



The baby Jesus is born to Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem. God tells the shepherds and wise men that this is his promised Saviour-King.

For 300 years the people of Israel had suffered under foreign rule — first the Greeks, who brought with them their own culture and civilization, then Egyptian and Syrian rulers, and last of all the Romans, who took control in 63 BC.

God's people longed for a saviour. Although there had been guerrillas and resistance movements, none had set them free. When would God keep his promise to deliver them, as the prophets had foretold?

Do they still send Christians to the lions?

Only on Sunday School trips.

King Herod dies: his three sons divide the country among them.

John the Baptist announces the coming of the one God promised to send. John is beheaded by Herod Antipas.

Jesus begins to preach and teach. In three years that change the world he announces God's kingdom and demonstrates God's power in healing and forgiveness: people can be 'made new'.

Jesus goes to Jerusalem to face death. He is tried on a charge of claiming to be God, and crucified. Three days later the grave is empty and he appears, alive, to many of his followers.

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THE WORLD OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

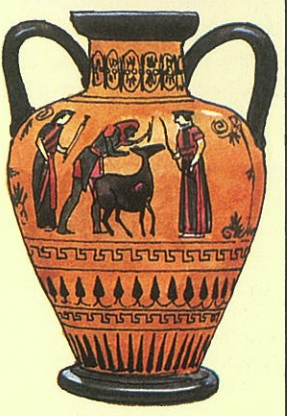
The first-century world was ready for the good news about Jesus.

The Greek Empire, established by Alexander the Great, spread civilization throughout the known world. Greek became the common language, crossing national boundaries.

After years of war, the Romans took over the empire. Caesar Augustus brought peace and harsh, but fair, government to the whole region. The Romans were hard-working, well-organized people. They built a fine network of roads throughout their conquered territories. People — and ideas — could now travel freely and quickly.

And the time was ripe for new ideas. Greek and Roman religion had become empty and formal. The Jews were keenly awaiting the Messiah and liberation from the Romans.

Groups of Jews scattered throughout the empire served as natural starting-places for the first Christian preachers. They made good use of the fine new Roman roads and stable, peaceful conditions to spread the faith. And their writings — in everyday Greek — were soon being read in every corner of the world.



Beautiful Greek vases were often painted with scenes from everyday life.

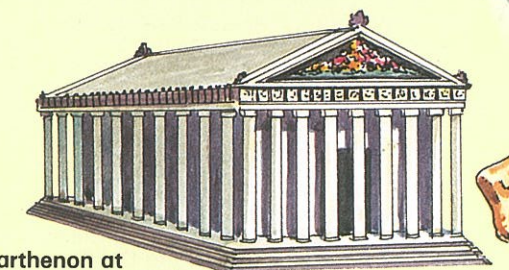


Roman soldiers were stationed throughout the empire, to keep the peace.

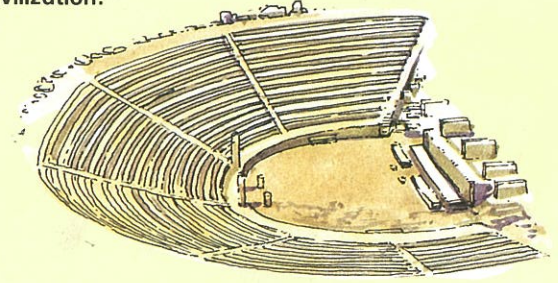
The Romans built their roads to last, using layers of gravel and stones. Many still exist today.



The Greeks loved athletic competition. The Olympic Games began as a festival in honour of the god Zeus.



The Parthenon at Athens (reconstructed here) is a reminder of the greatness of Greek civilization.



Most big cities in New Testament times had a theatre, one of the legacies of Greek culture.

- The men who ruled in Rome in New Testament times:
- Caesar Augustus
27-4 AD
was Emperor when Jesus was born
 - Tiberius
AD 14-37
was Emperor when Jesus was crucified
 - Caligula
AD 37-41
 - Claudius
AD 41-54
was Emperor at the time of Paul's journeys
 - Nero
AD 54-68
had many Christians killed
 - Galba/Otho/Vitellius
AD 68-69
 - Vespasian
AD 69-79
 - Titus
AD 79-81
 - Domitian
AD 81-96
persecuted the church