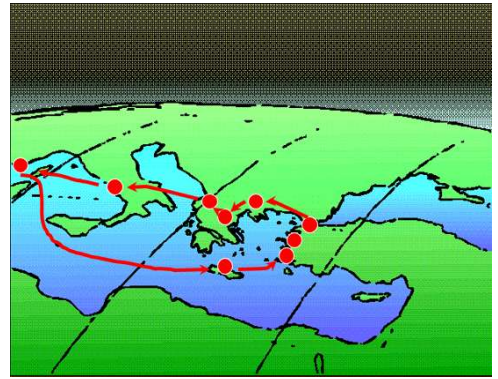
- Herod Antipas (4 BC – 39 AD) – Galilee
  - Beheaded John the Baptist
- Philip the Tetrarch (4 BC – 34 AD) – Jordan regions N of Galilee
- Agrippa I (37 – 44) – appointed by Caligula, successor to Antipas
- Agrippa II (48 – 92) – active in trying to put down the Jewish rebellion
- Historians
  - Flavius Josephus (37 – 100 AD) – Jewish historian
    - General in Jewish Rebellion – defected to Rome
    - Wrote *The Jewish War*
    - *Antiquities of the Jews* – valuable insight into 1<sup>st</sup> Century Judaism and background to Christianity
- Note on Dates
  - Developed by 6<sup>th</sup> Century by Dionysius Exiguus
    - 1<sup>st</sup> used “In the Year of our Lord” (*Anno Domini* – AD)
    - Popularized by the Venerable Bede (*Ecclesiastical History of the English People*) 731 AD
  - Therefore, early dates are helpful, but not precise
    - More precise – dates of Roman Emperors, Wars, etc.
    - A little more speculative – biblical NT events and people
  - The NT is interested in
    - Lengths of times (40 days, 30 years)
    - Progression of events, yet relation with external characters
      - Herod, Pontius Pilate, Caiaphas
    - Progression of persecution of believers (Sanhedrin, Jews, Roman Emperor)

### Historical Context for the Church

- 20 BC – Herod begins massive renovation of Jerusalem Temple
  - Likely being completed during Jesus’ time
- 4 BC - death of Herod the Great
- 26/27 AD – beginning of Jesus’ ministry
  - Lk 3:23 – Jesus was about 30 years old when he began his ministry
  - Pilate begins service as procurator of Judea
- 28 AD – beheading of John the Baptist by Herod Antipas
- 30 AD – Crucifixion, Resurrection, Pentecost
  - Paul still a student under Gamaliel in Jerusalem
- 32 AD – Stephen stoned
  - Saul begins to have more influence in the persecution of believers
  - Philip scattered to Samaria – calls Peter to witness that Samaritans were believing
    - Acts 8:14 – 17 – they were receiving the Holy Spirit
  - Philip converts Ethiopian Eunuch (Jews, but international Jews)
- 34 AD – Saul goes to Damascus and is converted
  - Stays in Damascus, travels for a period into Arabia, returns to Damascus
- 37 AD – Saul goes to Jerusalem to meet with the Apostles
  - Acts 9: 30 – Paul sent away to Tarsus because of animosity with the Jews
  - The church experiences relative peace from persecution
  - The church in Antioch (Syria) begins growing
- 37 AD – Tiberius dies and Caligula becomes Roman Emperor
- 39 AD – Conversion of Cornelius
  - Peter reluctant – “No way, Lord!” (3 times)
  - Eventually amazed that the Holy Spirit was poured out on the Gentiles (Acts 10: 47)
  - Peter has 1<sup>st</sup> conflict with Judaizers
- 40 AD – Caligula deposes Herod Antipas and sends him to Gaul

- Appoints his friend Agrippa to be the King of Judea
- Dedicates the completed temple and talked Caligula into NOT putting one of his images in it to be worshipped
- 41 AD – Death of Caligula – Claudius becomes Emperor
- 44 AD – Agrippa I
  - Instrumental in the persecution of the church and the death of James, son of Zebedee (Acts 12:1)
  - Imprisoned Peter and executed the guards who allowed him to escape (Acts 12:18-19)
  - On the other hand, delayed much animosity between the Jewish people and Rome
- 44 AD – Barnabus and Paul sent to Jerusalem with contribution of poor (Gal 2:1)
  - Return to Antioch with John Mark
- 46 AD – Paul’s 1<sup>st</sup> Missionary Journey
- 49 AD – Claudius expels Jews from Rome
  - Because the Jews were creating a disruption over the teachings of a man named Crestus (Seutonius)
  - Marries Agrippina the younger, great granddaughter of Augustus
    - She influenced him to adopt her son by previous marriage named Nero
- 49 AD – Paul and Barnabus go to Rome for the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15)
- 50 AD – Paul and Barnabus disagree over Mark’s continuance
  - Split up and Paul and Silas begin their 2<sup>nd</sup> Missionary Journey
- 53 AD – End of 2<sup>nd</sup> Missionary Journey
  - After having visited Galatia and gone through Macedonia, Athens, Corinth
  - Returning through Ephesus to Caesarea to Antioch (Acts 18: 22)
    - Having left Priscilla and Aquilla in Ephesus
- 53 AD – 3<sup>rd</sup> Missionary journey
  - Paul goes to Ephesus and stays for 2 years
  - Paul finds a group of believers from the “John the Baptist sect”
    - Imparts the Holy Spirit which is evidenced by tongues
    - Last time that Baptism by the Holy Spirit is mentioned historically
  - Luke’s point – the Gospel has fully gone out to the Gentiles and the Church is not fully integrated into an international body
- 54 AD – Claudius is poisoned by Agrippina
  - Claudius was becoming suspicious of Nero’s stability
  - Nero becomes the new Emperor
- 55 AD – Paul makes a brief trip to Corinth to resolve problems there
- 57 AD – End of 3<sup>rd</sup> Missionary Journey
  - Stopping by Ephesus (Miletus) enroute
  - Finishing in Jerusalem where Paul is arrested
- 57 – 59 AD – Paul is detained in prison
  - Preaches before Felix – born a slave, very corrupt
    - Acts 24:26 – “called often for Paul, hoping that ‘money would be given to him’”
  - Portius Festus – replaced Festus when Nero fires Felix
    - Tried to induce Paul to go back to Jerusalem for trial, Paul appeals to Caesar
  - Eventually King Agrippa II & sister Bernice (Acts 26)
- 60 AD – Paul sent to Rome
- 61 – 62 AD – Paul waits for hearing in front of Nero
  - House arrest, freedom for associates to come and go
  - Writes the prison epistles – Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians
  - End of Acts – Paul still waiting for Nero (Acts 28)
- 63 AD – Paul released for 4<sup>th</sup> Missionary Journey
  - Not recorded in the Book of Acts,
    - Must be derived from references in Pastoral Epistles
  - Eusebius notes that Nero was comparatively mild at that time

- 63 – 65 AD – Paul visits
  - Eusebius – “the farthest western reaches of the Empire” – probably Spain
  - Crete (Tit 1:5)
  - Miletus & Ephesus (2 Tim 1:18, 4:12,13,20)
  - Troas
  - Nicopolis (on the Adriatic [western] side of Greece (Tit 3:12)
    - Where Paul is likely re-arrested and taken back to Rome



- July 18, 64 AD – Great fire in Rome
- Christian persecution in Rome dates to this time
  - Note: growth of Christianity was significant enough to become a “class”
  - Nero blames Christians for fire, begins significant torture
    - "Therefore, to stop the rumor [that he had set Rome on fire], he [Emperor Nero] falsely charged with guilt, and punished with the most fearful tortures, the persons commonly called Christians, who were [generally] hated for their enormities. Christus, the founder of that name, was put to death as a criminal by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea, in the reign of Tiberius, but the pernicious superstition - repressed for a time, broke out yet again, not only through Judea, - where the mischief originated, but through the city of Rome also, whither all things horrible and disgraceful flow from all quarters, as to a common receptacle, and where they are encouraged. Accordingly, first those were arrested who confessed they were Christians; next on their information, a vast multitude were convicted, not so much on the charge of burning the city, as of "hating the human race." "Therefore, to stop the rumor [that he had set Rome on fire], he [Emperor Nero] falsely charged with guilt, and punished with the most fearful tortures, the persons commonly called Christians, who were [generally] hated for their enormities. Christus, the founder of that name, was put to death as a criminal by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea, in the reign of Tiberius, but the pernicious superstition - repressed for a time, broke out yet again, not only through Judea, - where the mischief originated, but through the city of Rome also, whither all things horrible and disgraceful flow from all quarters, as to a common receptacle, and where they are encouraged. Accordingly first those were arrested who confessed they were Christians; next on their information, a vast multitude were convicted, not so much on the charge of burning the city, as of "hating the human race." Besides being put to death they were made to serve as objects of amusement; they were clothed in the hides of beasts and torn to death by dogs; others were crucified, others set on fire to serve to illuminate the night when daylight failed. Nero had thrown open his grounds for the display, and was putting on a show in the circus, where he mingled with the people in the dress of charioteer or drove about in his chariot. All this gave rise to the feeling of pity, even towards men whose guilt merited the most exemplary punishment; for it was felt that they were being destroyed not for the public good but to gratify the cruelty of the individual. Tacitus, *Annals*
  - Begins great persecution
- 65/66 AD – Paul back in prison, also Peter
  - Writes his final letter to Timothy
  - Peter likely writes his epistles
    - 1 Pet 4:12 – warns of the “fiery trial”
  - Heb 13:23 – Timothy might have even been arrested enroute to Rome then released
- 66 AD – Peter and Paul martyred
  - Tradition – Paul was beheaded while Peter was crucified (upside down)

### Meanwhile, back in Judea

- Background
  - 60 AD – Nero replaces corrupt Felix with Festus
  - Agrippa II was King of Judea
- 3 main Jewish sects

- **Pharisees** – Oral law interprets Torah for present circumstances – coming Messiah, resurrection – physical afterlife – Spiritual fathers of modern Judaism
- **Sadducees** – Torah only – upper class – no coming Messiah, resurrection – man creates his own circumstances
- **Essenes** – Separatists – living in separate communities
- 4<sup>th</sup> Sect – **Zealots** – freedom fighters
  - Pharisees who were extremely attached to liberty of the Jewish people
- 5<sup>th</sup> Sub-Sect – **Sicarii** – extreme Zealots – “cloak and dagger”
- Roman Imperial Cult Worship
  - Augustus – transforms Rome from republic to *de facto* monarchy
  - Caligula – had statues made of himself to put in temples all over empire
  - Agrippa I – talked him out of putting one in temple in Jerusalem
- 62 AD – Jewish leaders had built a tall wall, preventing Roman view down into the temple area from Fortress Antonia
  - Festus demanded wall be torn down, but was overruled by Nero
  - Festus also had to deal with a “messiah” who promised rest from (Roman) troubles
  - Festus died in 62 AD, leaving Judea in turmoil
- 66 AD – The Jewish Rebellion
  - Josephus – The Jewish Wars
    - Conflict between Jewish factions
      - Traditionalists vs Hellenists
      - Made worse by Roman corruption in administration of country
- 64 AD - Gessius Florus appointed governor
  - Greatly favored the Hellenist group
  - Increased taxes
  - When Jews refused to pay, he forcibly removed the money from the Temple treasury
  - Arrested numerous senior Jewish leaders
- 66 AD - Large-scale rebellion
  - Military garrison was overrun by rebels
  - Agrippa II had to flee Jerusalem
  - Syrian Legion comes to restore order,
    - Ambushed, 6,000 Romans massacred
- 66 AD – Year 1 of the New Jewish State
  - Sicarri leader attempts to take control of Jerusalem, expelled
- 67 AD – Nero sends General Vespasian to quell the revolt
  - With his son, general Titus
  - He invades Galilee, conquering Jewish strongholds one by one
  - Josephus, Sadducee general in charge of Galilee makes peace with Vespasian
  - Zealots flee to Jerusalem
    - Where there is infighting between Sadducees and Zealots
- 68 AD – Nero commits suicide and there is political infighting in Rome
- 69 AD - Vespasian returns to Rome to become emperor
  - Son Titus assumes command of Roman forces in Judea
- 70 AD – Titus surrounds Jerusalem
  - Putting it under siege when unable to break through its walls
  - Brief lifting of the siege, the Jerusalem Christians took literally Jesus’ warnings and fled to hide in the caves of Judean desert to the south
    - Lk 21:20 – 23 – <sup>20</sup>“But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. <sup>21</sup>Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are inside the city depart, and let not those who are out in the country enter it, <sup>22</sup>for these are days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written. <sup>23</sup>Alas for women who are pregnant and for



those who are nursing infants in those days! For there will be great distress upon the earth and wrath against this people.

- Titus send Flavius Josephus to negotiate a possible peace
  - Rejected, so Titus “locked the city down”
  - Horrible conditions of drought and cannibalism
- August 70 – Titus takes Fortress Antonia
  - Josephus records the incredible slaughter and destruction
- September 70 – Jerusalem is completely under Roman control
  - The entire city is razed, including the temple
  - Josephus records the Roman destruction
  - A small band of Sicarii escaped to Masada, a Herodian fortress overlooking the dead sea
- 73 AD – Masada conquered, its inhabitants (almost 1,000) committing suicide

### Significance of 70 AD

- At the Last Supper, Jesus takes the “cup after supper” of the Passover and declares that it is the cup of the New Covenant
  - The next day the New Covenant is consummated by the sacrifice of the Lamb
  - Hebrews 8:13 – the Old Covenant is passing away (written about 66 AD when Timothy just released)
- In the destruction of the Temple, Jesus’ warnings are fulfilled
  - Matt 24:2 - “You see all these (temple buildings), do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.”
  - Matt 16:28 – “Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”
- As the Church of Jesus Christ becomes the Temple of God, there is hope in no one else.
  - That the land of the Jews, then, was to be laid waste, hear what was said by the Spirit of prophecy. And the words were spoken as if from the person of the people wondering at what had happened. They are these: "Sion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. The house of our sanctuary has become a curse, and the glory which our fathers blessed is burned up with fire, and all its glorious things are laid waste: and Thou refrainest Thyself at these things, and hast held Thy peace, and hast humbled us very sore."(6) And ye are convinced that Jerusalem has been laid waste, as was predicted. And concerning its desolation, and that no one should be permitted to inhabit it, there was the following prophecy by Isaiah: "Their land is desolate, their enemies consume it before them, and none of them shall dwell therein."(7) And that it is guarded by you lest any one dwell in it, and that death is decreed against a Jew apprehended entering it, you know very well.

(Justin Martyr, First Apology, Ch. 47., 150 AD)
  - "The coming of Christ in A.D.70 was a coming in judgment on the Jewish nation, indicating the end of the Jewish age and the fulfillment of a day of the Lord. Jesus really did come in judgment at this time, fulfilling his prophecy in the Olivet Discourse.“

(R.C. Sproul, *The Last Days According to Jesus*, p. 158)