**Palestine Under Roman Rule**

Life for the Jewish people at the time was challenging, and perhaps the greatest threat

to the way of life of the Jewish people was Roman presence in their land.

The Romans arrived to take over Palestine in 63 BCE (63 years before Jesus was born).

It was always Roman policy to appoint native (local) leaders to the new lands that they

conquered. Palestine was no different and so King Herod the Great was made the King

of the Jews. Eventually Herod died and each one of his sons was given a piece of the land to rule over.

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| **Area** | **Leader** |
| Judea and Samaria | Ruler: Herod Archelaus.  Tyrannical Ruler who caused great fear  among his people. His subjects pleaded  with Rome to remove him and he was  removed. Instead the Romans appointed a  new Roman leader and this marked the  beginning of direct Roman Rule in the  area. |
| Judea | This province was ruled by men called  “Prefects.” These Prefects were appointed  by the Roman Governor of a given region.  At the time of Jesus life the Governor of Judea was Pontius Pilate. |
| Galilee | Ruler: Another son of King Herod the  Great, Herod Antipas. He was a puppet who took orders  directly from Rome and collected taxes.  Galilee was known as an area of huge  political unrest and turmoil. Large religious  groups were frowned upon and thought of as  suspicious. |

Rome threatened the very survival of the Jewish people in a number

of ways:

1. Rome was **polytheistic** (belief in many gods) and so this was a direct threat to the monotheistic (one God) beliefs of the Jews at the time. Any threat to their monotheism had a profound effect on their political, religious and social life at the time.

2. Rome being polytheistic - the Emperor was seen as a divine person - almost seen as

Godlike. This notion was completely alien to the Jewish people - they only had one

allegiance and that was to Yahweh!

3. The ideas of land and religion were very closely linked for the Jewish people. Their

land was a sign of their covenant with God. They believed that their land and

everything that it produced belonged to God and to give this to the Romans through

taxes was seen as being unfaithful to God.

4. They felt that they could not give to Caesar what was rightfully God’s. They felt

that God was their king and their ruler. Not Caesar.

5. Palestine in the 1st Century was a place of great unrest and turmoil. It had already

been invaded by the Persians, then the Greeks and now the Romans had arrived. The

place was reeling from years of Occupation. Once again it was under foreign rule

and the Jewish people’s identity as God’s chosen people was once again under

attack. At this time different groups began to emerge offering different ways of

holding on to what they felt was important.