NEW TESTAMENT LIFE and TIMES

Leander Church of Christ

Adult Bible Class

Began 11/8/2020

Primary Sources

1. The New Testament in its World, by N. T. Wright and Michael F. Bird, “An Introduction to the History, Literature, and Theology of the First Christians”
2. Multiple Seminars, Sermons, and Classes, by Ray Vander Laan

Authors

1. Who is N. T. Wright?
    a. Christianity Today magazine: People who are asked to write about N. T. Wright may find they quickly run out of superlatives. He is the most prolific biblical scholar in a generation. Some say he is the most important apologist for the Christian faith since C. S. Lewis. He has written the most extensive series of popular commentaries on the New Testament since William Barclay. And, in case three careers sound like too few, he is also a church leader, having served as Bishop of Durham, England, before his current teaching post at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland. But perhaps the most significant praise of all: When Wright speaks, preaches, or writes, folks say they see Jesus, and lives are transformed. A pastor friend of mine describes a church member walking into his office, hands trembling as he held a copy of Wright's Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church. "If this book is true," he said, "then my whole life has to change."
    b. The Atlantic: N. T. Wright is one of those thinkers who fall into a binary: Either people have never heard of him, or they believe him to be one of the most influential figures of our time. The magazine Christianity Today has called him “the most prolific biblical scholar in a generation” and “the most important apologist for the Christian faith since C. S. Lewis.” The British theologian is credited with writing more than six dozen books, many about the apostle Paul, and has reached the stage of fame where publishers are repackaging his work into new volumes, akin to a pop star’s greatest-hits album. He’s spent a large portion of his career in academia, but his work has also reached far beyond the Ivy Tower: He served as the Anglican bishop in Durham, England, in the early 2000s, and on the 2004 Lambeth Commission, a body set up to provide guidance on contentious divisions within the Anglican Communion over same-sex marriage and homosexuality.

From the Preface to NTiiW (The New Testament in its World) –

> The eminent British New Testament scholar C. H. Dodd (1884–1973) was once asked if, supposing all written copies of the Greek New Testament were either lost or destroyed, he could reproduce the whole thing from memory. Dodd replied that, having lived with the Greek New Testament for so long, he was confident that he could indeed remember it all. In one account of the same story, the questioner responded with utter amazement: how could someone possibly claim to be able to recall the whole thing, in Greek no less? ‘Well,’ Dodd is said to have replied, with a comical mixture of humility and coyness, ‘it’s only a little book.’

The New Testament might only be small, but it is a strange and powerful book. At one level, it tells the history of Jesus and the early church; at another level (and these two go closely together, as we shall see) it is regarded by churches around the world as inspired scripture, normative for the life of faith. For this to become a reality, for the New Testament to come alive, each generation of readers, and especially teachers and preachers, needs help, particularly in the form of thorough, user-friendly, and creative introductions to Jesus, his first followers, and the literature that emerged from that movement. That is what this book is hoping to provide.

NtiiW -- KEEPING HISTORY, LITERATURE, AND THEOLOGY TOGETHER

It is better, though riskier, to see history, literature, and theology as belonging together. To continue our whimsical biblical parallels, we might liken this to the three friends in Daniel 3 who testified together to God's kingdom in the face of a megalomaniac monarch. The New Testament *is* history *and* literature *and* theology, all at once, and we should not try to reduce it to any one of these at the expense of the others. A close reading and thick description of the New Testament will necessarily involve the messy business of history, the hard work of literary criticism, and the arduous task of theological reflection.

As such, an informed reading of the New Testament, especially for a believing audience, will involve pursuing three main questions. First, the historical one: how did Christianity begin, and why did it take the shape that it did? Second, the literary one: why did the early Jesus-followers write the way they did, and what does this tell us about their worldview? Third, the theological question: what did the early Christians believe about God and the world, and about humans in general and Jesus in particular within that, and what kind of sense might their beliefs make? This volume will not answer all those questions in full. But, as we survey the New Testament writings, the present book offers a first guiding step on how to think about them.

NtiiW – 1 Beginning Study of the New Testament … WHY THE NEW TESTAMENT?

The New Testament, in other words, isn't there to tell us simply 'how to get to heaven'. Indeed, to the surprise of many people, that isn't what it's saying at all. That's why some theories about the New Testament and its authority don't work as well as they should. If you try to read it as a 'how-to' book, which sadly is how some people approach it, you may end up frustrated, thinking it would be better if the spirit had given us something more like a car manual or a railway timetable. No: the New Testament is designed to draw us into the story of God's plan, to rescue the world from chaos and idolatry and to launch his new transformative creation. This rescue, and this launch, have happened in Jesus; now, by the spirit, they are to be put into operation through people who are shaped by the biblical vision itself, by the stories of Jesus and his first followers, with ourselves joining in the movement those first followers began.

John Eldredge – EPIC – The Story (selected video clips)

- EPIC_02…0000 What Sort of Tale? (1.5 minutes) Hobbits, Something Larger
- EPIC_02…0135 Life Is a Story (1.5 minutes) Not like math problem, not like an IRS form. Tragedy, Comedy, Soap Opera. Daughter totaled the car.
- EPIC_02_0312 (0.5 minutes) Grandfather, Okinawa
- EPIC_02…0444 (1.5 minutes) We run into a problem, enter a movie 45 minutes late, what is the plot, earthquakes/divorce/heartache… need to know the rest of the story

- EPIC_02_0612 (1.2 minutes) Mall map "You Are Here," This Is The Big Picture, You Can Discover The Larger STORY! (It would be gold!)
- EPIC_02…1037 (0.5 minutes) Christianity is MORE… find yourself in the EPIC, your crucial role
- EPIC_02…1157 (2.5 minutes0

EPIC_02 Comments: Story is the nature of the world in which we live… this Story is the Most True thing in the world.

- ***** 11:57 – 14:28**

RVL – Granbury, East vs West, how read the Bible

- Students, come see our frogs, go to lab, frogs pinned down
    - I ask its name, i.e., Boy or Girl. If boy, "Which frog was its girlfriend?"
    - When did it become impossible to know? When removed from pond.
    - But some things are impossible to know while still in pond, e.g., number of chambers in heart, its last meal, etc.
    - There is TRUTH in both methods, i.e., observational vs propositional.
- BIBLE: Take a passage out of its book, out of its chapter and, verse – take it out of its story – and some things become impossible to know. What you do learn is true, but at the moment you take it out of its cultural context, there are some things you will never know or understand.
- The WEST prefers a Rational Concept, propositional Truth, and Definitions. The EAST refers story, metaphor, word pictures, etc., to describe Truth.
- EXERCISE
    - Finish this sentence: GOD IS _____.
    - In Israel may see a Christian or Muslim classroom, or a Jewish hiking group. Stop and ask them. GOD IS ?????.
        - Bread of Life
        - Has Eagle's Wings
        - My Shepherd
        - A Shade in the Desert
        - A Rock
        - A Fortress
        - Living Water
- The Bible was written in particular times, in particular cultural settings, to people who thought in a certain way. They prefer a Story over Definitions or Systematic Explanations. If you ignore all that and read the Bible with only Western eyes, there will be Truth in it which you never see.

2. **NTiiW – 2 The New Testament as History … Reading the New Testament as a Historical Document**
    a. VIDEO 1m51s -- NTiiW_v02x_0006-0158_HistoryIntro
        i. 0059 -- Sadly some will object to this historical enterprise, like a teenager complaining about being made to catalogue the boxes of parental memorabilia in the basement. For many grumblers the historical task seems irrelevant to their own situation: historical events might have provided the foundations for the church, they think, but no-one invests much time inspecting the foundations when there are prayers to pray, sermons to write, the elderly to visit, and services to prepare. Others will complain, not so much about the time-consuming nature of the task, but about the contents they have to pick through. How can Iron Age texts possibly be relevant in the Internet Age? Whatever people think the texts once 'meant', it is mostly irrelevant to the 'meanings' that we ascribe to them now—or the fresh insights we believe we possess in our own day. The flaws in arguments should be obvious. Foundations are important. If you can make the text mean what you want, chaos has come again.
    b. Yet in counter-point to such recalcitrance, the reason why we engage in a study of the history of the New Testament is because of the conviction that Jesus and the apostles constitute the basis for normative Christianity.
    c. VIDEO 1m00s -- NTiiW_v02x_0334-0433_ImportanceOfNT
        i. This belief gained adherents as a result of Protestant Reformation. Sola Scriptura. First century mattered. Not Traditions. NT is where the Christian must start. Study… within historical context… Christian discipleship.
    d. As a result, many Christians are somewhat afraid of history, frightened that if we really find out what happened in the first century our faith might collapse. The problem is that without historical enquiry there is no check on Christianity's propensity to remake Jesus, never mind the Christian 'God', in its own image. Equally, much Christianity is afraid of scholarly learning, and insofar as the Enlightenment programme was an anti-dogma venture, Christianity has often responded by retreating into the safe space of a 'confession', a self-reinforcing church circle. But, granted that learning without love is sterile and dry, enthusiasm without learning can easily become blind arrogance.
    e. VIDEO 2m40s -- NTiiW_v02x_0555-0835_ModernityPostModernityCriticalRealism
        i. Historical Knowledge and Culture -- To give an analogy, consider three windows. Modernity liked to think of itself as looking through a transparent window that allowed one to see perfectly through to the other side as long as it was sunny (that is, truth is easily found if you have good sources and good methods). Postmodernity is basically saying that the window is really a mirror and all you see is little more than your own reflection, though you may get lucky if you unconsciously peer through one of the cracks and catch a glimpse of something behind the mirror (that is, truth may be out there, but you'll have a hard time telling it apart from your own reflection). Critical realism says that the mirror has a dark tint caused by the gaps in our knowledge and the shading of our own location, and that part of our own reflection does indeed appear on the window, but we really can see something through it that is not ourselves, nor part of our own making (that is, truth can be seen, but never crisply or perfectly). Modernity

exalted itself in claims of incorrigible certainty (and claimed that what you couldn't have certainty about either didn't matter or didn't exist). Postmodernity basked in ambiguity and irony. **Critical realism aims to provide clarity and sobriety to the historical task.**

ii. CR – "There is something in the text to be known. Something in history to be found. Even if the Knowing and Finding is never infallible or complete. Not absolute nor Archaic, but Adequate."

iii. CR – "One can believe in a thing called history without believing one has full possession of it."

f. **(mcm – Which era did Alexander Campbell live in? Was he a proponent of it?)**

i. John Mark Hicks -- Hermeneutic

g. VIDEO 1m15s -- NTiiW_v02x_1356-1512_JewishHopeFulfilledInJesusStory

i. The relevance of this for our historical enquiry into the New Testament is that we find ourselves describing a certain group of first-century Jews, namely the 'early Christians', who held one particular variant of the first-century Jewish worldview. This strange group was saying in effect, 'The hope which characterize es our worldview has been fulfilled in these events.' And they chose to say this in the most natural and most obviously Jewish way they knew, by telling a *story*—from gospel to apocalypse—encoding in a narrative the sum of their worldview and beliefs. Therefore, a chief task of New Testament study is to construct a hypothesis which explains the story of the first Christians within the storied world of Jews, Greeks, and Romans. This critical-realist theory of story and hypothesis accordingly acknowledges the essentially 'storied' nature of human knowing, thinking, and living, within the larger framework of worldviews. It affirms, in fact, that all knowledge of realities external to oneself takes place within a worldview-framework, within which stories form an essential part. In the end, our task is to construct a hypothesis, a story encompassing the beliefs, aims, identity, praxes, and hopes that constituted the early church's own story, and to show that this hypothesis makes good sense of the evidence and does so in a clear and coherent way, with such simplicity as is appropriate for the dense subject-matter of actual human life.

h. What does all this mean for the student who wants to wrestle with the New Testament? Several things. (1) Remember that the study of the New Testament as history is not an optional extra. It is a crucial part of any course in 'biblical studies'. (2) You need to be aware of the complexities of what it means to 'do history' (it isn't simply about 'looking up facts in a book'), and critical realism is a way of attempting to acknowledge the possibility of historical retrieval while fully recognizing the limitations of the historical enterprise. (3) The past is a very different place. You cannot just jump from Atlanta to Antioch or leap from Rochester to Rome without doing some serious historical, hermeneutical, cultural, and social studies along the way. You will need to roll up your sleeves and **be prepared to get your hands dirty.**

3. NTiiW – 3 The New Testament as Literature

a. The New Testament is literature, not simply a pile of propositional nuggets waiting to be ordered into a systematic theology, nor an inchoate sequence of words designed to activate religious feelings. We must therefore enquire, in general terms at least, what literature does, how it works, and how best to treat it. <…> A proper place to start is with the idea of 'meaning' itself.2 What do we mean when we say that biblical texts have meaning? What are we looking for? Where do we find it? Here we enter into the morass of debate about where 'meaning' resides: is it ultimately with the author, or with the text, or with the reader, or some combination of all three?

b. *** VIDEO 1m25s -- Share the A.I.M. of Bible study, by Mark Moore -- AIM_AuthorIntendedMeaning_Moore_1m25s

c. But it gets even worse for those who prize authorial intention. Texts can carry surplus meaning beyond the author's consciousness. Any writing can become more significant as it enters new social, political, and religious spaces. So, what if authors wrote about things that took on a life of their own, long after they were gone? What if people attribute meanings to a text that at one level appears to be based on that text but at another level obviously exceed the author's original intention? <…> This is akin to what is called in patristic exegesis the sensus plenior ('fuller sense') of scripture, by which an 'inspired' text actually says more than the author realized at the time. The recognition of such a sense, and the possibilities for allegorical and theological exegesis that it opens up, have at various stages of the church's reading of scripture been ways of allowing for the experience of Christians who affirm that the biblical text 'speaks' to them in ways that the author might not have imagined. Along this line we find Augustine, for whom the truth of scripture was not simply a matter of detecting authorial intention; the author is not directly available for interrogation, and, even if he were, we have no way of knowing whether to believe him. So for Augustine, 'meaning' also derives from the 'inward Truth' arrived at by spiritual study, which hopefully accords with an author's intention but is not bound to it.10 Let us not forget either that C. S. Lewis, the great Christian apologist and literary critic, said, 'An author doesn't necessarily understand the meaning of his own story better than anyone else.'11 Theologians have been looking for biblical meaning beyond the cusp of an author's mind for centuries.

d. Taking those conclusions into account—the problems of authorial distance and the failings of a two-stage 'meant-to-means' scheme—we must concede that 'meaning' is not restricted to authorial intent. It is shaped by wider factors like contexts, texts, and communities. If, in reading Isaiah 53, one's context is the canon and creeds of the early church, then readers will naturally identify Jesus in the text so that 'this' (Isaiah's 'Servant') is really 'that' (Jesus)—while again recalling that Paul could cheerfully apply 'servant' texts like Isaiah 49 to his own work. He was, after all, 'a man in the Messiah'.

    i. Paul applies the Suffering Servant language to himself. See Rom. 10.14–16; 15.21; 2 Cor. 6.2; Gal. 1.15–16; 2.2; Phil. 2.16; 1 Thess. 3.5

e. When we apply this principle to all three components of the reading process, it will be possible to make a number of simultaneous affirmations and denials. First, we need to do justice *both* to

the fact that texts do not represent the whole of the author's mind *and* to the fact that they nevertheless do tell us quite a bit about him or her. Second, we need a theory that will do justice *both* to the fact that the author intended certain things *and* that the text may well contain other things—echoes, evocations, structures, and the like—that were not consciously present in the author's mind. Third, we need a theory that will do justice *both* to the fact that the reader is deeply involved in the communicative event *and* to the fact that the text is an entity on its own, not a plastic substance to be moulded to the reader's whim. If that is the case, then we should acknowledge that the author must be resurrected but not deified; that texts genuinely carry meaning like a hard-working mule, yet a text also inspires meaning like an iconic muse; and, while readers have rights, this does not license anarchy. Until we grasp the place of the author, text, and reader in the formation of 'meaning', most of the present battles about reading the New Testament will be dialogues of the deaf, doomed to failure. In sum, this hermeneutic of love is a *lectio catholica semper reformanda* (a reading of and for and in the whole church, but a reading which is always in need of revising and reforming, even as such readings themselves should revise and reform the church). Such a reading seeks to be faithful to what is received, while always open to the possibility of challenge and correction.

4. NTiiW – 4 The New Testament as Theology

a. …the nature, scope, and tasks for New Testament theology have been in constant dispute. According to Wayne Meeks, New Testament scholars should 'erase from our vocabulary the terms "biblical theology" and, even more urgently, "New Testament theology" '. Meeks argued strongly that whatever 'contribution these concepts may have, we have come to a time when they can only blinker our understanding'. The objection is not new. The idea is that to do a theology of the New Testament will mean subscribing to the authority of these holy books and the institutions that venerate them. Instead, such writers urge, one should pursue a 'theology of early Christianity' and attempt to profile the texture of 'early Christian religion' as a more secular enterprise. We could respond by saying that there are very good reasons for pursuing New Testament theology, over and above a detached theological analysis of 'early Christian religion'.

b. VIDEO 2m14s -- NTiiW_v04x_0130-0345_UltimateAuthorityGodNotText

    i. First, if the New Testament is in some sense 'authoritative', as virtually all churches acknowledge, then this 'authority' has been deemed to lie in the theology that it contains. The caveat we must offer is that the ultimate authority is God, the creator, and since God has revealed himself in Jesus, then Jesus is the one who holds all authority. Jesus did not tell his disciples that all authority is vested in the books that they would write; he insisted that it was vested in his own person.5 And yet Jesus' authority operates through the New Testament message, as it testifies about and on behalf of the risen lord. Knowing that, we must therefore wrestle with what this message is about, how it works, and what its demands might be for followers of Jesus.

c. The problem of ignoring the historical context of the New Testament is that one can impose other narratives and schemes which become the controlling backdrop for understanding the New Testament's message. If we take seriously the contingent historical nature of the New Testament, its 'back-then-ness', the fact that while it was written for us it was not written to us, then we will recognize the essential need to situate the New Testament in its social, religious, and historical context. For a case in point, we will struggle to grasp the basic thrust of the incident at Antioch narrated by Paul in Galatians 2.11–14 if we don't have a working knowledge of Jewish social boundaries, food taboos, and debates about fraternizing with gentiles. Discerning the theological claims of the text frequently follows from reconstructing the social context behind the text. Rather than imposing the structure and questions of later systematic theology (which has often ignored those original contexts), we must allow the text to speak for itself, in its own words, from its own context, on its own terms, so that its theological and missional significance can then be more accurately gauged.

d. VIDEO 2m33s -- NTiiW_v04x_0438-0712_MustUnderstandHistoryAndTheology

e. Thus, theological study of the New Testament, within the spirit-driven and prayerful life of the whole church, is meant, ultimately, to enable us to love God with our minds, in order to be constantly stirred up to love him with our heart and soul. That way, our mission—

loving God with all our strength, for the benefit of the whole world—will be shaped by the cataclysmic foundational events concerning Jesus. Rooted in history, we are shaped by theology—not least the theological claim that God will put all things right at last—as our lives effect real transformation, in real history, today and tomorrow, and on until God himself, in the ultimate act of creative sovereignty, does for the whole creation what he did for Jesus when he raised him from the dead.

5. NTiiW – 5 History of Jews between Persian and Roman Empires

a. The story of second-Temple Judaism is one of tension and tragedy. The Babylonians had conquered Judea and destroyed the first Temple in 587 BC and taken a large part of the populace into exile in Babylon. The destruction of the Temple and the removal of the Jews from the land had placed a great question mark against their pre-exilic faith. Had their God forsaken them? Although it seemed like that, the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah had spoken about a future day when God would bring them back from exile, a time when God would deliver them through a new exodus, with a new king, a new Temple, and the renewal of the covenant, with God himself returning to dwell in the new Temple. Just over fifty years later, this promise came (partly!) true. The Babylonian army was routed by the Persians in 539 BC, led by their king, Cyrus. The Persians were generous overlords to the Jews. They permitted them to return to their homeland and to rebuild their Temple. But the Persians remained their overlords.
b. Timeline
    i. 597-539 BC – Babylonian
    ii. 538-323 BC – Persian/Greek
    iii. 320-200 BC – Egyptian
    iv. 200-142 BC – Syrian
    v. 142-xxx BC – Hasmonean Dynasty
c. But although the Judeans were now back in the land, the full, glorious sweep of prophetic promises about Israel's restoration had not yet materialized
d. Alexander the Great and his Greek army swept through the old Persian empire and beyond, changing the cultural landscape, and imposing Greek culture
e. The two subsequent overlordships, first by the Egyptian Ptolemies in the third century and then by the Syrian Seleucids in the second century, make the history more complex in terms of military control of Palestine, but do not alter the basic fact that the world was now Greek.
f. But God will again have mercy on them, and God will bring them back into the land of Israel; and they will rebuild the temple of God, but not like the first one until the period when the times of fulfilment shall come. After this they all will return from their exile and will rebuild Jerusalem in splendor; and in it the temple of God will be rebuilt, just as the prophets of Israel have said concerning it. Then the nations in the whole world will all be converted and worship God in truth . . . All the Israelites who are saved in those days and are truly mindful of God will be gathered together; they will go to Jerusalem and live in

safety for ever in the land of Abraham, and it will be given over to them. Those who sincerely love God will rejoice, but those who commit sin and injustice will vanish from all the earth. (**Tob. 14.5–7 NRSV**)

g. By the time of the first century, in fact, there were three times as many Jews living outside Palestine as in it, and their main language was Greek, not Hebrew. Jesus grew up in Nazareth, only a few miles from Sepphoris, a Galilean city with Greek influences.
h. Even with the ascent of the Latin-speaking Romans, the east remained linguistically and culturally Greek until the Arab conquests of the seventh and eighth centuries.
i. The megalomaniac Seleucid ruler Antiochus Epiphanes IV [mcm – Beam audio?], wanting to use Judea as a buffer state against Egypt, tried to cement his hold on the country, politically and religiously, through a process of forcibly Hellenizing it and eliminating the Jewish religion entirely. Antiochus decided to ensure the Jews' loyalty by changing the function and direction of their central religious symbol, the Temple, so that it ceased to make them think independently and turned them in the direction of service to himself. He took over the Temple on 25 December 167 BC, deliberately desecrating it so that the Jews would no longer think of it as the place where they were reaffirmed as a unique people. He established worship of himself there instead.
j. Judas Maccabaeus and his companions accomplished the unthinkable, and organized a protracted insurgency that routed, and eventually wore out, the Seleucid forces. Antiochus IV abandoned the campaign against the Judean rebels, rescinding the ban on traditional Jewish worship, and turned his attention to recovering lost provinces beyond the Euphrates. Then, three years to the day after the Temple's desecration (25 December 164 BC), Judas cleansed and reconsecrated it (see box: 'Judas Maccabaeus rededicates the Temple'). A new festival (Hanukkah) was added to the Jewish calendar to celebrate the event. The Maccabean revolt became classic and formative in the same way as the exodus and the other great events of Israel's history. It powerfully reinforced the basic Jewish worldview…
k. The ambiguity of the Hasmonean dynasty, in which the heirs of the successful revolutionaries ruled as priest-kings, initially under Syrian auspices but later independently, did not dim the Jews' sense of the victory of their God, but created the same sort of puzzle that was left after the so-called 'return from exile'. A great vindication had occurred, but it now seemed as though there must be yet another one still to come. The great prophecies had not, it seemed, been fulfilled. There had been no blaze of divine glory returning to Jerusalem and transforming the world. By no means were all Jews happy with the new situation. Getting rid of the tyrant and his idolatrous practices was one thing, but was the new Hasmonean regime what God actually wanted? Was it not in its turn heavily compromised with Hellenism?
l. JEWS UNDER ROMAN RULE (63 BC – AD 70)
    i. Roman power had been building for centuries, especially after the defeat of the Carthaginians in the late third century which had left Rome as the unrivalled power in the western Mediterranean.

ii. The Romans' arrival in Judea in 63 BC coincided with the confusion of a civil war between rival Hasmonean brothers. Pompey's ability to simply wander into Jerusalem, without anyone putting up much of a struggle, and to then violate the sanctity of the Temple left people with a lot of questions.
iii. After the death of Agrippa I, Judea again reverted to direct Roman rule, with a procurator based in Caesarea and under the supervision of the Syrian governor. The situation deteriorated as the procurators overseeing the province between AD 44 and 66 were largely corrupt, incompetent, and brutal. <…> Soon after, Eleazar, the captain of the Temple and son of the high priest, persuaded a group of rogue priests to cease accepting the sacrifices offered daily on the Roman emperor's behalf. Acceptance of this sacrifice had been the token gesture of Judea's submission to Roman authority in lieu of worshipping Roman gods and participating in the imperial cult. Stopping the imperial sacrifice—refusing, in other words, to pray for Rome—was an open act of defiance, marking the beginning of the war with Rome.
iv. Titus initially tried to starve the city. But then, hoping eagerly for a significant victory that would bring glory to the new imperial regime headed by his father, he launched an all-out assault on Jerusalem (AD 70). It worked. The Temple precincts were gradually taken over; the Temple itself was burned; most of the rebels were either killed on the spot or captured and crucified.

m. The JEWISH WORLD RECONSTRUCTED (AD 70 – 135)
i. THEORY -- Pharisee, Johanan ben-Zakkai, emperor, Jewish academy, modified twelfth clause in "eighteen Benedictions" invoking a curse on Christians – Stopped meeting in synagogues at this time.
ii. It is more likely, in fact, that the destruction of the Temple created not one single reaction, but a variety of reactions. It is over-simplistic to think that all forms of 'Judaism' were wiped out except a particular type of Pharisaism, which then, transmuting itself into rabbinism…
    1. the anguish apparent in the writings of 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch, whose authors lament the fall of the Temple as if their hearts would break;
    2. the pragmatism of Johanan ben-Zakkai, calmly recognizing that Hosea 6.6 had long ago spoken of Israel's God as desiring deeds of loving-kindness rather than sacrifice;
    3. the smouldering fire of rebellion, crushed once again by pagan might but seeking nevertheless the way by which to reverse the catastrophe and build the true Temple.
iii. We should note that one of the results of the events of AD 70 was the complete disappearance of the Sadducees, focused as they were on the old Temple hierarchy. In addition, the Romans seem to have destroyed the Essene movement; Qumran was uninhabited thereafter.) To what extent these three main points of view might have overlapped in the post-70 period, and to what extent they stood in continuity

with various movements from before the destruction, must remain in question for the moment. What matters is that we recognize the non-monolithic nature of the new situation in the Jewish world following the disaster of AD 70.

iv. We might also include a fourth strand in the Jewish world at this time: (4) the young Christian church, still thinking of itself as the fulfilment of Israel's great story, following Israel's true Messiah, and interpreting the fall of Jerusalem in terms of the divine vindication of Jesus' claims. Since Ignatius of Antioch, writing in the early second century, speaks of Jews attending churches and Christians attending synagogues, it looks as though whatever happened at Javneh did not result in total separation.

v. We should not forget that early Christianity, claiming the high ground of Israel's heritage, was first and foremost a movement that defined itself in opposition to paganism, and only secondarily in opposition to the Jewish movements whose adherents refused to accept Jesus as their Messiah.

vi. This period of transition came to an abrupt and bloody end with the Jewish rebellion against the emperor Hadrian in AD 132–5 (see box: 'Chronology of Roman emperors and prefects'). Hadrian had passed a law forbidding circumcision as a barbaric practice (the Jews were not the only people who practised the custom, but the ban struck them especially due to the centrality of circumcision within their worldview). He had also founded a pagan city, Aelia Capitolina, on the site of ruined Jerusalem, with an altar to Zeus on the site of the Temple itself. These provocations, more serious still than those of the procurators in the 50s and 60s, and comparable to those of Antiochus Epiphanes much earlier, called forth rebellion. Simeon ben-Kosiba began a revolt which quickly roused the whole land. He himself was hailed as Messiah by the great rabbi Akiba, among others, and given the title Bar-Kochba, 'Son of the Star' (referring to the prophecy of Num. 24.17).

vii. Despite inflicting heavy losses on Hadrian's army, the Judeans were massively defeated. Many who survived were sold into slavery in large numbers. Jerusalem became a fully pagan city, with the ban on Jewish customs strictly enforced. Not until the twentieth century could the idea of a self-governing Jewish state in the middle east be spoken of as anything other than the remotest possibility.

6. NTiiW – 6 Jewish Context of Jesus and the Early Church

a. **Geography**

i. In the first century, there was no single 'state' in that region with borders in the modern sense. Judea itself was basically Jerusalem and the surrounding country, and there were several other cities in the region without Jewish influence. As we have seen, for administrative purposes the region could be divided different ways (as for instance between the sons of Herod the Great), rather like central Europe over the last few centuries, where someone living in the same house near Bratislava for fifty years might have found themselves in four or five different 'countries'. The traditional regions of Galilee, Samaria, and

Judea were general designations rather than permanently fixed social or geographical entities.

b. **Language and Literacy** –
    i. Palestine was a trilingual environment. Aramaic was still the majority language, as it had been the lingua franca of the Persian empire. It persisted for centuries, despite Greek and Roman conquests of the region. (It is closely cognate with Syriac, whose ancient form some still use today as a living language.) Hebrew, relating to Aramaic rather as Chaucer's English relates to ours, was found in liturgical settings where scripture was read, but was also spoken by some, and used in writing and inscriptions. Greek, too, was also spoken widely, particularly among merchants and the ruling class. Since Jesus grew up in Nazareth, it is certain that he spoke Aramaic; the transliterated words attributed to him in the New Testament are all in Aramaic (see, for example, Mk. 5.41). It seems he could at least read Hebrew (see Lk. 4.16–20). As we suggested earlier, he will almost certainly have been competent in Greek, maybe conversing in Greek with gentiles like the Syro-Phoenician woman in Mark 7.24–30, or indeed like Pontius Pilate.
    ii. … there are different levels. Saying someone is 'literate', or asking about percentages of 'literate' people in a population, will depend on which level we are talking about. Some people can just about write their own name. Others can also scribble out business contracts, and write short informal letters. Others are capable of reading sustained literary works; others still, of composing them. And there are shades in between. In addition, being functionally multilingual does not always mean having the same degree of literary competency in all the relevant languages. Generally speaking, and working with a 'literacy' somewhere in the middle of the scale just described, ancient literacy levels are estimated to be at around 10–15 per cent

c. Economic Life
    i. Agrarian
    ii. Tiers
    iii. Slavery had nothing to do with ethnic background or skin color.

d. Cultural Values
    i. Family/Kinship
        1. …modern and western conceptions of family are much more individualistic. Families were extended household entities, normally comprised of a male head, wife, children, dependants, freedmen, and slaves. The household head, paterfamilias or materfamilias, was the ultimate source of power and identity for the household, and largely determined the social, economic, and religious activities of the family. His or her political allegiances were those of the family; his or her religion was that of the family
        2. kinship could also be created by devotion to a common set of ideals and shared way of life. This type of kinship was 'fictive', not in the sense of 'fake' or pretend, but in the sense of being cultivated apart from biological or marital bonds.

a. ‘Truly I tell you,’ Jesus replied, ‘no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—along with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life.’
b. Jesus once rebuffed the efforts of his own family to intervene in his mission, identifying his disciples as his true family, saying: ‘Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother.
c. Paul conceived of his churches as a family, God’s family, in which fictive kinship superseded other allegiances. He told the Ephesians: ‘Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household.’
d. **Evidently the early church** was comprised of people with an ethnically mixed and socially diverse fictive kinship, devoted to Jesus and united by a common concern to love and support one another as **a single family**.

ii. Honor/Shame

1. **Foundational** social values for Jewish, Greek, and Roman societies.
2. **Honor** in the ancient world could either be inherited by a noble birth, a product of one’s gender or social rank, or acquired through social advancement in public accomplishments and by excelling over others. **Shame**, in contrast, is the lack or loss of honor due to one’s social position or through actions that cause one to lose face.
3. All groups also used honor and shame as a way of enforcing their particular values, and urging conformity to a particular ethos.
4. The gospels emphasize that Jesus is, in the world of his day, **‘honorable’** by virtue of his prestigious genealogy, his miraculous birth, the sign of his divine sonship at his baptism, and his teachings and prophetic works that received widespread acclaim. A significant feature in the gospels is that Jesus challenges the authority of the Pharisees, scribes, chief priests, and Herodians to speak for God. In each confrontation with such people, Jesus out-performs them in wisdom and ability, and so **increases his own honor while shaming his opponents.** This is why we are told that the Pharisees, chief priests, scribes, and Herodians plotted to kill him; that is what people do, as the ‘honorable’ course, if they have been shamed by a social inferior.
5. The author of Hebrews tries to undo the **cultural script that equated crucifixion with shame** when he declares that Jesus ‘endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God’. For the author, Jesus’ humiliation by the Romans was undone by his exaltation and enthronement with God the father.

iii. Purity/Pollution

1. Purity codes are the attempt to put things in their proper place for their proper time. This is why, in Jewish and Christian writings, you can find references to people and things that are holy, pure, sanctified, unblemished, undefiled, and clean.
2. Generally speaking, impurity and pollution were simply part of life; most people were unclean most of the time, and living in common places rather than in holy precincts. Impurity, obviously, was not the same thing as 'sin', though the effects might overlap.
3. the relationship between ritual impurity and moral impurity was robustly debated among ancient Jewish groups. The rabbis could distinguish the two without prioritizing one over the other, while those who wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls could conflate the two, so that to be ritually impure was also to be morally impure.35 It appears that Jesus may have entered this debate in the parable of the Good Samaritan…
4. Christian leaders did not abandon the language of purity and pollution. Rather, they adopted the language to describe the saving work of Jesus and the holiness of the Christian assemblies.
    a. Peter, at the Jerusalem council
    b. Paul's exhortations to the Corinthians
    c. John: "If we walk in the light… his blood <u>purifies</u> us from all sins."

e. **The Jewish Sects --** The demise of the Hasmonean dynasty, and the advent of Roman rule, together spawned several mutually antagonistic Jewish groups, each with their own vision for Israel's future.
    i. **Zealot** – Sicarii, Masada during the Roman/Jewish war.
        1. say your prayers, sharpen your swords, make yourselves holy to fight a holy war, and God will give you a military victory over the hordes of darkness
    ii. **Pharisees** – Community Activists
        1. The more strict a Pharisee you were, the more likely you might sympathize with the zealots, e.g., Saul of Tarsus.
        2. No political position; more like a pressure group.
        3. Their aim went like this: When ejected from the halls of power, start a grass-roots campaign to get your vision for Israel adopted by the masses, tell everyone to have their own ritual bath if they can, have your bones buried in ossuary boxes waiting for resurrection. If we can be obedient enough, get pure enough, keep Torah most accurately, then maybe the 'son of David' will come.
    iii. Essenes (Qumran)
        1. separate yourself from the wicked world, say your prayers, and wait for God to do whatever God is going to do.
    iv. Sadducees – The compromise position
        1. keep the Temple going, offer sacrifices pleasing to God, maintain the peace, get along with your political bosses as well as you can, do as well out of it as you can, and hope that God will somehow validate it all.

f. Revolutionary Movements

i. A tumultuous sequence of events began in 4 BC. As Herod the Great lay dying, a group of Judean hotheads pulled down the ornamental eagle he had caused to be placed over the Temple gate. They were egged on by two respected teachers of the law with the suspected collusion of the high priest.
ii. Many similar events followed, and responses escalated on both sides.
iii. At the same time as these events were going on there were two would-be messianic movements. These involved respectively one Simon, an ex-slave of Herod who was proclaimed king before being killed by the Romans, and a shepherd called Athronges, who gave himself royal airs and organized his followers into brigand bands before being captured by Archelaus.
iv. A brief respite from continual provocation occurred during the reign of Herod Agrippa, a grandson of Herod the Great, whom the Romans allowed to rule in place of the procurators from 41 until his early death in 44. His apparent piety, and his care to avoid offending Jewish scruples, held revolutionary tendencies at bay. But with the resumption of procuratorial rule we hear of renewed insurgent movements.
v.

g. The Pharisees

i. Out of all the sects of Judaism there is none more important for the study of the New Testament than the Pharisees. That is for three reasons. First, the Pharisees are depicted in the gospels as Jesus' primary adversaries. Second, the apostle Paul claims to have been once a zealous Pharisee. Third, the Pharisees eventually came to dominate the Jewish world after the capture of Jerusalem in AD 70 and the failure of the Bar-Kochba revolt in 135.
ii. the only two Jewish sects who survived the war with Rome were the Christians and Pharisees, which meant that they were now effectively competing to be the voice of the Jewish world in a post-Temple age.
iii. we can affirm three basic theses about the Pharisees

1. First, in terms of size and spheres of operation, the Pharisees probably numbered several thousand.
2. Second, the Pharisees, due to their political marginalization in the Herodian period, became largely concerned with manufacturing the conditions necessary for Israel's eschatological restoration through a strict regime of Torah observance as seen from within their specific tradition. In other words, they were not a separatist religious club. Rather, they were a Jewish renewal movement, seeking to draw Israel towards the conditions that would hasten its restoration before God and its elevation over the surrounding nations.
3. Third, this gives us a better chance to understand the Pharisaic concern with purity. The purity codes were not simply 'about' personal cleanliness. As social anthropologists would insist, they were coded symbols for the purity and maintenance of the tribe, the family, or the race.

iv. The clash between Jesus and the Pharisees, therefore, must be seen in terms of two alternative political agendas, generated by the alternative eschatological beliefs of two competing renewal movements (see text grid: 'Critiques of the Pharisees by other Jewish groups'). Jesus was announcing the kingdom in a way that did not reinforce, but rather called into question, the agenda of revolutionary zeal that dominated the horizon of the leading group within Pharisaism.75 The coming of the kingdom, as Jesus announced it, put before his Pharisaic contemporaries a challenge, an agenda: give up your interpretation of your tradition, which is driving you towards ruin. Embrace instead a very different interpretation of the tradition, one which, though it looks like the way of loss, is in fact the way to true victory, the way of the cross!

h. Sadducees, priests, and aristocrats

i. The great majority of the priests were not aristocrats; nor were they particularly wealthy. They, and the Levites who served as their assistants, were dependent on the tithing practiced by the rest of the population. Most of them lived away from Jerusalem, going there in groups, by turn, for the performance of the regular rituals. For the rest of the time, they functioned in a way which has often been ignored: they were the main teachers of the law, the group to whom ordinary Jews turned for judgment and arbitration in the case of disputes or legal problems.

ii. The Sadducees believed in free will. Just as I am inclined to think that Josephus's description of the Pharisaic blend of fate and free will is a de-politicized code for their balance between waiting for Israel's God to act and being ready to act on his behalf if necessary, so I am inclined to think that the Sadducean belief in free will has little to do with abstract philosophy and a great deal to do with the politics of power: Israel's God will help those who help themselves. This is a comfortable doctrine for those in power, who maintain themselves there by taking whatever measures seem necessary, just as its mirror image, belief that divine action can only be awaited, not hastened, is a consoling doctrine for those who are out of power and see no hope of regaining it by their own efforts.

iii. They had no time for laws, or scriptures, other than those in the Torah (that is, the Pentateuch, the first five books of Moses). This viewpoint is set over against those who followed 'the traditions of the elders', a pretty clear reference to the Pharisees, who certainly maintained, and applied to themselves at least, a large body of such traditions. Here again we see the Sadducees as an essentially conservative body, unwilling to allow mere innovation. In the political realm, this is again a useful doctrine for those in power to hold if their innovating opponents are engaged, as we have seen at least some of the Pharisees were engaged, in revolutionary activities.
iv. Lastly, the Sadducees denied the doctrine of the resurrection. The best explanation for the Sadducees' view is that, by the first century, 'resurrection' had long functioned as a symbol and metaphor for the total reconstitution of Israel, the return from Babylon, and the final coming redemption in which God would put everything right—always a worry for those wielding power.
v. Resurrection, in its metaphorical sense of the restitution of a theocratic Israel, possibly under a Messiah, would mean the end of their precarious power.

i. The Essenes

i. We know about them from Josephus, Philo, and Pliny. They are not mentioned in the New Testament, though some have speculated that John the Baptist may have had links with them.
ii. known for their ascetic way of life, concern for ritual purity, corporate reading of scripture, refusal to own slaves, sharing of property, and communal meals.
iii. majority of scholars identify the Qumran community, from whom we derive the Dead Sea Scrolls, as a marginal splinter group of urban Essenes.
iv. Assuming the majority view for the moment, the community was probably founded by an enigmatic figure known as the 'Teacher of Righteousness', who took issue with the 'wicked priest' (probably one of the Hasmonean leaders) and his re-organization of the Judean Temple-state in which the older high-priestly group were ousted in favour of the new Hasmonean priest-kings. The sect separated from other Jews and followed this teacher into the wilderness, where they were trying quite literally to 'prepare the way of the Lord'

j. The Ordinary Jews

i. Not every Jew living in the Galilean countryside or inhabiting a Judean town necessarily identified with any of the religious parties. Most ordinary Jews were consumed with the daily struggle of human existence: farming, trading, paying taxes, putting food on the table, dealing with family matters like births, marriages, and funerals, and not continually gossiping about the newest teaching and the latest heresy.

k. Jewish Beliefs – One God and One People

i. As we have seen, the Jewish world was anything but monolithic in its views, beliefs, and aspirations … the Jewish way of life was just that, a way of life; people did not think of it as a 'religion' in the modern sense. It was a totality, comprising ethnic identity, geographical focus, shared history, customs, and traditions.
ii. Several things in common, however:

1. Commitment to Torah as both story and instruction, even though they disagreed fiercely about the details.
2. The Temple was the intended place of the divine presence.
3. The "land of Israel" was their inheritance from God.
4. They followed an annual calendar of festivals and feasts.

iii. The ULTIMATE CORE of Jewish beliefs, what sustained them for centuries despite domination by successive pagan kingdoms, was
1. Monotheism and Election, or
2. ONE GOD and ONE PEOPLE.

l. One thing should be clear from this brief survey of first-century Jewish beliefs. At their core is the conviction of the Jewish people that their **God was the creator God**, not a tribal god or a local deity, but 'God Almighty', the 'maker of heaven and earth'. **He had called Israel** to be his special possession, the people of his pasture, a kingdom of priests, and a light to the nations. Though the world was ravaged with evil and savaged by dark powers, it would not always remain so. Many Jews cherished, and brought to various expression, the hope that this one true God would deliver Israel through his agents—prophets, priests, and kings—to bring about a new exodus. This would utterly transform Israel's fortunes and future; and, through this transformed Israel, God would one day transform the entire world.

7. NTiiW – 7 Greco-Roman Context of the Early Church

a. Hellenistic Culture and Roman Empire

i. When we reach the first century, the eastern Mediterranean is culturally Greek, but politically dominated by the Roman empire.
1. The primary instrument of Hellenization was language. Greek became the lingua franca of the ancient world, and remained dominant for centuries even after the Latin-speaking Romans had gained overall power.
2. The second instrument of Hellenization was the polis or city-state. As the Greeks conquered regions, they established colonies with a Greek way of life. Here the Greek polis was the political, economic, educational, religious, and social hub of a civilization. Cities were adorned with temples honoring the gods, a gymnasium for training young men, schools for instruction in philosophy and rhetoric, an agora for traded goods, and amphitheatres and stadiums for arts and sports. The polis was the means of forming a cultured urban society.
3. A third instrument of Hellenization was religious syncretism. Local deities could be identified with gods from the Greek pantheon. The Samaritans identified YHWH with Zeus under the Seleucid ruler Antiochus Epiphanes IV in the second century BC, and then with Jupiter (the Roman equivalent of the Greek Zeus) under the Roman emperor Hadrian in the second century AD.

ii. The Hellenism of the eastern Mediterranean must be distinguished from the culture of the classical Greek period, the time of Sophocles and Socrates. It was now, to speak loosely, more oriental. Greek culture in the time after Alexander was shaped, in the different regions, by Egyptian, Judean, Arabian, Asian, Syrian, and even Iranian influences. Greek influence was also uneven, affecting different regions and the social classes to different degrees. In places like Judea there was a mixture of appropriation and resistance to Hellenism. Nevertheless, Hellenism provided a regnant culture in

which Jesus and the early Christians lived their lives and carried out their vocations. We see this throughout the New Testament.

iii. Roman empire had grown out of an insatiable hunger for conquest. Rome's military power, famed and feared over a vast area, enabled the capital itself to grow rich with taxes imposed throughout its territories. The lower tiers of society in urban centers swelled with those who were made slaves or else displaced by military conflict. This put considerable pressure on the empire's ability to feed the populace of Rome itself, and the city became dependent on grain levied from Egypt. Life in the empire, including its capital, could be severe for those not part of the elite classes.

iv. establishment of colonies in places like Corinth and Philippi in Greece and Pisidian Antioch in southern Turkey was intended to deal with the simultaneous problems of overcrowding in Rome and the large number of old soldiers to whom land had been promised. Especially after the civil wars (fought mostly in Greece), Rome had no desire to see hordes of military veterans coming back to the already overcrowded region of central Italy.

v. Roman social stratification created other headaches too. For example, Christian noblewomen had a dilemma. There was at times a shortage of Christian men from the upper classes, but Christian noblewomen were not supposed to marry pagan men. If, in order to marry a Christian, they married a social inferior, they would lose their status among the nobility. Bishop Callistus, a third-century bishop of Rome, recognized that mixed marriages with pagans were undesirable for Christian noblewomen, but that it was preferable for them to retain their social status. He therefore gave the church's blessing to Christian women living in concubinage with a socially inferior Christian man, even with a slave, without being legally married.13 This was the kind of thing that some found necessary if Christians were to negotiate their way within the social structures of the Greco-Roman world.

b. RELIGION, PHILOSOPHY, AND CULTURE

i. Presented with any given speech, play, coin, statue, novel, or religious rite, a first-century inhabitant of the Greco-Roman world would pick up allusions to Hercules, the Trojan War, the founding of Rome by Remus and Romulus (or perhaps by Aeneas), and the deification of Roman emperors. They knew these stories as well as today's western culture knows the present state of various soap operas, or film franchises such as Star Wars, or the present marital dilemmas of leading celebrities. We cannot begin to understand how ordinary people in the first century thought, imagined, reasoned, believed, prayed, and acted unless we try to get inside their myth-soaked culture. Importantly, this was a culture in which religion was everywhere.

ii. So when someone like Paul arrived in Thessalonica or Ephesus with his message about the one God and his crucified and risen son, he was not offering an alternative way of being 'religious' in the sense of a private hobby, something to do in a few hours at the weekend. He was offering a heart transplant for an entire community and its culture. In cities like Thessalonica, this meant offering a direct challenge to the imperial cult, with its pretentious claim to being the religious and political glue that kept society together. Paul's message implied the eclipse of local rites and cultural identities (as with the goddess Artemis in Ephesus): when people were grasped by the gospel of Jesus they gave up all other worship—but it was that other worship, soaked into every aspect of local culture, that most people regarded as vital for the health and safety of a city, a community, or a household. So it is hardly surprising that Paul's work often produced riots.

iii. to understand the New Testament, we need to be able to grasp what ancient religion was and wasn't, and how it differed from our own modern ideas of religion and its boundaries.

c. GRECO-ROMAN RELIGION

i. A first issue we have to broach is that the ancient world did not have something called 'religion' as we understand it today. If by 'religion' we mean a body of beliefs about 'the supernatural', with various ethical corollaries that can be kept in a separate compartment from secular culture, then clearly there was no such thing as 'religion' in that sense. There wasn't a word for that kind of thing, because it was unknown. The Latin word religio could mean 'scruple' in the sense of one's duties to the gods, or the idea (as we said before) of the 'binding together' of gods and humans in a community. In Greek, the main terms we find for religious activity, found also in the New Testament, are 'piety' or 'godliness' (eusebeia); 'worship' (thrēskeia); and the 'service' associated with it (latreia).15 This language pertains to cult and ritual, not to any complex web of beliefs, worldviews, and practices. The word 'religion' only gradually came to be used in the ancient world in relation to Christianity when it was fashioning a way of separating cult from culture. The idea that there might then be different 'religions' was an innovation of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

ii. A second issue we have to mention is that the parameters and spheres in which religion exists today are very different from those of the ancient world. We can see this in several ways.

1. Concern with present life rather than with an afterlife. One of the main attractions of Christianity or even Islam is the promise of life after death in an unending eternity with God. Ancient views on an afterlife were quite diverse. Emperors might, after death, become gods. Some people believed in reincarnation; others denied any future life. Most seemed to think that after death they would join the ranks of those in Hades, in some kind of shadowy and subterranean existence. Men and women pursued the favour of the gods not primarily for what the gods might give them in a future life, but for blessings, boons, help, security, peace, and prosperity in this life here and now.
2. Focus on cultic ritual rather than on doctrinal beliefs. Some ancient authors do, indeed, discuss different views of the gods. Cicero, for instance, wrote a dialogue, On the Nature of the Gods, discussing the different views about the gods held by different philosophical schools. But on the whole, Greco-Roman religion was concerned, not with creedal beliefs about gods, but with cultic acts that demonstrated devotion to the deities. The offering of food to a household spirit, the utterance of prayers before a long journey, the sacrifice of an animal in a temple or at a festival—all this was designed to court the benevolence and benefaction of spirits and gods.
3. No secularism with a separation of religion and state. Secularism, even as we might think of it, is not a monolithic concept. There are diverse expressions of secularism in our world: the secularisms of the USA, Turkey, France, the UK, Australia, and many other countries all take subtly different forms. If, however, one reduces secularism to 'a separation of church and state', then it is safe to say that the ancient world was far from secular. Political leaders wanted peace and security, and 'religion' was one vital way to achieve that. This is why emperors built temples, sponsored religious rites, often attempted to reform religious practices, and sometimes even enforced participation in religious observances by whole cities. The Roman emperor could style himself as the 'high priest' of the empire, but on other occasions as a 'god' to whom worship

was owed by his subjects to secure his protection and benefaction. Religious practices were thus part of statecraft. Political authorities took more than a passing interest in religious groups and their rituals.

4. Pluralism but not necessarily tolerance. Worship of a god was never exclusive. There were gods for just about everything: love, poetry, baking, travel, and even bee-keeping. Greco-Roman 'religion', both at the public and private level, was usually capable of accommodating various divinities. As groups and individuals migrated around the ancient near east, this resulted in complex, crisscrossing varieties of local 'religions' in any one place, in which, as we have seen, newly arrived gods and goddesses might take the names and attributes of existing local ones. A Greek philosopher named Celsus, himself a pagan monotheist of sorts, wrote a pointed critique of Christianity in the late second century, saying that God can go by various names: *'It makes no difference if one invokes the highest God or Zeus or Adonai or Sabaoth or Amoun, as the Egyptians do, or Papaios as the Scythians do*.'18 From the Hellenistic Jews of Egypt, we have a writing called the Epistle of Aristeas, which depicts Alexandrian elites as believing that Jews and pagans basically worship the same God, only by a different name: *"These people worship God, the overseer and creator of all, whom all men worship including ourselves, O King, except that we have a different name. Their name for him is Zeus and Jove. The primitive men, consistently with this, demonstrated that the one by whom all live and are created is the master and Lord of all."*
    a. there was no religious identity separate from political or civic identity. Control of these public cults was in the hands of the local elite, in their capacity as magistrates, priests and members of the town council; priesthoods were public positions, distinguishable from magistracies only by certain formal features. The town council as a whole oversaw public cults, supporting established shrines and festivals with public funds and decreeing new ones as appropriate.

iii. If we had to distil the substance of ancient 'religion', then, we could say that it pertains to negotiating the relationship between the divine world and the human world through ritual observance. This could be summed up by Cicero as cultus deorum ('the cult of the gods') in the sense of the labor of cultivating the divine favor of the gods for human existence. The whole point was to secure the pax deorum ('the peace of the gods') whereby harmonious relationship could be maintained between the divinities and mortals in their daily affairs.

iv. The differences between all this and the early Christian devotional life are striking. For a start, Christianity had no priesthood and no temple, so to outsiders it would look much more like 'philosophy'. Yet Christianity had some similarities to Greco-Roman 'religion': Christians, too, could talk about God, about the gods (though they didn't believe in them), about heavenly worlds, spirits, and 'demons' (the latter term covering a range of imprecise supposed beings). Furthermore, Christians exhibited religion in the sense of having their own rituals like the Lord's Supper and baptism, cultic acts which bound the members of the community to one another and particularly to the God revealed in and through Jesus. Where pagans consulted sacred books and oracles, the Christians searched the scriptures and prayed for the holy spirit to guide them. Christians, like other groups, had various forms of worship, singing, and prayers, including ecstatic utterance. Knowing all this becomes important when it comes to mapping how Christianity both fits into, and grates against, the religious context of the ancient world, and what Greeks and Romans might have thought

when they encountered the little groups of Jesus-believers and their varied life and practice.

d. GRECO-ROMAN PHILOSOPHY

i. Another feature of the ancient world for us to consider is that of philosophy. Again, we must resist the anachronism of imposing upon the ancient world our modern idea of philosophy as an abstract academic discipline. Philosophy in antiquity was far more integrated with religion, politics, rhetoric, art, science, and wider culture. It was everyday life as lived, reflected upon, and interpreted in this or that way. Philosophy shaped the intellectual currents of the Greco-Roman world as it reflected on the meaning and purpose of life, ethics, religion, politics, science, nature, law, public speaking, and even agriculture.

1. The entire edifice of western philosophy owes its origins to ancient Greece, and to the important trio of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. They, building on their predecessors ('the pre-Socratics'), set the questions and agenda for western philosophy ever afterwards.
    a. Socrates (c. 469–399 BC) was regarded as the first great philosopher and the first philosophical martyr as well. To paraphrase Cicero, it was Socrates who brought philosophy down from heaven to earth. In contrast to the pre-Socratics, particularly the Sophists, Socrates did not see philosophy as primarily a discourse about nature, but as a matter of practical living. He emphasized virtue and religious disposition.
    b. Socrates' student, Plato (c. 428–348 BC), taught that the world of space, time, and matter was essentially a secondary thing, a world of illusion, by comparison with the ultimate reality, the world of the 'Forms' or 'Ideas', the invisible realities of which this-worldly things were mere space-time copies. True knowledge, for Plato, was therefore knowledge of these 'Forms'. Such knowledge was what the soul desired; and the soul, Plato believed, was immortal. It passed into the body, and departed from it upon death, either into a state of disembodied bliss or into a series of other bodies through reincarnation. Plato established his own school, known as the Academy, in Athens. Over the centuries, the Academy went through several changes.
    c. Plato's star pupil was Aristotle, but Aristotle did not become part of the Academy. Aristotle came from northern Greece and returned there after Plato's death to tutor the young Alexander of Macedon, who through his vast conquests would become 'Alexander the Great'. Plato had a flair for the abstract, but Aristotle moved in the opposite direction, towards concrete categorizations of things, distinguishing objects, animals, behavior, and beliefs. He tackled areas as diverse as biology, virtue, rhetoric, aesthetics, music, and metaphysics, and practically invented the discourse of logic with his three-point syllogisms. Aristotle returned to Athens in 335 BC and established his own school in the Lyceum, just outside Athens. This became known as the Peripatetic school, due to the habit its members cultivated of walking to and fro while discussing a subject.
2. By the first century, various other philosophical schools besides the Academy and Lyceum joined the scene.
    a. Epicurus (c. 341–270 BC), who gave his name to Epicureanism, outlined a philosophy that was tantamount to a metaphysical dualism. There were gods,

but they were distant and detached deities, uninvolved with the world, supremely happy with themselves, and the best thing a human could do was attempt a similar detachment from the cares of this life. The highest virtue was therefore ataraxia ('undisturbedness'), trying to imitate the gods in their happy and carefree state. One of Epicurus's great concerns was to eliminate the fear of death and what lies beyond it. For Epicurus, the body was made up of atoms that dissolved at death. There was therefore no surviving 'soul' to migrate either into an afterlife or into an alternative body. Good and evil were aesthetic, rather than absolute: pleasure was good, pain was bad. (Thus the word 'good' comes to mean 'I like this'.) Epicureanism received its greatest expression in the long Latin poem of Lucretius (c. 99–55 BC). In the modern period, it has become the implicit underpinning of the western Enlightenment, the multifaceted culture that regards itself as detached from the 'uncivilized' or 'underdeveloped' world all around.

b. Another significant philosophical school was that of Stoicism, based upon the teachings of Zeno (c. 333–264 BC), though subsequently developed by many others, such as Epictetus in the first century AD. Stoicism is a classic form of pantheism, seeing 'divinity' in everything. Zeus and his associates in Greece, and Jupiter and his colleagues in Rome, were all variegated manifestations of the one 'divinity' which permeated all things. World history was based on a number of repeating cycles, at the end of each of which a great cosmic conflagration would purify the world so that its true self would enjoy a time of stillness before history repeated itself again. Stoic philosophers aimed at continual moral enlightenment, with the goal of becoming a genuinely wise and well-formed person, attaining self-mastery and living in accordance with nature.

c. The thinkers known as the 'Cynics' were not, as the word might suggest today, known for philosophical scepticism. Rather, they prided themselves on pouring scorn on all human pretension. The word 'Cynic', which comes from the Greek kyōn, 'dog', was originally a nickname, since the Cynics appeared to bark and yap like dogs at the rich, the respectable, and any who gave themselves airs. Cynicism was a type of uninhibited Stoicism, exulting in its anti-social critique.

3. **There are plenty of apparent parallels between certain ideas and themes in the New Testament and the themes, teachings, and ideas found in the Greco-Roman world**. In some cases there is direct borrowing (such as when Paul quotes philosophers or poets in Ac. 17 or 1 Cor. 15). Elsewhere there are close analogies, but not necessarily a direct genealogy of ideas. In plenty of places we can see the New Testament authors strongly repudiating standard Greco-Roman beliefs.

   a. On the whole, the apostle Paul shared the Jewish critique of Greco-Roman religion and the behavior-patterns that went with it. His rejection of the central symbols of paganism was sharpened by what he believed about Jesus. Yet Paul lived and breathed the cultural air of the Greco-Roman world. As a speaker and writer, he exhibited tell-tale signs of rhetorical training, even while claiming not to have preached with rhetorical elegance or proclaimed his message with specious and self-serving reasoning. Furthermore, Paul's

thought has often been seen as having affinities with Stoicism, especially in ethical theory, even while he warned of the dangers of 'philosophy'. The gospel of John tells the story of Jesus in thoroughly Jewish and messianic terms, but when John calls Jesus the logos ('the Word'),33 he is not only echoing an important biblical theme (for example Ps. 33.6; Isa. 55.11, and elsewhere) but also borrowing an idea initially developed by the sixth-century BC Greek philosopher Heraclitus, subsequently taken up by Stoic philosophers to describe the rational principle by which the universe came into being and by which all things exist. The Logos, as the personified 'idea', becomes the one through whom the invisible God interacts with the corporeal world. This notion of the Logos was adopted by Jews like Philo of Alexandria, and Christians like the second-century apologist Justin Martyr, employing the philosophical tools of antiquity to explain their beliefs about God. To what extent this development was compatible with John's own intended biblical allusions remains a matter of debate.

4. Examples could be multiplied of Christian authors engaging in adaptation of or confrontation with the ethos and ethics of the Greco-Roman world. But by now the main point should be clear: the New Testament comes to us as a book belonging in the Greco-Roman world as much as in the Jewish world. To grasp and be grasped by the New Testament, it is important to be immersed as far as possible in its wider culture, Greco-Roman as well as Jewish. Only so can we avoid anachronism, imagining that the early writers were straightforwardly addressing 'our' concerns. Questions have changed; the words to articulate key ideas have shifted in meaning. By exploring ancient philosophy, culture, politics, religion, and worldview, contemporary readers will be more equipped to see otherwise unimagined depths and dimensions (see 'Emails from the edge: Gnosticism?').
    a. Having a grasp of the wider context of the New Testament, or not having such a grasp, is therefore like the difference between watching a film in black and white on an ordinary screen, and watching the same film in color on a 3D screen.

e. THE JEWISH DIASPORA

i. The ancient historian and geographer Strabo (64 BC–AD 24) once commented about the Jews: 'This people has already made its way into every city, and it is not easy to find any place in the habitable world which has not received this nation and in which it has not made its power felt.' That is because, by the first century, the majority of Jews, up to 80 per cent by some estimates, did not live in Palestine, but in the lands of other nations. In some cities as much as 20 per cent of the population was Jewish. This scattering of the Jews, known as the diaspora or 'dispersion', was caused by several factors, such as the Assyrian (721 BC) and Babylonian (597 and 587 BC) conquests through which the people of the northern kingdom of Israel, and then the southern kingdom of Judea, were taken into exile. Many captured Jews were enslaved, and then taken abroad to places like Rome. There were various forced migrations caused by conflict or famine. Many Jews simply chose to relocate to foreign cities due to economic opportunities and family connections. By the first century there were major concentrations of Jews in Alexandria, Syrian Antioch, Rome, Babylon, and elsewhere. And wherever the Jews went, they of course took their scriptures with them. The scriptures functioned as a portable land and Temple: studying Torah, they could come

into the divine presence as if they were in the Temple itself. They built synagogues and prayer-houses, wrote their own literature, and tried to live as faithful Jews in a foreign city. So much so that at the Jerusalem council, James could declare: 'For the law of Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath.'

1.

f. THE SEPTUAGINT

i. The 'Septuagint' is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible and several other deutero-canonical writings. According to the legend recounted in the Epistle of Aristeas, seventy scholars were commissioned by Ptolemy II of Egypt to translate the Torah into Greek for deposit in the Library of Alexandria. That is how the Septuagint, represented by the Roman numeral 'LXX' for seventy, got its name.

ii. The Septuagint is important for several reasons. First, it demonstrates how many Jews tried to embed their religious literature within the Hellenistic world. Second, for the early church, the Septuagint was their 'scripture': it is normally the Septuagint that New Testament authors cite when quoting the Old Testament, and the Septuagint became part of the church's biblical canon. It was only in the west, from the fourth century or so, that Jerome's Latin Vulgate supplanted the Septuagint and the Greek New Testament as the preferred Bible of the Roman church (there had been earlier Latin translations but none received the status then given to the Vulgate). Third, in some cases, the assertions of New Testament authors are tied to the particular wording and texture of the Septuagint. This is clearly the case in Paul's argument about Abraham in Romans 4.1–8, where he connects two passages (Gen. 15.6 and Ps. 32.2) through the word logizomai which features in the Septuagint of both passages even though there is no verbal connection in the Hebrew. Similarly, at the Jerusalem council, James appealed to Amos 9.11–12 to justify the church accepting gentiles as gentiles without becoming converts to Judaism, which is based on the distinctive rendering of the Greek rather than Hebrew form of the text (Ac. 15.15–19).

8. NTiiW – 8
9. NTiiW – 9
10. NTiiW – 10
11. NTiiW – 11

12. NTiiW – 12 Resurrection in GrecoRoman and Jewish thought

a. Three representative diverse views:
   i. Once a man has died, and the dust has soaked up his blood, there is no resurrection.
   ii. While the pyre was burning, it is said that a cloud passed under Hercules and with a peal of thunder wafted him up to heaven.
   iii. You accursed wretch, you dismiss us from this present life, but the King of the universe will raise us up to an everlasting renewal of life, because we have died for his laws.

b. Sources
   i. Theater -- Aescylus' play *Eumenides*, 647–8
      1. DEATH IS PERMANENT.
   ii. Literary -- Apollodorus The Library 2.7.7
      1. HEROES GET TRANSLATED INTO HEAVEN WITHOUT DYING
   iii. Apocrypha -- 2 Macc. 7.9
      1. THE FAITHFUL WHO DIE ARE RETURNED BACK TO LIFE

c. Life after Death in Antiquity
   i. Hercules' Apotheosis
      1. 

d. GRECO ROMAN BELIEFS (Jesus +/- 250 years)
   i. Witless shadows in a murky world -- The ancient Greek author Homer, whose significance for antiquity is perhaps akin to that of the King James Bible and Shakespeare in our own day, provides a window on ancient views of life after death. In his work, the dead become shades (skiai), ghosts (psychai), or phantoms (eidola).

They are certainly not fully human beings. They may sometimes look like them; but the appearance is deceptive, since one cannot grasp them physically. Theirs is a shadowy and wispy existence in an underworld abode, even though they may occasionally appear to the living.

ii. So what of the dead according to Homer? They are in Hades, under the eponymous rule of the underworld's god and his dreaded wife. They are sorry both to be where they are and about much that happened in their previous human existence. They are sad at their present subhuman state. In some cases they are tormented, as punishment for particularly heinous crimes. For the most part, Hades holds no comforts, no prospects, but only a profound sense of loss. The inhabitants of Hades remain essentially subhuman and without hope.

iii. If Homer functioned as the Old Testament for the Hellenistic world—which by the first century included the entire middle east—its New Testament was unquestionably Plato. In contrast to Homer, the Greek philosopher Plato had a very different conception of human existence, its place in the cosmos, and the post-mortem destiny of the individual.

1. Plato, building on the work of other philosophers like Socrates and Pythagoras, believed that the essence of a human being was a soul, which was non-material. Bodily life was full of delusion and danger; the soul was to be cultivated in the present, both for its own sake and because its future happiness would depend upon such cultivation. The soul, being immortal, existed before the body, and would continue to exist after the body had gone.
2. It is hard to overestimate the importance of Plato for the later and wider world into which there burst the phenomenon we know as Christianity. For the Roman author Seneca, the immortal human soul had come from beyond this world—from among the stars, in fact—and would make its way back there. Though one might hold that it simply disappeared, it is more likely that it would go to be with the gods.
3. Platonic thought provided the tectonic plates for much Christian thought well into the middle ages. The second-century Christian apologist, Justin, was an eager Platonist (though he firmly believed in bodily resurrection). The second-century 'heretic' Marcion was well and truly steeped in Platonic ideas, regarding the human body as a 'sack of excrement' unfit for God to incarnate himself in, with the corollary that salvation must mean deliverance of the soul from this body, rather than the body's resurrection.8 This divergence has continued among Christian teachers to this day.

iv. several different perspectives about the possibility of the dead crossing back over the chasm into the land of the living.

1. necromancy—communication with the departed

a. not, however, cases of people ceasing to be dead and resuming something like normal life. They were precisely about the dead remaining dead, and being encountered as visitors from the world of the dead, without any suggestion that they would then resume the kind of life they had earlier possessed.

2. mythic stories of actual returns from the underworld
    a. Odysseus's visit to Hades.
        i. even the ghost of Hercules (the 'real' Hercules is feasting with the immortal gods, married to Hebe, the daughter of Zeus and Hera, but even this does not prevent his shade from living in the house of Hades)
    b. Others
    c. These stories are fascinating, but they scarcely provide any parallel with resurrection. Odysseus did not die to get to Hades.
    d. intelligent pagans contemporary with early Christianity knew about such stories, and dismissed them as mythic fictions
3. (metempsychosis, the transmigration or reincarnation of souls) -- belief, widely held by philosophers, according to which the dead did indeed return to some kind of this-worldly and bodily existence.
    a. The classic statement of this is found in Plato. His basic scheme is reasonably straightforward: after death, the souls of all humans wait for a period, whereupon they are given the choice of what sort of creatures they will become in their next existence (such as a swan, a lion, an eagle, or indeed another human). The souls then proceed through the Plain of Oblivion, drink from the River of Forgetfulness, and so pass into their next existence, unaware of who they have been, or even that they have been anything at all.
    b. Since for Plato, as for the Hindu and Buddhist schemes of the same type, return to embodied existence means that the soul is once more entering a kind of prison, the ultimate aim is not simply to choose the right type of existence for one's next life, but to escape the cycle altogether. We are here not far from one version of Hinduism and other doctrines of karma.
    c. From Plato's point of view, to come back into this life at all is clearly to have failed in the soul's ultimate destination. It is to return to jail.
        i. By contrast, for believers in resurrection—that is, many Jews and virtually all early Christians—the new embodied life is to be looked forward to and celebrated.
4. Homer's basic rule remained in force. Nobody was allowed to return from Hades and resume the life that he or she had once had.

e. JEWISH VIEWS OF THE AFTERLIFE

i. explore views of the afterlife in the Old Testament and in a wider sample of post-biblical Jewish literature. Grasping this will not only clarify the context of the resurrection narratives in the gospels, but will also explain what Paul meant when he said (quoting very early tradition) that the Messiah 'was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures'.18 It will also address the question of why Paul caused such a commotion by telling the Sadducees and Pharisees of the Sanhedrin, 'I stand on trial because of the hope of the resurrection of the dead.

ii. Old Testament
    1. The first thing we have to note is that resurrection makes only rare and late appearances in Israel's scriptures. Hopes for the afterlife were at best on the periphery of the message of the Old Testament as a whole.
    2. One cohort of texts expresses a view, not all that different from that of Homer, that when a person 'slept with his or her ancestors' in death, such a person entered a post-mortem world of next to nothingness:
        a. Among the dead no one proclaims your name. Who praises you from [the] grave? Ps 6.5
        b. It is not the dead who praise the LORD, those who go down to the place of silence . . . Ps 115.17
    3. In these texts, and in others, we find mention of Sheol, the Pit, the grave, and the dark. These almost interchangeable terms denote
        a. a place of gloom and despair
        b. a place where one can no longer enjoy life
        c. where the presence of YHWH himself is withdrawn.
        d. As in Homer, there is no suggestion that the dead are happy there; it is a dark and gloomy world. Nothing much happens. It is not another form of real life, an alternative world where things continue as normal.
        e. Isaiah 14 offers a splendid depiction of the king of Babylon arriving in the underworld to join the erstwhile noble shades who are there already. In a passage worthy of Homer, he is grimly informed that things are very different down there.
        f. Job
            i. Remember, O God, that my life is but a breath;
            ii. my eyes will never see happiness again.
            iii. The eye that now sees me will see me no longer;
            iv. you will look for me, but I will be no more.
            v. As a cloud vanishes and is gone,
            vi. so one who goes down to the grave does not return.
            vii. He will never come to his house again;
            viii. his place will know him no more.
            ix. But a man dies and is laid low;

x. he breathes his last and is no more.
xi. As the water of a lake dries up
xii. or a riverbed becomes parched and dry,
xiii. so he lies down and does not rise;
xiv. till the heavens are no more, people will not awake
xv. or be roused from their sleep.

4. A cursory reading of Genesis 1—3 suggests that while humanity was not created with immortality, they were made for immortality, to know God and to enjoy him forever, to be his priest-kings over creation, and to rule with God over his world. Though death in some form seems to have been present in the world in the natural cycles of the animal and vegetable kingdoms, Death as we now know it, felt as shameful and unnatural, is presented as an alien and tyrannical intrusion into the world, entering through the lie of the 'serpent'. This, the story insists, was not the way it was supposed to be.
    a. So if death is nothing, it is no match for the God who makes things from nothing. The dead might be asleep; they might be almost nothing at all; but hope lived on within the covenant, in which YHWH had promised to be the God of the living, not of the dead.
5. Ps 49.14-15
    a. Their forms will decay in the grave,
    b. far from their princely mansions.
    c. But God will redeem me from the realm of the dead;
    d. he will surely take me to himself.
    e. Where we find a glimmer of hope like this, it is based not on anything in the human make-up like an 'immortal soul', but on YHWH and him alone. Indeed, YHWH is the substance of the hope, not merely the ground: he himself is the 'portion', that is, the inheritance, of the righteous, devout Israelite. When this strong faith in YHWH as the creator, the life-giver, the God of ultimate justice, met the apparent contradiction of the injustices and sufferings of life, there was at that point, as we have seen, a chance of fresh belief springing up. Thus, if YHWH was the inheritance of his people, and if his love and faithfulness were as strong as Israel's traditions made out, then there was no ultimate bar to seeing death itself as a beaten foe. That, of course, was what several key texts went on to assert.

iii. The constant factor, throughout the types of belief we have surveyed, is Israel's God himself. The vision of YHWH's creation and covenant; his promises and his faithfulness to them; his purposes for Israel, not least his gift of the land; his power over all opposing forces, including finally death itself; his love for the world, for his human creatures, for Israel in particular, and especially for those who served him and followed in his way; his justice, because of which evil would

eventually be condemned and righteousness upheld—this vision of the creator and covenant God underlies the ancient belief in the national and territorial hope, the emerging belief that the relationship with YHWH would be unbreakable even by death, and the eventual belief that YHWH would raise the dead.

iv. Extra-Biblical
    1. Jews, it used to be said, believed in resurrection, while Greeks believed in immortality. Like most half-truths, this one is as misleading as it is informative, if not more so. If the Old Testament offers a spectrum of belief about life after death, the second-Temple period provides something more like an artist's palette: dozens of options, with different ways of describing similar positions and similar ways of describing different ones.
    2. Three Jesus's
        a. Jesus ben-Sirach ('Eccesiasticus') -- Remember that death does not tarry, and the decree of Hades has not been shown to you. Do good to friends before you die, and reach out and give to them as much as you can. Do not deprive yourself of a day's enjoyment; do not let your share of desired good pass by you. Will you not leave the fruit of your labors to another, and what you acquired by toil to be divided by lot? Give, and take, and indulge yourself, because in Hades one cannot look for luxury. All living beings become old like a garment, for the decree from of old is, 'You must die!'
        b. Jesus ben-Phameis (Egyptian Diasporan Jew) -- Traveller, my name is Jesus, and my father's name is Phameis; when descending into Hades I was 60 years of age. All of you should weep together for this man, who went at once at the hiding place of ages, to abide there in the dark.
        c. Jesus of Nazareth -- The hour is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and will come out—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.
    3. Moving from pessimism to Platonism, many Jews assimilated to Hellenistic culture, and absorbed the belief in the immortality of the soul. The great first-century Jewish exponent of a thoroughgoing Hellenistic viewpoint was the Alexandrian philosopher Philo. His subtle and fascinating writings contain much food for thought on this, but it is beyond controversy that he taught the immortality of the soul rather than the resurrection of the dead. Philo is unambiguously dualistic in his thought: for him, the soul is immortal, or more accurately, the soul can be divided into several parts, one of which is immortal.
    4. What we can say with some degree of confidence is that when Jews in this period really did believe in 'resurrection', it had two basic meanings: (1) the

restoration of Israel ('resurrection' as metaphor, denoting socio-political events and investing them with the significance that this would be an act of new creation, of covenant renewal); and (2) the reconstitution of dead human bodies into new bodily life ('resurrection' as literal, denoting actual re-embodiment). Importantly, the two go together: resurrection was about the restoration of Israel on the one hand and the newly embodied life of all YHWH's people on the other. This act of re-creation was the great event that would bring the 'present age' to a close and usher in the 'age to come'. All of this was premised on the twin belief in YHWH as both the creator and the God of justice. Without the goodness of creation, divine justice might remake humans in some quite different way. Without justice, the sorrows of the present creation would be unrelieved. Creation and justice go together. The martyrs would be raised; Israel as a whole would be vindicated.

f. This admittedly long survey of Greco-Roman and Jewish views of the afterlife is a vital backdrop for understanding the New Testament witness to resurrection. It allows us to situate in the story of scripture the words of Jesus that the 'Son of Man . . . must be killed and after three days rise again', to note the radical claim of Jesus in John's gospel that 'I am the resurrection and the life', to understand the significance of Paul's terse words that Jesus 'was raised for our justification', and to grasp the meaning of John the Seer's vision of the risen and exalted Jesus as saying, 'I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.'
    i. When we grasp the background materials, whether about 'Hades' in Homer or about the philosophies of Plato and Philo, we see how the New Testament authors are offering a different narrative about God, God's purposes for this world, the restoration of Israel, and the hope of humanity. 'Resurrection' always had to do with physical bodies, never with a disembodied 'life after death'. And the only group of people among whom we have clear evidence of this belief in the first century are the Jews.
    ii. We sometimes talk about 'the afterlife', but since 'resurrection' means a new bodily life after a period of being bodily dead we should perhaps call it 'the after-afterlife'.
g. We need to be aware of the fears, hopes, and dreams about death and afterlife that swirl around in our culture, so that we can meaningfully address them with the good news about how God the father
    i. 'in his great mercy . . . has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade'.

13. The Story of Easter according to the Apostle Paul (very abbreviated)

a. CHAPTER AT A GLANCE -- This chapter looks at the New Testament witness to Jesus' resurrection, majoring on Paul, to show its historical credibility and the theological meaning that was attributed to it. By the end of this chapter you should be able to:
   i. describe Paul's testimony about the resurrection of Jesus;
   ii. understand how Paul associates Jesus' resurrection with the future resurrection of believers;
   iii. grasp some of the critical issues about the resurrection such as the resurrection of the body in 1 Corinthians 15;
   iv. identify the importance of resurrection for Paul's theology as a whole.

b. Importantly, they didn't claim to have seen Jesus' ghost (though they knew all about such things). Nor did they say they had seen him transformed into an angel, or seen a vision of him resting in the bosom of Abraham, or scooped up to heaven in a chariot of fire. Jesus' followers believed that the God of Israel had raised Jesus from the dead. Jesus had been bodily resurrected. What exactly did they mean by this, and why did they say it?

c. Paul is an important witness to Jesus' resurrection, in terms of:
   i. the origin of belief in Jesus' resurrection among Jesus' own circle of disciples;
   ii. Paul's testimony to his own encounter with the risen Jesus;
   iii. how resurrection, something marginal in Judaism, became central in Christianity;
   iv. how 'resurrection' as a metaphor for Israel's socio-political restoration was deployed as a metaphor for participation in the Messiah's life-giving power.
   v. In addition, Paul's letters contain early traditions, almost creed-like fragments, that affirm two basic events: Jesus died and rose. Paul expounds this tradition frequently when explaining its pastoral and missional implications and warding off confusions. He is in fact our <u>most important early source for Jesus' resurrection</u> and what it meant to his first followers. <u>Paul was, after all, writing in the 40s and 50s</u>, when (according to most scholars) the four gospels had not yet been produced, though no doubt many traditions about Jesus were circulating.

d. 1 and 2 Thessalonians

e. Philippians

f. Ephesians and Colossians

g. ROMANS
   i. Paul's letter to the Romans is suffused with resurrection. Squeeze this letter at any point, and resurrection spills out; hold it up to the light, and you can see Easter sparkling all the way through. If Romans had not been hailed as the great epistle of justification by faith, it might easily have come to be known as the chief letter of resurrection.

h. INTERLUDE
   i. If we can offer an interim report about Paul on Jesus' resurrection, prior to launching into 1 Corinthians 15, we have to say that for Paul, the resurrection of the

crucified Jesus of Nazareth is the heart of the gospel. It is the object of faith, the ground of justification, the basis for obedient Christian living, the motivation for unity, and, not least, the challenge to the principalities and powers. Moreover, there can be no question that when Paul speaks of resurrection in all these ways it is the bodily resurrection of Jesus he has in mind.

ii. When Paul wants to ground his theological arguments and baptismal metaphors of new life on bedrock, it is to the literal, bodily resurrection that he returns. Something has happened as a result of which the cosmos itself is a different place. And when people are brought into that newness through baptism and faith they, too, become different people.

i. 1 Corinthians
   i. Chapter 15 -- Paul responds critically to the news that some of the Corinthians were denying the very possibility of resurrection.
   ii. To claim 'resurrection' while not caring if there was a body in the tomb would be self-contradictory. The phrase anastasis ek nekrōn, 'resurrection from the dead', literally means the 'standing up of dead corpses'.
   iii. NTW article – "I once heard a funeral sermon in which the preacher said, "As we trust that Jesus died and was raised to heaven, so we trust that our beloved friend has now died and has been raised to heaven." That's not the point. Easter is not Jesus getting to heaven when he died. Easter is Jesus' newly embodied life launching God's new creation through the water of death. And that's why, from the very earliest Christian sources that we possess, Christian baptism is linked not just to Jesus' own baptism, not just to the Exodus and to the first creation, but to Jesus' own death and resurrection."
   iv. "So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body [sōma psychikon], there is also a spiritual body [sōma pneumatikon]."
      1. Debate surrounds the last of the contrasts, on how best to translate and understand a psychikon body and a pneumatikon body. Many translations render these in a very unhelpful way, for instance as 'physical body' and 'spiritual body', which to modern ears sounds as though, whatever the latter body may be, it will not be 'physical' in our sense. But there are two problems here. First, the word psychikon certainly doesn't mean 'physical' in our sense; it comes from psyche, normally translated 'soul', referring to human interiority. So, whatever the contrast Paul is drawing, it can't be the one to which our minds easily jump. Second, Greek adjectives ending with the-ikos suffix normally tell you, not what something is composed of, but what it is animated by. If people had remembered this, a lot of confusion would have been eliminated. Paul is contrasting a body animated by a soul, a natural life-

force, with a body animated by the spirit, God's divinely imparted vitalizing power. The point is that in both cases it is still a 'body', something which in our terms we would call 'physical', even if in the case of the latter body it will be what we might call 'transformed physicality'. The Jerusalem Bible (JB) gives a fairly good translation of verse 44: 'when it is sown it embodies the soul, when it is raised it embodies the spirit. If the soul has its own embodiment, so does the spirit have its own embodiment.' Thus, faced with the question, 'What sort of body will the dead have when they are raised?', Paul answers that they will have a body animated by, enlivened by, the spirit of the one true God.

v. PAUL: THEOLOGIAN OF THE RISEN LORD

1. Even from this brief and selective survey we can see that Paul's beliefs about resurrection belong firmly within a Jewish worldview: he believed that Israel's God, being both the creator of the world and the God of justice, had raised Jesus to new bodily life, thereby confirming him as Messiah and lord, and that he would likewise raise from the dead all the Messiah's people. This would be achieved through the spirit, who was already at work in them so that their own work would be genuinely part of the already-begun new creation.
2. This makes sense, to repeat, within the Jewish world of the day, rather than in any corner of the non-Jewish world.28 At the same time, Paul believed two things which are only comprehensible as mutations within the Jewish worldview. First, he believed that 'the resurrection' had, as it were, split into two: the resurrection of the Messiah in the first place, and then, at his 'parousia', the resurrection of all his people. Second, he believed, and articulated in considerable detail, that the resurrection would not only be bodily, but that it would also involve transformation into imperishability and immortality.

APPENDIX I

Video Notes

0. NTiiW v00 – **EXCELLENT OVERVIEW** OF BOOK. 13 Minutes. Here are some nuggets:

a. 2:20 – Why should anyone be interested in the New Testament?
    i. An explosive book
    ii. 3:15 – Jesus the place where Heaven and Earth came together.
    iii. 4:16 – Matters because Jesus matters.
b. 5:00 – We have to know what was going on as the NT was being written.
    i. 5:29 – Danger! We assume NT people are the same as us.
    ii. 6:00 – Armies in and out of Jerusalem
    iii. 6:20 – Unless you know that story, you're not in a position to
    iv. 6:40 – Something NEW is happening →6:49
c. 7:15 – Must understand the Greco-Roman world
    i. First century Judaism. Anachronistic assumptions.
    ii. 7:45 – What did Jesus teach about himself. Kingdom at hand?
d. 8:15 – Resurrection. Did not mean the same to them as to most today.
    i. Not just "life after death." -- 9:05

1. NTiiW v01 – 24 minutes "Beginning Study of the New Testament"
    a. 00:19 – Own many sorts of books.
        i. History, short stories, plays, poetry, biographies
        ii. Also atlases, dictionaries, how to play golf, car maintenance, gardening
        iii. 2:05 – How does the NT fit? For some people, like car maintenance, or an atlas. ("Ultimate Authority")
    b. 2:50 – NT doesn't look like that kind of book
        i. 3:30 – Live under authority of NT
        ii. 4:00 – Part of a play, the whole bible, creation, covenant, spoiled and restored, comes in to land in the NT COME UP ON STAGE Your story, my story. –4:55
    c. 5:40 – The larger whole should be our consideration
        i. 6:06 – How do we find out own parts to play them?
        ii. 6:40 – Must learn to study for all we're with – Hearts, minds, strength
    d. 7:30 – Early Christians taught people to read. NT for Everyone.
        i. Seen as educational institution instead of a "religion."
        ii. 8:30 – Christians developed a new kind of codex.
    e. 9:00 – The reason there is a NT is because of Jesus Himself.
    f. 10:00 – Most early Christians not from Jewish world. Messianic references had to be explained to them. Four gospels. Letters. Vision.
        i. WELCOME TO THE NT
    g. 11:00 – Two things happening when read NT
        i. Drawn into a life of WORSHIP and prayer. Jesus is central.
            1. What really counts? THE WHOLE STORY. GOD'S STORY.
            2. 13:50 – Study is VITAL
                a. Especially the PLAY? What part are we called to play in it. → 14:15
        ii. 15:42 – NT equips us for MISSION
    h. 15:53 – NT not there SIMPLY to tell us "how to get to heaven." Not at all

    i. Not a railway timetable.
    ii. But a story for how to launch transformation → 16:50
i. 17:16 – As we get to know the first Christians, we find ourselves called and equipped. Manual of Worship and Mission.
j. 18:50 – God's Purposes for the world can be misunderstood. It happened in First Century, and it has happened over and over again. STUDY IS VITAL. Every generation. Every part of the church needs to understand its part in the story.
k. 19:27 – ERIC BIRD. Dodd, could you reproduce NT Greek if all NT was lost. "It's only a little book." It's a strange and powerful little book. It has shaped Western civilization more than any other book in the world.
l. 21:20 – What IS the NT? Religion, theology, myth, divine revelation, etc., etc. History/Literature/Theology
m. Three questions:
    i. How did Christianity begin, and take the shape it did?
    ii. What is the world view in the text?
    iii. What does Christianity begin, and… does it make sense?

2. NTiiW v02 – New Testament as History (18 minutes)
    a. We claim that God has revealed Himself in the life and death of Jesus Christ. God has acted within what we call "History." To know God, we need to understand history.
    b. 1:07 – Some object to spending huge amounts of time inspecting foundations when there is work to be done. Some turn their noses up. Some think the original meanings are not relevant. Some think "They were primitive." If you can make the text mean anything you want now, then chaos has come.
    c. NTiiW_v02_0006-0158_HistoryIntro.mp4
    d. 2:03 – Some object that historical knowledge is partial.
    e. 2:33 – The reason we study the history of the NT is that Jesus and disciples constitute normality.
    f. 3:16 – From early times, Christians have believed their lives need to be in conformity with the NT.
    g. 3:40 – Sola Scriptura, Protestant Reformation, toss out traditions.
        i. Reading the NT is where the Christian must start.
    h. NTiiW_v02_0334-0433_ImportanceOfNT.mp4
    i. 4:37 – Critical Realism, approach to reading the NT as history.
    j. 5:58 – Affected by the cultural moves of our own world
        i. Modernity – Transparent window
        ii. Post-Modernity – Window is a mirror; see your own reflection.
        iii. Critical Realism – Windows has a dark tint caused by gaps in knowledge and we see part of our own reflection, but insists there is something that we can see THROUGH the window..
        iv. Critical Realist says there is something to be found.

v. Jerusalem destroyed in AD 70.
vi. Jesus died on a Roman cross.
vii. We can believe in history, without having full possession of it.

k. NTiiW_v02_0555-0835_ModernityPostModernityCriticalRealism.mp4
l. 9:08 – Need interpretative framework, an hypothesis
    i. New scroll, new coin, etc., can force us to reconsider what we have understood.
    ii. What counts as justified hypothesis in history?
    iii. History is not a matter of psychology.
m. 10:30 – Why Roman needed stable Middle east – not psychology, but history – needed to protect the grain shipments from Egypt.
n. 10:40 – Why Herod was rebuilding the temple – not psychology, but history – an attempt to legitimate himself as the true king of the Jews.
o. 11:30 – Several more examples
p. 11:48 – This is then how history works… Historians attune to the issues of the day.
q. 12:30 – Story is key.
    i. Passover – "My father was a wondering Aramean, and he went down into Egypt with a few people…"
    ii. The Jews thought of themselves in Jesus's day as Exodous people.
r. 13:50 – Historians are story tellers
s. 14:00 – How does this relate to our study of NT?
    i. This group of Jews and non-Jews lived in a certain time, believed hope had been fulfilled, chose to tell this in a story. See this in the four gospels, the letters, and in the revelation of John.
t. NTiiW_v02_1356-1512_JewishHopeFulfilledInJesusStory.mp4
u. 15:24 – We are called to know the historical Jesus. Not derail into self-deception.
v. 15:59 – People in every age act based on their world view. Story, symbols, praxis, etc. Be aware of OUR OWN WORLD VIEW also.
w. 16:35 – Three implications
    i. Study of first century history is not an optional extra, but CRUCIAL.
    ii. There are complexities in "doing" history. Reflect on critical realism capabilities and limitations.
    iii. The past is a VERY DIFFERENT PLACE. Can't just go from Rochester to ancient Rome.
    iv. History means thinking into the minds of people who thought quite differently from ourselves.
x. 18:12 – If that's where God revealed Himself, that's where we need to go.

3. NTiiW v03 – New Testament as Literature (19 minutes)
    a. Bird
    b. 0:48 – What do we mean by "meaning," as in, "what is the meaning of that verse?"
    c. 1:01 – Meaning in Author, Text, or the Reader?

d. 1:15 – Authorial Intent
    i. Different language, different culture, understood universe differently
    ii. *** Share the A.I.M. of Bible study, by Mark Moore -- AIM_AuthorIntendedMeaning_Moore_1m25s
    iii. 2:30 -- Text can carry surplus meaning beyond the author's thoughts.
    iv. 3:45 – One way to get around this seeming disparity between Isaiah's intention and a Christian's theological interpretation is to differentiate between what a text 'meant' (that is, the empirical and descriptive analysis of a text) and what it 'means' (the creative and responsive appropriations of a text).
    v. 5:20 – Early Christian readers did not assume authorial intent, but read based on knowing Jesus Christ.
    vi. 6:35 – Meaning not restricted by Authorial Intent
e. 7:00 – Does the meaning then reside in the literary text. Task of interpretation is to adopt the proper reading strategies. Treat text as self-enclosed entity.
    i. Narrative Criticism – Some say "read as story and not history." This is a problem.
        1. 11:34 – Text is historically referential.
    ii. 12:28 – Role of the Reader Meaning not in AIM or literature but the reader.
        1. Meaning is not retrieved from the text, but created by readers using the text. Determined by socialized context of the reader.
        2. 13:57 – One must play with the text for oneself. No "right" or "wrong" reading – only your reading and my reading.
        3. 14:42 – Multiple issues with this approach.
        4. 15:25 – If texts have no fixed meaning, they are only a mirror of the reader.
    iii. 16:11 -- Fusing the Horizons of Author, Text, and Reader
        1. All three components are involved. It appears that authors *intend*, texts *signify*, and readers *understand*; and that 'meaning' occurs in the fusion of all three.
        2. 17:00 – Hermeneutic of Love

4. NTiiW v04 – New Testament as Theology (14 minutes)

a. Wright
b. 00:35 – Focus on what the first Christians believed? Is the historical Jesus part of New Testament Theology? Corpus by corpus? Deal with books in order written? Find a "Canon within the Canon?" Elevate one theme and marginalize others?
c. NTiiW_v04x_0130-0345_UltimateAuthorityGodNotText
d. 1:45 – If NT is authoritative, its authority lies in theology. But the ULTIMATE authority is God, who revealed Himself in Jesus, who holds all authority – not in the books His disciples wrote.
e. 2:51 – The church's perceived task is to offer the world the message of God. Its job is to know it and live by it and make it known.

f. 3:54 – God promised to put the world to rights. Disciples thought they were responsible for following through, until Jesus returned to finish it.
g. 4:40 – NT is both history and theology. Challenge is to do justice to both.
    i. If ignore history, you can insert other themes.
    ii. NTiiW_v04x_0438-0712_MustUnderstandHistoryAndTheology
    iii. 5:17 – NT was written for us, but not to us.
    iv. 5:32 – Galatians 2:11, Paul confronted Peter as to whom to eat with. If approach without realizing the context of food taboos, Jewish debates, etc. To discern theological claims, you must understand history. Theology needs history.
h. 7:15 – NT study is two-pronged: theology and historical.
i. 8:17 – Christian reader of NT is committed to these two tasks.
j. 10:00 – To the Christian reader… NT carries prescriptive force for mission and life of church.
k. 11:28 – The NT can be seen as the first scene of the final act of God's great narrative. Early Christians saw themselves within a much longer story.
    i. 12:09 – Fifth Act: New Creation
    ii. 12:30 – The actors have to understand the "story so far." We, the actors, must understand the story we are in.
l. 13:32 – Rooted in history, we are shaped by theology… as our lives effect real transformation, in real history.

5. NTiiW v05 – Jewish History from Persia to Rome

a. 0:00 -- Three biggest events?
    i. Alexander the Great – Greek culture
    ii. Antiochus Epiphanes (Syrian) – Desecrated Temple
        1. Maccabean Revolution – Hasmoneans
    iii. Romans – 63BC
    iv. 2:33 – They want their God to come back and enable them to flourish. Want their God to be KING
b. 3:02 – To understand NT must understand the Jews of the day
    i. Assyria Takes the Northern Tribes in 722 BC
    ii. Babylonians capture Jerusalem in 587 BC
    iii. New Persian king restores Jerusalem – 539 BC (Post-Exilic)
c. 5:22 – Antiochus Epiphanes and Maccabean Revolt – HUGE IMPACT
    i. Maccabean house established as royal for next century
d. 6:49 – Herod the Great
    i. Romans gave the title "King of the Jews" (local warlord)
    ii. Died
    iii. Jesus until 30 AD
e. 7:30 – Paul and Peter died
f. 8:00 – Roman/Jewish war – Temple destroyed in 70 AD, Masada in 73 AD

g. 8:19 – Judaism tried to reconstitute itself
h. 9:27 – Early Church starting to discover its mission

6. NTiiW v06 – Jewish Context of Early Church

a. 0:22 – 4th Century at Capernaum Synagogue (Greek word for "coming together")
   i. Jesus' home during public career
   ii. Herod/Philip territory boundary near
b. 1:32 – Rome had been there a year
   i. "Something is wrong." We have not been fully restored.
   ii. How would God's promises come true? Different approaches resulted in various movements and sects.
      1. 2:35 -- Revolutionary Groups
      2. 2:50 – Pharisees (pressure group, personal purity)
      3. 3:20 – Sadducees (aristocracy)
      4. 3:35 -- Essenes – Waiting for God to act (Dead Sea scrolls)
      5. Jesus began teaching in a place like this.
c. 4:08 – Jesus spoke about the Kingdom of God
   i. Jesus had a different approach →4:25
d. 4:29 – BIRD – Ancient Judaism and its Diversity
   i. 5:08 – Judaism not a "religion" like we use the word. More of a way of life.
   ii. 5:30 – Torah, Temple, Land, Calendar
   iii. 5:55 – Real core Jewish beliefs
      1. Monarchism and election, ONE GOD and ONE PEOPLE
   iv. 8:23 – Judaism 101
      1. Their God was the CREATOR God, not a local God
      2. He called Israel to be his special possession
      3. God would deliver Israel, and bring about a new Exodus, and a new World.

7. NTiiW v07 – Greco-Roman Context of Early Church

a. BIRD
b. 00:24 – World of Jesus was dominated by Greek culture
   i. Melbourne – Second largest Greek city in the world!!! (4th century BC)
   ii. Alexander created CITIES and TEMPLES, with Constitutions, etc., Philosophy
   iii. 2:00 – Spread of Hellenistic culture caused the Jews problems
      1. Some accepted the ideas gladly
      2. Others considered it pagan, and fundamentally against God
      3. 3:00 – First Christians had similar issues
   iv. WRIGHT
   v. 3:24 – By Jesus' birth, whole of known world controlled by Rome
      1. Rome city-state continued gradual expansion
      2. Greek culture, if not rule, seeped into the culture

3. Rome was more brutal/direct
4. But Rome tried to be ~democratic, two consuls, etc.
5. Julius Caesar assassinated
6. Octavian emperor brought "peace" "Son of deified Julius"

vi. 6:50 – Roman symbols all over the world, colonies, "We want this to be like, look like, feel like… Rome!"
   1. 7:25 – Paul declared Jesus was Son of God. This was IN YOUR FACE to the Roman system.

vii. BIRD – Greco-Roman World
   1. 8:33 – Ancient world did not have "religion" as we normally use the word.
   2. Not even a word in the ancient world which means what we mean today.
   3. Rome – scruples "duty to gods"
   4. Greek – piety, worship – Practice of cult and ritual. NOT a web of beliefs or world view
   5. Religion in ancient world – nothing to do with after life, but deeply connected with economy, politics, etc.
   6. 10:30 – How obtain peace from gods via cultic practices.

viii. BOTH – 11:04 –
   1. Culturally Greek, Politically Roman – Challenges?
   2. Wright – Christianity did not look like a "religion," but they did some things which bound them with Jesus (baptism, Lord's supper). More like ancient philosophers. Would have clashed with other philosophers of the day. In the Roman empire there was GREAT suspicion of people meeting behind closed doors. SUBVERSIVE!
   3. 12:41 – Be loyal to Jesus, but do so in such a way that shows this is a NEW way of "being human" – not retreat from the world, but transform the world.
   4.

APPENDIX II

RVL-Recommended Reading Material

- Reading the Bible Contextually: Introductory Sources
- Lois Tverbert
    - Sitting at the Feet of Rabbi Jesus
    - Walking in the Dust of Rabbi Jesus
    - Reading the Bible with Rabbi Jesus
- Sandra Richter
    - Epic of Edin
- Marvin Wilson
    - Exploring Our Hebraic Heritage
    - Our Father Abraham