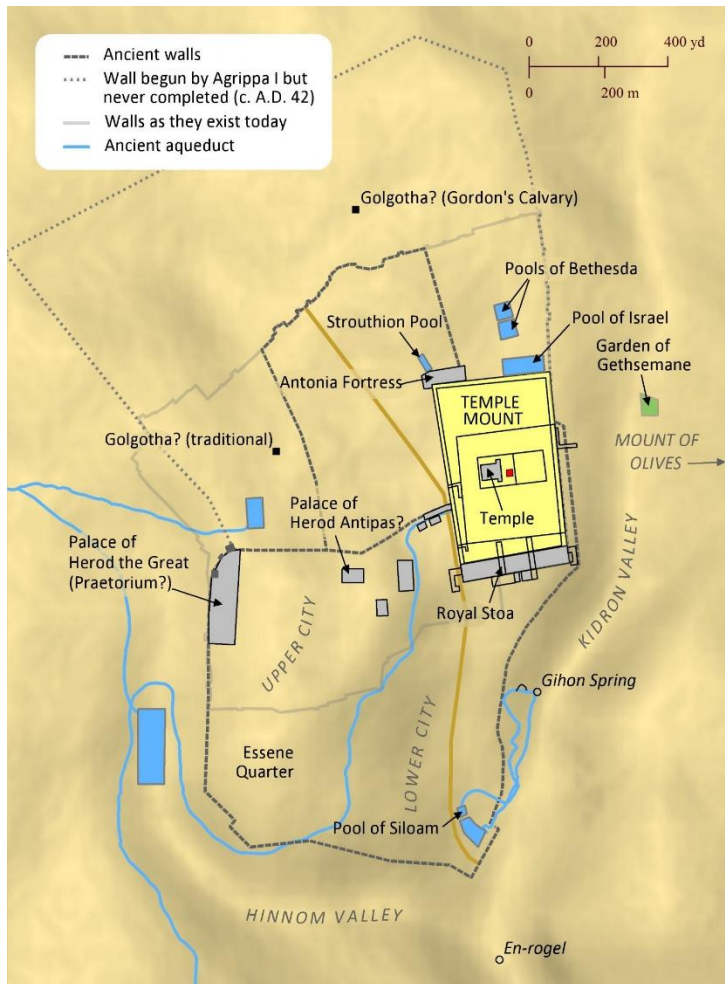


Personalities During The Time of Christ: Politics, Society, Culture



Jesus' "Entourage"

1. **The Apostles** – The core 12
2. **Key Women** – Woman at the Well, Mary & Martha, Mary Magdalene, the financial support team, Mary Mother...
3. **Other Key Men?** – Nicodemus, John the Baptist, Lazarus...

Political Climate

- **Roman Control:** Rome imposed heavy taxes and maintained order through governors (like **Pontius Pilate**) and "puppet" client kings (**the Herods**). Public executions, especially crucifixion, were common and brutal reminders of Roman power.
- **Jewish Nationalism:** Many Jews deeply resented foreign rule and longed for a military Messiah to restore the Davidic kingdom. This fueled revolutionary groups like the **Zealots**, leading to frequent unrest and eventual major revolts later in the century.
- **The "Collaborators":** ** Jews who worked within the Roman system were despised by their countrymen. **Tax collectors** (publicans), such as Matthew and Zacchaeus (Lk. 19:1-10), were particularly reviled and seen as sinners for profiting from their people's oppression.
- ** Jesus had an apostle that was a "collaborator": **Matthew Levi** the tax collector (Mk. 2:14, Lk. 5:27-32, Matt. 9:9, Matt. 10:3, Mk. 3:18, Lk. 6:15, Acts 1:13). IMO, so was the High Priest!

Social Climate

- **The Peasant Majority:** Jesus grew up among rural peasants who were farmers, shepherds, and artisans. Life was physically

demanding, and crop failures or heavy taxation often meant a struggle for basic survival.

- **Purity and "Outcasts":** The culture revolved around honor and shame, with a strict system of ritual purity laws. Almost all of Jesus' ministry was within this class! He broke purity and cultural rules in every instance.
 - **The Unclean:** People with certain illnesses (like leprosy or chronic bleeding), specific occupations, or even women at certain times were considered "unclean" and isolated from the community and Temple worship.
 - **The Poor and Marginalized:** Widows, orphans, and the physically ill had little legal or social protection.
- **Gender Roles:** **** Women had a low social status, could not own property, and their legal testimony was often considered unreliable.

**** Women were an integral part of Jesus' mission and message. He accepted financial support from them, spoke with them, revealed things to just them, taught them, ... There were the primary witnesses at the cross, at the tomb, and at the resurrection. Here are just a few key ones: **The Woman at the Well (Jn. 4), Mary and Martha, Mary Magdalene.**

Primary Jewish Religious Sects

Judaism itself was not a single, unified practice; different sects held competing interpretations of the Law.

- **Pharisees vs. Sadducees:** These two main groups clashed over core doctrines like the resurrection and the authority of oral tradition versus the written Torah alone.
- **Clash with Purity Systems:** Jesus consistently challenged the rigid application of purity laws, often by touching the "unclean" or eating with "sinners," which created significant conflict with religious authorities.

Top 3 Individual Jewish Leaders

1. **Joseph Caiaphas (High Priest):** The political "pro" who organized the plot to arrest Jesus to save the nation from Roman wrath.
2. **Gamaliel:** A highly respected Pharisee who taught [Apostle Paul](#) and later urged the Sanhedrin to be cautious in persecuting the early church.
3. **Nicodemus:** A Pharisee and "ruler of the Jews" who serves as a great example of a leader honestly searching for truth, appearing in John 3.

Group / Body	Who They Were	Key Beliefs & Focus	Attitude Toward Jesus
<u>The Sanhedrin</u> *	The supreme Jewish "Supreme Court" of 71 men.	Enforced religious law and managed day-to-day Jewish affairs.	Primarily viewed Him as a threat to religious and political order.
<u>Pharisees</u> "Rule Followers"	Lay scholars and teachers; popular with the common people.	Strictly followed both Written Law and Oral Tradition ; believed in the resurrection .	Frequently clashed over legalism, though some (like Nicodemus) were followers.
<u>Sadducees</u> "Elitists"	Wealthy aristocrats and priestly families.	Controlled the Temple; accepted only the Torah (first 5 books); denied the resurrection.	Strongly opposed Him; feared His popularity would provoke Roman intervention.
<u>Essenes</u> "Withdrawers"	Monastic-like separatists who lived in the desert (Qumran).	Believed the Temple was corrupt; practiced strict asceticism and ritual washing.	Not explicitly mentioned in the Gospels, though shared some apocalyptic views.
<u>Zealots</u> *** "Rebels"	Political revolutionaries and freedom fighters.	Wanted to overthrow Rome by force; believed God alone was King.	Expected a military Messiah; one of Jesus' disciples (Simon) was a Zealot.

*The High Priest (during Jesus' time it was Caiaphas) was the supreme religious, legal, and political leader of the Jewish People. He managed Temple operations and served as a crucial, Roman-appointed liaison designed to maintain order. He also performed the ultimate Day of Atonement rituals.

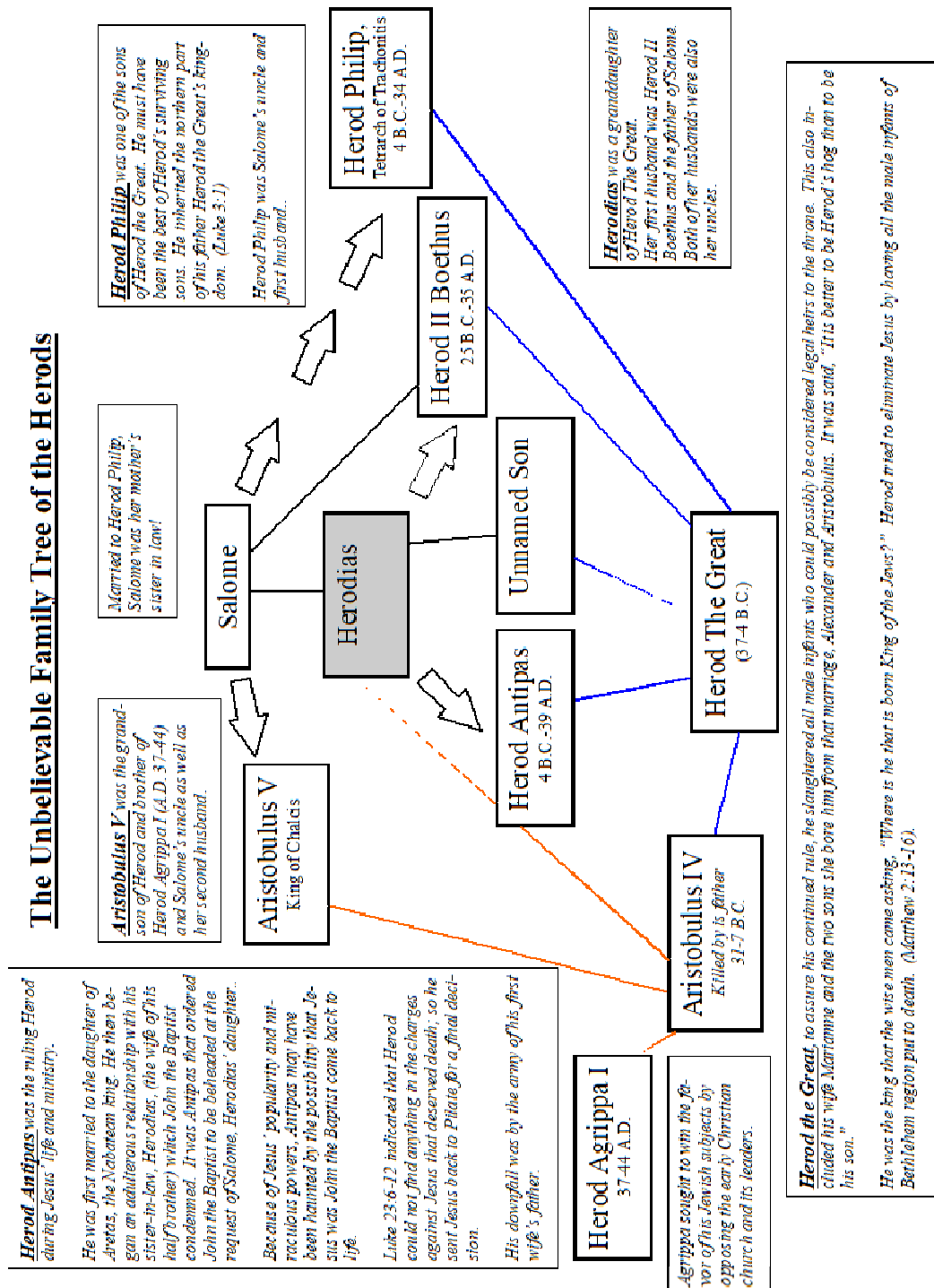
***Jesus had an apostle that was a Zealot: **Simon The Zealot** (Matt. 10:4, Mark 3:16, Lk. 6:15, Acts 1:13)

The Herods: Power, Paranoia, and Prophecy

1. **Herod the Great (King at Jesus' Birth)**
 - **Reign:** 37–4 B.C. (p. 1)
 - **Key Actions:**
 - To secure his throne, he executed many people, including his wife and his own sons; the Roman Emperor Augustus reportedly said it was "better to be Herod's hog than to be his son" (p. 1).
 - After the Magi visited to inquire about the "King of the Jews," a paranoid Herod ordered the **Massacre of the Innocents**—the killing of all boys two years old and under in Bethlehem and its surrounding area.
 - Jesus' family fled to Egypt to escape his infanticide.
2. **Herod Antipas (Ruler During Jesus' Ministry & Trial)**
 - **Reign:** Tetrarch of Galilee and Perea from 4 B.C.–39 A.D., essentially ruling throughout Jesus' life (p. 1).
 - **Key Actions:**
 - **Imprisoned and beheaded John the Baptist** because John condemned his unlawful marriage to Herodias, his brother's former wife.

- At his birthday banquet, Herodias' daughter (traditionally named Salome) danced, and a vengeful Herodias prompted her daughter to ask for John the Baptist's head on a platter.
- Jesus called him "that fox," likely referring to his cunning nature.
- Pontius Pilate sent Jesus to Antipas during the trial, as Jesus was from Galilee. Antipas, hoping to see a miracle, mocked Jesus but sent him back to Pilate without condemning him to death (p. 1). This incident actually turned Pilate and Herod, who had previously been enemies, into friends.

The Herods consistently used their Roman-backed power for personal gain and security, often resulting in brutal actions that feature prominently in the New Testament narratives.



12 APOSTLES:

James Zebedee
John Zebedee
Andrew
Simon Peter
Nathaniel Bartholomew
Philip
Matthew Levi
Simon The Zealot
Judas Iscariot
Thomas
James of Alpheus
Thaddaeus (Judas, Son of James)

WOMEN:

Mary Mother
Mary Magdalene
Mary and Martha
Woman at the Well
Financial supporters: Mary Mag, Joanna (wife of Chuza), Susanna
At the Cross: Mary Mother, Mary Mag, Mary of Clopas, Salome (mother of Sons of Zebedee), Mary, mother of James the Younger and Joses, "Many others"
At Resurrection: Mary Mag, Joanna, Mary (mother of James), Salome

OTHER MEN:

Nicodemus
Lazarus
John the Baptist

UNNAMED:

Healed Individuals
Parable Individuals

WHO DID I FORGET????