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JOHN THE BAPTIST – LESSON 4

HIS PUBLIC MINISTRY – PART 2

As we continue with John's ministry, let us set the political landscape. Rome was in control of all the "known world" from Europe, northern Africa, and all the way to India. Although in tight control, they were relatively benevolent rulers during the time of John and Jesus. (That changed just a few short years later.) They appointed governors or "kings" who had cultural or religious commonalities with the people being governed. These "kings" or rulers answered to an appointed Roman Curator (such as Pilate) whose main purpose was to keep the peace (pax Romana).

The king in Galilee (Jesus' home in northern Israel) was Herod Antipas (Herod II), son of Herod the Great who had sought to kill infant Jesus. The ruler in Ituraea (NE of Israel) was Philip, another son of Herod the Great and half-brother to Herod Antipas. Remember this.

John was preaching a harsh message about sin, in order to stir people to repentance. (Luke 3:3-20.) He even called them vipers (snakes) in verse 8 and condemned their works in verses 8 and 9 under the Mosaic law. The hated Publicans (tax collectors) came to him (vs. 12) as did the soldiers (likely the Temple guards) asking John what they should do.

John also regularly preached of a Messiah coming who would be far greater than himself. This man would baptize them with the Holy Spirit from God and would be in their spirit like an unquenchable fire.

After close to a year of this kind of preaching, the prophesied man John spoke of showed up as we shall see tomorrow.