

# The Gospel Passion Narrative in Context

## Stages in New Testament Development

|                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| 30 to 50 (even to 90) CE | oral tradition<br>stories of Jesus' life<br>proclamation ( <i>kerygma</i> ) |
| 50 to 70 CE              | some written sources<br>narratives<br>sayings of Jesus                      |
| 50 to 60 CE              | Paul's letters  |
| 65 to 85 CE              | synoptic gospels: Mark, Matthew, Luke                                       |
| 90 and later             | John's gospel, pastoral epistles, Revelation                                |

## Historical background for the passion story

30 CE

Pilate 26-36 CE

Herod Antipas 4 BCE-39 CE

Caiphas 18-36 CE

Palestine = poorest province in Roman Empire

## Literary features

1) Total length one-sixth to one-third of each gospel

- Mark= "a passion narrative with an extended introduction"
- Oldest written part of story of Jesus
- Largest piece of material about which all four gospels agree

2) Position at end and build up

- Predictions in Mark 8:31, 9:31, 10:33-34
- Bridegroom imagery in Mark 2, John 2, Matt 25
- Journey to Jerusalem and Palm Sunday entry
- Plotting in Mark 12:13
- Dramatic foreshadowing in parable of vineyard owner's son Mk 12:1-12
- Anointing of Jesus in Mark 14:8, etc.

## Theological content

- Not just literary climax, but explains all the rest who Jesus is and what is to be accomplished through him (Mk 1:1, 10:45, 15:39)
- Gospels focus attention on Jesus on the cross as foundation of Christian faith; not only teacher and healer, but suffering servant messiah
- Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:23, 20 years before Mark's gospel: "Jews demand signs, Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified."

## Passion chronology set by Mark 11-16

Parallels in Matthew 21-28; Luke 19-24; John 12-21