

YESHUA DISCUSSION GUIDE
PROGRAM 1: “The Land and The Promise”
Part One

INTRODUCTION

The story of Jesus does not begin with His birth. Biblically speaking it begins “before the foundation of the world” in the mind and heart of God (Eph. 1:3-4) . Historically it finds its beginning in the history of God’s chosen people, Israel. The first two films in this series document the geographical, cultural, and political background in Old Testament narratives and thus prepare for the story of Jesus.

This first film introduces the Holy Land showing the viewer Jericho, that most ancient of cities, and then, sweeps across the desert with Amorite hoards to Ur of the Chaldees. The surprise is how advanced a civilization this ancient city-state had developed by the time of Abraham. Its destruction and the fall of its gods serves as the background for Abraham’s response to the living God’s call.

Then condensing centuries, the film ushers the viewer into the magnificent land of Egypt where Rameses II accomplished astounding building feats using the Israelites as slaves until

God raised up Moses as a deliverer for His people.

The “land of promise” was not discovered accidentally by wandering Hebrews but was a gift, part of the covenant-promise God made to Abraham. It indicated that God was at work in a specific place and in the history of a specific nation, unfolding His kingdom until it would be fulfilled in Jesus, the Messiah. The God of the Bible entered into the lives of people and changed them. Abraham and Moses are cases in point.

PROGRAM 1: “The Land And The Promise”
Part Two

INTRODUCTION

“The Land the The Promise” Part Two begins with the Israelites taking possession of the land promised to Abraham, their conquest of Jericho and their deportation, and exile to Babylon centuries later. A remnant of the nation

returned to the promise land only to become subject to the Greeks and, finally, the Romans who made Israel a puppet state and put on the throne a half-Jew named Herod.

Herod was a master builder and politician who eventually secured for Israel all the land that had been given to it in the beginning. To that land and ruler in the first century came astrologers from the east asking, "Where is the one born king of the Jews?"

The promise given to Abraham in the covenant (Gen. 19:1-5) was fulfilled in the birth of Jesus. All the history in between led to that fulfillment and demonstrated God's faithfulness. Kingdoms rose and fell but the kingdom of God endured and His purposes were achieved. 3

NOTES:

Jericho – Salt created population and center of commerce

UR of Chaldees – Ziggurat to Moon God; technical skills at least 2000 years in advance of its times: Wheels, the sail, writing, mathematics (geometry, square roots, cubic roots)

Schools

Powerful army, but defeated by Amorites

Abraham led by God to wander with his sheep, goats, cattle, silver, gold and dependents – no land – dependent upon Amorites for hospitality – led by God to Jordan River valley – God's promise to Abraham – Abraham's descendents go to Egypt and become slaves – 400 years pass and Amorites being driven out of Israel making God's promise possible as Hebrews were able to return once more – in Egypt concept of eternal life introduced through Scarabs; Ramses the Great; Exodus; 500 BCE Roman conquest of Israel; 25 BCE

Israel at time of Jesus' birth: Herod built harbor and city of Caesarea in honor of Caesar Augustus and in so doing inflamed Jewish subjects; Temple to God of

Israel built in Jerusalem on 36 acres by Herod; Court of Women where Mary would be purified after birth of Jesus occupied an area comparable to 1 ½ football fields; Temple built in three years – blocks much larger than those in pyramids; Hippodrome: gladiators and animals set upon and killed Jewish criminals for sport which inflamed the Jews who tried to assassinate Herod

Herod considered himself to be the personification of God's promise to Abraham --- as many descendants as stars in the sky –news of the birth of Jesus alarmed him and set the wheels of slaughter into motion

PROGRAM 2: "The Promise Takes Root"

Part One

INTRODUCTION

This video deals with events immediately surrounding the birth of Christ. It begins with the angel's visit to Mary in Nazareth at a location now marked by the magnificent Church of the Annunciation, built near the spring where young Mary once drew water.

When Caesar Augustus issued his decree "that all the world should be taxed," (Luke 20:1) Mary and Joseph were forced to travel to Bethlehem where another ornate shrine now marks the traditional location of Jesus' birth, a simple event celebrated ever since in sacred song and art.

The film concludes with a discussion of the possible nature of the star of Bethlehem and the Jewish rites of circumcision and presentation which were observed in the earliest days of our Lord's life on earth.

Our annual celebrations of Christmas have made the events of our Lord's birth familiar to everyone, even people outside the church. It is Important, however, to see "the way it really was" and to reassess our understanding of the Christmas story and our ways of celebrating it in the light of that reality. The central Message of Christmas is that in the coming of Jesus Christ God kept His promises. Jesus was born for all of us. The various ways in which people remember and celebrate His birth indicate how far-reaching that event truly was in its significance.

PROGRAM 2: "The Promise Takes Root"

Part Two

INTRODUCTION

This video provides background on the childhood and youth of Jesus.

The murderous intentions of King Herod force the holy family to flee to Egypt, perhaps to Alexandria, a teeming center of Greek culture, Roman influence, and Jewish emigration. Following the death and elaborate burial of Herod, the family returns to Nazareth where Jesus grows up in the home and under the religious influence of the carpenter Joseph.

Since the Bible tells us very little about the childhood and youth of Jesus, the film offers background information on the culture of that time on the basis of which we can make assumptions about Jesus' early years. This background involves the political realities of the distant rule of Rome and the rule of murderous Herod close to home.

The film also describes the foreign environment in which Jesus might have lived and the village life of Nazareth where we know He lived as a child in a carpenter's home. The religious influence of the local synagogue certainly figured prominently in Jesus' development.

NOTES:

Birth story; Church of the Nativity; Magi (scientists); Star (7 BCE – conjunction of Saturn and Neptune three times); Herod's edict to kill boy children two and under in 5BCE coincides with this date and celestial event

Mary went to Temple, Court of Women – Simeon lifted Jesus from her arms and told her the child was God's chosen one

Brutality of Herod – death of his favorite wife on a suspicion; killed three of his own sons; died of cancer and syphilis – mausoleum

Holy family could return to hills of Nazareth above Jezreel Valley; Nazareth in midst of oak tree forests; carpenter: Justin Martyr once wrote that Joseph and Jesus were agricultural carpenters producing and repairing implements for farming such as plowshares and yokes for oxen; lived in simple homes; coming of age in Bar Mitzvah (13 today; 12 in Jesus' day); when Jesus went to Temple with his parents at age 12, he was considered to be a man already.

PROGRAM 3: "The Voice and the Light"

Part One

INTRODUCTION

We know him as John the Baptist (or Baptizer). His was "the voice crying in the wilderness," announcing the coming of the Messiah. John remains somewhat a mystery. We know from Luke that his father was a temple priest and that John grew up in the desert. Tradition tells us he was orphaned at an early age. This segment of the film shows us the desert landscape and caves near the ruins of Qumran, where John may have been raised in a religious community. From here John may have gone to the river Jordan to baptize Jesus and to herald Him as the Messiah.

This episode also tells the fascinating story of the 1947 discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, most ancient of all Biblical manuscripts. Almost 2,000 years earlier; following the destruction of Jerusalem, the Scrolls had been hidden in caves by members of the Qumran community as they fled from Roman soldiers. Included among them is a complete manuscript of the book of Isaiah. The promises of Isaiah may have inspired John the Baptizer. Christians today believe they pointed to Jesus.

After Jesus had been baptized by John in the River Jordan and the voice from heaven had identified Him as the "Son of God," Jesus went into the wilderness to be tempted. From there He began a ministry of preaching, healing and teaching.

John the Baptizer pointed to Jesus the Messiah. While John's preaching ministry alongside the Jordan had value in itself, it seems His whole life was a preparation for His one-sentence proclamation, "Behold the Lamb of God." Even more important is the Father's declaration which followed, "This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased." "Son of God" is a title which gives us clues to the mystery concerning the person of Jesus. In Jesus, God draws near to His people. In Jesus, God confronts His people with His rule.¹²

PROGRAM 3: "The Voice And The Light"

Part Two

INTRODUCTION

Capernaum, a city on the Sea of Galilee, became the center for Jesus' public ministry. Here He called His first disciples; the fishermen Peter, Andrew, James, and John. Near here He performed His first miracle, changing water to wine at the wedding in Cana. Here, at the house of Peter and Andrew, He healed the sick and forgave the sins of the paralyzed man. The film shows us where these events took place. We also see people who live today according to those same ancient patterns of life.

As Jesus traveled with His disciples, He cured a leper, restored sight to a blind man, and incurred the wrath of the religious authorities by violating their understanding of the Sabbath. In the final segment of this film we hear how Jesus spoke to the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. In her response we learn of an unqualified faith that Jesus is Savior of the world.

After Jesus cured a man suffering from leprosy, He warned him, "Don't tell anyone about this (Matt. 8:4). The need for that warning became apparent in the growing antagonism toward Jesus by the authorities after Jesus forgave a paralyzed man and restored sight to a blind man On the Sabbath. But there were other reactions to the early ministry of Jesus, too. Some religious people, like the Samaritan woman, responded in faith.

NOTES:

Chorazim (just north of Capernaum on north shore of Sea of Galilee) – visit today to see ruins

John the Baptizer – father: Temple priest, but probably orphaned at a young age and lived among Essene community at Qumran: favorite scroll – Isaiah: “Prepare the way of the Lord” – called to proclaim Messiah – baptism of Jesus ---Essenes didn’t recognize Jesus as Messiah; twenty later fled Qumran hiding scrolls in caves discovered 2000 years later in 1947 just as UN was voting resolution to make Israel a Jewish state and the war with Arabs was erupting.

Isaiah scroll discovered was written only 500 years after the original – probably read by John; dance of Salome on Herod’s birthday (son of Herod the Great) led to death of John upon Jezebels’ prodding

Jesus’ ministry around the Sea of Galilee was based in Capernaum

Jesus healed Peter’s mother-in-law, cured the leper, gave sight to the blind man at the pool of Siloam

Sabbath observed in Jerusalem today: Jesus worked on Sabbath in curing people; Pharisee’s protests do not fit Jewish tradition today in which Sabbath regulations are broken if saves human life; Sabbath is time of rest so people can observe God’s word; Jesus claimed God as his father

Jesus in Samaria – traditional schism with Samaritans over Mt Gerizim and the second Temple there; after defeat of Jerusalem and exile of people there in Babylonia Exile, Samaritans continued to worship at Mt Gerizim

Jacob’s Well at Sychar: Samaritan woman – living water; many Samaritans believed Jesus was Messiah and Savior of the world

PROGRAM 4: "The Bread of Sacrifice"

Part One

INTRODUCTION

This video traces the events of the last weeks of Jesus' life. His reference to Himself as the "Bread of life" (John 6:35) and His followers' reactions to that image become understandable when put into the historical perspective of the ancient practice of human sacrifice.

Viewers also learn the circumstances surrounding the raising of Lazarus from the dead, and the significance of that event for the developing conflict between Jesus and the leaders of the people. The film concludes with a detailed look at the fulfillment in 70 A.D. of Jesus' prophecy about the destruction of Jerusalem.

PROGRAM 4: "The Bread of Sacrifice"

Part Two

INTRODUCTION

In this film, viewers are shown the events of Holy Week, including the cleansing of the temple, discussions with the Pharisees, and the incident with the woman caught in adultery. The film ends with a description of the events of Maundy Thursday, including the Last Supper and Jesus' arrest.

NOTES:

Unleavened bread – sacrifice; human sacrifice repugnant to first Christian Jews; sacrifices at Hazor – Deuteronomy: God's anger at human sacrifice; Coast of Africa – monoliths covering remains of infants sacrificed to Baal

Mt Moriah – Abraham tested – sacrifice of Isaac, his own; instead, animal sacrifice instituted to replace sacrifice of infants to Baal

Jesus was the Good Shepherd willing to die for his sheep; the True God was willing to sacrifice his own son to atone for our sins

Death of Lazarus – Bethany Church – Pharisees and maybe Essenes but NOT Sadducees, believed in resurrection (eternal life) – raising Lazareth from death upset Pharisees who feared Roman retribution

Parable of the Sower – Palm Branches: entrance into Jerusalem

Zealots in Galilean caves – revolt of 65 AD – Rome’s vengeance unleashed as Pilate had once feared – As Jesus entered Jerusalem, he wept, because he saw the coming revolt and its failure – Titus’ four legions stormed Temple -- daily crucifixions of 500 Jews a day and sacrifices in circuses

Jesus overturned tables of moneychangers and merchants in Temple

Jesus preached that over concern with money, food and clothing showed lack of faith and lack of trust in God; Jesus cited hypocrisy of religious leaders and said “destroy the Temple and in three days I will rebuild it – speaking of himself being crucified and resurrected

Last Supper: Not Passover, Essenes celebrated a day early so as to be out of step with traditional dates which they thought were corrupted

Eating while reclining on couches; meal of Passover – traditional Passover ending to meal versus Jesus ending at Last Supper

Gethsemane – Church of All Nations in the Garden of Gethsemane – Jesus prayed; disciples slept – Arrest of Jesus

PROGRAM 5: “Ripples of Darkness, Waves of Light”

Part One

INTRODUCTION

While many of the events in the life of Jesus are reported in only one of several of the Gospels, all four Gospels tell about Jesus’ suffering, crucifixion and death. The importance of those events is evident also in the Apostle’s Creed which mentions only three people by name: Jesus; Mary; and Pontius Pilate, the man who signed Jesus’ order of execution. “Ripples of Darkness, Waves of Light” tells the story of Pilate, the man who became famous not because of his success as a Roman politician but because of his brief encounter with Jesus of Nazareth.

In addition to what was known about Pontius Pilate from the Bible and Jewish historians, Dr. Paul L. Maier, author of *First Easter*, tells about new discoveries in secular sources regarding the Roman governor. The film also shows the involvement of Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin (The Jewish Council) in the trial and conviction of Jesus.

PROGRAM 5: “Ripples of Darkness, Waves of Light”

Part Two

INTRODUCTION

The final segment of “*Yeshua*” describes the events of Christ’s burial and resurrection from the dead. In this film Dr. Hoffmann explains the Jewish customs of burial at the time of Christ and also describes the precautions taken by those who killed Him to guarantee that no fake resurrection could be staged. The historical facts of the event are examined in an interview with Dr. Paul L. Maier, the author of *First Easter*.²³ The film also gives a detailed and balanced analysis of the Shroud of Turin. Through interviews with scientists and the recounting of the few known facts regarding the shroud, the film gives the viewers an opportunity to evaluate the possible relationship of the Shroud of Turin to the resurrection of Christ.

“*Yeshua*” concludes with the ascension of Christ into heaven with His great Commission to spread the Gospel throughout the world and His promise to be with those who believe in Him.

NOTES:

Roman Oppression=Darkness; Pontius Pilate thought his reign=Light

Caesarea=Roman capitol of Judea

Passover=chaotic for Pilate, feared uproar of tourism it produced; always there that week

Traditions of Passover – search for leavened bread

Caiaphas – arrest of Jesus; worried that uprising he might produce among populous would bring wrath of Rome upon them; also, threat to Jewish monotheism: a Son + a Father seemed blasphemy;

Trial, Sentence, Carrying the cross – Simon of Cyrene

Darkness came over the land

Joseph of Arimathea’s tomb – a member of Sanhedrin who asked Pilate for Jesus’ body

Shroud of Turin – testing in 1978 and more recently in 2002 – (quite a lot of info I found on Web)

Road to Emmaus

Ascension