

# SECTION 1

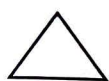
Lesson

1

## The Romans Will Come



### Study Words



*emperor*: (em' pər ər) ruler of a group or nation

*rebel*: (ri bel') fight to overthrow a government or ruling power

*Rome*: (rōm) capital of the Roman empire

The news spread fast. It spread far. A dead man in Bethany got up and walked out of his tomb. He had lain there four days. But when Jesus of Nazareth told him to come out, he came out. Many Jews who saw it happen now believed on Him.

The story stirred up great excitement among the Pharisees in Jerusalem. They gathered with the chief priests. "What can we do? That Man is doing many miracles. If we leave him alone, everyone will believe in Him. Then the Romans will come. They will take away our temple and nation." But why did the Pharisees fear the Romans?

Long before this, the Romans had conquered the land of Israel as well as many other countries. Now **Rome** was the most powerful nation in the world.

However, the Romans had not made slaves of the people they conquered. The

**emperor** lived in Rome, far away to the west across the Mediterranean Sea. It was very difficult for him to keep control of all the lands and people he had conquered.

He appointed kings and governors to live in Israel and rule the people. He hired tax collectors. He kept soldiers living there to enforce the Roman laws and keep order. But he allowed the Jews to live pretty much as they pleased. He wanted them to be satisfied. He knew if they were not content, they would **rebel**. Then he would have to transport his armies to the land of Israel and conquer the Jews all over again.

The kings and governors tried to keep the Jews happy. They let them worship God in the same way their forefathers had worshiped. King Herod had even built them a temple, larger and more splendid than the one built by Solomon. The Jews could

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celebrate their feast days. They had their synagogues where they could teach the Scriptures. They had their own Jewish leaders to enforce their own laws. But Rome still was the master. A strong master, and a cruel master if anyone caused trouble.

So the Jews had freedom to do many things, but they were not free. And they knew those freedoms could end in a day. If the Romans suspected them of trying to rebel, soldiers would immediately kill everyone who had part in it. And who knew what would happen to the rest of the people?

The Pharisees knew that long ago the Jews had been carried off to Babylon because their king had rebelled against the country which had conquered them. Those soldiers had broken down the wall of Jerusalem. They had burned the temple. No one wanted to risk having such a thing happen again.

Nevertheless, the Jews in Jesus' day did want to overthrow the Romans. They hated being ruled by Gentiles and paying the heavy taxes. They hated the Romans. Day and night they dreamed of having their own king and nation again. Yes, they did want to rebel, but they would have to plan it in secret.

However, they could not hope to break

free from the Romans unless they had a powerful leader. Many Jews believed they must wait for the promised Messiah to lead them. Some thought Jesus of Nazareth might be the Messiah. Certainly He had miraculous powers. But they soon learned that Jesus had no intention of fighting the Romans. And that time when the people tried to force Him to be king, He had slipped away from them. The Pharisees knew Jesus did not plan to lead a rebellion or be king. So why did they say the Romans would clamp down on them if more people believed in Jesus?

What about the Romans? Did they think Jesus was planning a rebellion? Were they worried when they saw more and more people following Him? Certainly not, for no rebel leader would work in public.

The Roman soldiers in Jerusalem had their headquarters in a castle which King Herod had built at one corner of the temple courts. He had done that so his soldiers could watch everything that went on around the temple. They could easily see Jesus there in the court or on the porch teaching the people. And how could they have missed knowing about the five thousand men following Jesus into the desert and staying with Him three days? Without

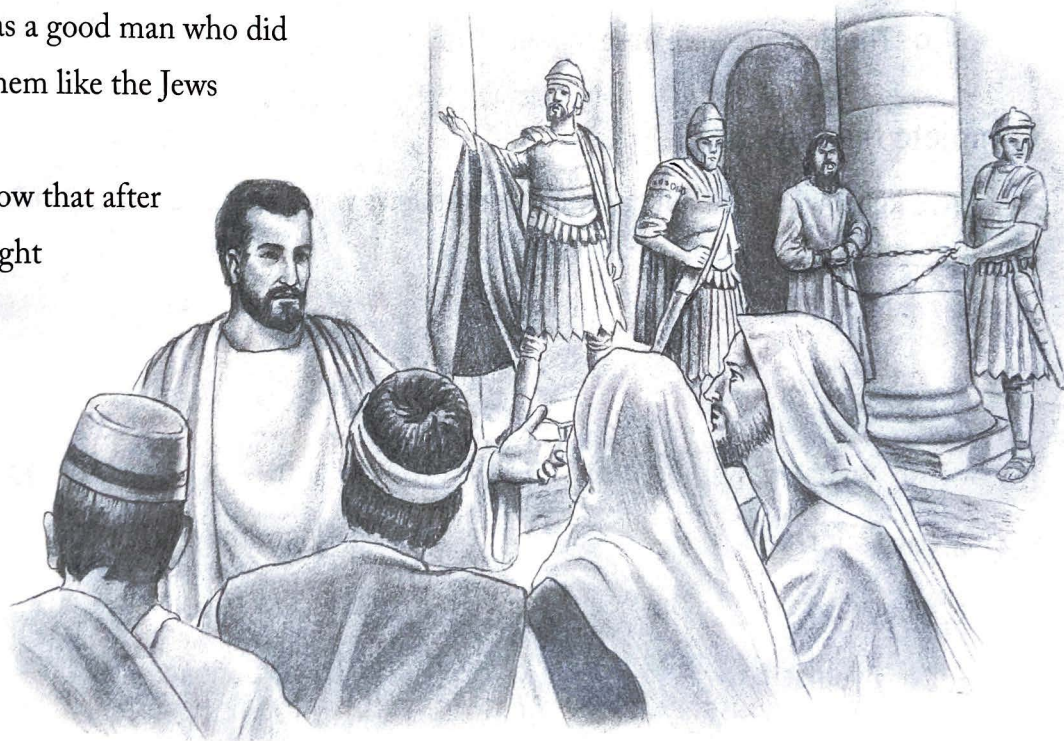
a doubt, the soldiers made it their business to find out what the Man from Galilee talked about.

“Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand. Obey God. Pay your taxes. Help your neighbor. Honor the king. Love your enemies.” That’s what the Roman soldiers heard this Man tell His followers. If they had worried about the Teacher from Galilee leading a rebellion, they would have killed Him. That’s the way the Romans handled anyone who stirred up trouble.

As far as we know, the Romans never even talked with Jesus. Evidently they saw Him as a good man who did not hate them like the Jews did.

We know that after Jesus brought

Lazarus back to life, more Jews believed in Him. That is when the Pharisees and chief priests made up their minds that He must die. But what reason could they give for killing a man who never did anything wrong? They had to have a good-sounding excuse. Would they admit, even among themselves, that jealous hatred was their real reason for wanting to kill Him? Was that why they said they had to get rid of Jesus in order to keep the Romans from coming and taking away their temple and nation? Who knows?



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## FROM THE STORY

Write the letters of the correct answers.

1. The Pharisees said, "If we leave Jesus alone, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. everyone will believe in Him"
  - b. the Romans will get rid of Him"
  - c. the Romans will take away our temple and nation"
  - d. He will destroy our temple and nation"
  
2. Why were the Pharisees talking about the Romans? \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. The Jews wanted to overthrow the Romans.
  - b. The Jews wanted an excuse to get rid of Jesus.
  - c. The Pharisees wanted the Romans to capture Jesus.
  - d. The Romans were upset about what Jesus taught.

Complete the sentence.

3. Two kings who each built a temple for the Jews were \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

## THAT'S OUR GOD

Underline Jesus' teachings that you think the Romans would have liked to hear.

- △ 4. a. Pay your taxes.
- b. Obey God.
- c. Deny yourself.
- d. Honor the king.
- e. Follow Me.
- f. Love your enemies.

## HOW THEY LIVED

Write *R* beside the workers who helped the Roman emperor rule in Israel.

- |                        |                         |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| 5. a. _____ carpenters | f. _____ governors      |
| b. _____ kings         | g. _____ priests        |
| c. _____ scribes       | h. _____ shepherds      |
| d. _____ soldiers      | i. _____ tax collectors |
| e. _____ farmers       |                         |

Write *T* for *true* or *F* for *false*.

- \_\_\_\_\_ The Romans allowed the Jews to believe in God.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The Jews could set up a king in Israel.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Under Roman rule Jewish feast days were forbidden.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The Jews were allowed to have their own synagogues.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Roman leaders enforced the Jewish laws.