

D. The New Testament's Broad Historical Background

1. The Political Background

The following page should be a chart indicating the persons and times of the New Testament period in the political realm. You will see a column with Roman Emperors and a segment on the control of Palestine. The important Roman procurators are listed and there is a chronology of events. If you do not have this chart, protest loudly. If you have it and cannot figure it out...count yourself among the many. The work on this chart is not given for absolute memory but for reference and for putting the books of the New Testament, as we come to them into a full historical sequence. In addition to the chart I will make just a few notes on:

a. The Roman/Judaeen problem...how it came to be and what its implications are for the New Testament age.

b. The Political/geographical combine that made the world such a ready place for New Testament witness

2. The Cultural background:

a. On society at large: the moral setting

b. Education: Roman, Grecian and Hebrew ideals

c. Theoretical inclination

--Platonism

--Gnosticism

--Stoicism

--Epicureanism

--varied and hybrid forms

d. Social activities: Hellenistic and Judaeen ideals compared and contrasted.

3. The Religious Background:

a. The Roman world: gods of myth and story abound and the so-called "black arts" are in vogue at all times. The Romans features personalized deities in a pantheon that was more a tribute to the memory of men and women. Mystery religions were also prominent. In general the Romans would allow any religion so long as it was "ancient". Their own forms were more matters of state and ethnic ideal than heart.

b. Judaism, although wrought with internal struggles, still possessed a religious ideal seen in a number of settings: