

# Contents

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Acknowledgments  | vii |
| Introduction   | 1   |
| 1 The World of Jesus and Paul  | 13  |
| 2 Leadership in the Synoptic Tradition<br><i>Discipleship, Mission, and Audience</i> | 25  |
| 3 Leadership in the Synoptic Tradition<br><i>Failure of Established Leaders</i>      | 62  |
| 4 Windows into Pauline Leadership  | 97  |
| 5 Paul's Leaders   | 121 |
| 6 Problems in Leadership<br><i>Corinthian Correspondence</i>                         | 165 |
| Conclusion<br><i>Summary of Leadership in Jesus and Paul</i>                         | 197 |
| Notes  | 213 |
| Bibliography   | 232 |
| Index of Subjects and Persons  | 241 |
| Index of Scriptures and Ancient Sources  | 244 |

# 1

## The World of Jesus and Paul

The first century of the Common Era in Palestine exhibited the rise of many movements, with a variety of movement leaders. The Jesus movement, the first group of believers to organize around the person and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth almost immediately after his death, represents once such movement. A discussion of the extent that it corresponded or deviated from other organized movements of the era will occupy us in this chapter as we try to understand the nature of the social, religious, and political world from which the Jesus movement and its leaders arose.

Questions about the nature of earliest Christianity must come in three forms:

1. What happened to Jesus and his followers during his lifetime?
2. What did his immediate followers do and teach after his death?
3. How and why did the stories about Jesus and those first followers come to be written into that unique form called the “gospel?”<sup>1</sup>

For the most part, our sources for all three types of questions have been the New Testament gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—especially the former three, known as the “synoptic gospels” because they share a similar outline and body of material. Although useful for

understanding all three stages of earliest Christianity, both historically and especially theologically, these documents represent products of the third phase. The gospels were written by and for the Christian communities as they existed toward the latter third of the first century, with their particular, contextual set of community needs and responses to those needs. Gerd Theissen described this phenomenon well: “We can presuppose that those who handed down [traditions about Jesus] shaped the tradition in accordance with their life.” At the same time, “we should assume a continuity between Jesus and the Jesus movement and in so doing open up the possibility of transferring insights into the Jesus movement to Jesus himself.”<sup>22</sup>

In our inquiry about aspects of leadership in earlier stages of the Jesus movement, we must inquire about the world during the time of Jesus, including other social, political, and religious movements and *their* quest for effective leadership. It is also important to look beyond the years of Jesus’ life and ministry to the beginning of this new movement that formed around him and around memories of him. How did this movement form and grow? What leadership was necessary for that to happen? Such will be the focus of this chapter. In the next chapter, I will explore what the gospels say, as far as we can tell, about those earlier stages, but also about their very own stage of the movement in the latter third of the first century. What qualities do the gospel writers promote for leadership in their own faith communities? How do these correspond to what Jesus himself expected?

Finally, in this chapter we must also take stock of the world of the apostle Paul, as he takes the movement beyond the immediate environment of Palestine and Palestinian Judaism into Diaspora Judaism and the Greco-Roman world of the Eastern Mediterranean. I will introduce the topic here, but come back to it when we turn to Paul in chapter 4.

### **The World of Jesus**

The world of first-century C.E. Palestine was one of domination and oppression. Indeed, since the period of exile under the Babylonians and then the Persians, except for a brief period of about one hundred years in the second-century B.C.E., Palestine remained under the autocratic rule of outside forces. The Babylonians and the Persians controlled Palestine from 587 B.C.E. to 333 B.C.E. Then Israel came under the control of Alexander the Great and his successors, the Seleucids and the Ptolemies. Increased pressure to “Hellenize,” i.e., to adopt Greek ways over Jewish ones, precipitated the famous Maccabean revolt of the 160s B.C.E., involving largely northern Judean priests and peasants led by a family of priests, the Maccabees.

This revolt ushered in that one brief period of Jewish independence from 168 to 63 B.C.E. Then the Romans, led by the general Pompey, came

at the invitation of a competing faction to the descendants of the Maccabees, the Hasmonean dynasty. With Rome's invasion, a fair amount of Palestinian autonomy ended, and outside domination and control continued. Resistance to Rome's presence ultimately brought about the end of a distinctly Jewish state, with the Jewish Wars of 66–70 C.E. and the Fall of Jerusalem in 70. A brief flare-up, known as the Bar Kochba rebellion of 132 C.E., also failed to restore Jewish autonomy in Palestine. Thus the status of the Jews as a diaspora community, which began with the Babylonian exile in 587 B.C.E., became a *fait accompli*.<sup>3</sup>

### ***A Peasant Society***

Several factors need to be noted about this history at this point. First, we must remember that the world of first-century Palestine was a peasant society. "In any traditional society such as Jewish Palestine in the first century C.E., the peasantry comprise 90 percent or more of the population."<sup>4</sup> As in other societies, peasants were at the bottom of the socioeconomic totem pole in Palestine. In addition, continuous occupation by foreign powers took its toll on the economic well being of Israel's peasantry. Not only did they have to concern themselves with feeding their own families, typically as subsistence farm-workers; but increased taxation from outsiders, especially from Rome with its need to pay, for example, for occupying armies, placed unbearable burdens on the peasantry.<sup>5</sup>

Besides paying outside taxes, the peasant population in Palestine also helped support the religious center of the Jews, the Jerusalem temple. This they had done, gladly, from the beginning of Israel's history, as many of their neighboring nations did for their gods. Peasants everywhere worked to "produce an abundance of goods to be brought to the temple storehouses, where the priests and 'great ones' would then tend to the care and feeding of the gods."<sup>6</sup>

By the time of the Roman occupation of Palestine, the burden of both foreign taxation and increasing temple costs had become unbearable. Many peasant farmers had to borrow money from their landlords and other Jerusalem elites to pay the political and religious taxes and to feed their own families. In many cases, those few who owned their own plot of land ended up having to sell and enter "indebted slavery."<sup>7</sup> Thus a state of "permanent debt" permeated the rural areas of Palestine. The source the peasantry depended on as "highly positive symbols of the unity of the people and their link with God"—the high priesthood and temple elite—offered no relief.<sup>8</sup> This hoped-for relief in the form of reduced temple taxes did not come, and a climate of peasant revolt was created. Thus the nature of temple leadership must come under some scrutiny in our study, for it represents the leadership that Jesus and his followers, among others, confronted in their day.

***The Jewish Aristocracy***

As noted above, Israel's peasantry was loyal to the Jerusalem temple and would withstand almost any hardship to support the ongoing viability of their religious center. However, key to this loyalty was the legitimate status of temple leadership, and when that was not forthcoming at various points throughout the first century C.E. in Palestine, tensions rose. The family of the high priest, in particular, was not only from an illegitimate line of Zadokite priests, but they owed their position of wealth and power, in part, to the Romans. The "compromised position and exploitative behavior of the Jewish ruling class" during the period of Roman domination in Palestine precipitated a series of peasant revolts, culminating in the one that destroyed Jerusalem for many centuries to come in 70 C.E.<sup>9</sup>

In Israel's history, the establishment of a priestly aristocracy resulted from exile and return. Israel prided itself on its theocratic governance from early in its history. However, that "rule of God" was always mediated by the "rule of the priestly aristocracy."<sup>10</sup> By the time of Herod the Great—the powerful, but Rome-controlled king of Judea from 37 to 4 B.C.E.—the high priesthood in Jerusalem acquiesced to his rule. Herod consolidated power around himself by appointing only those priests loyal to him. The Pharisees had secured significant power during the Hasmonean period, especially among the peasantry, because they supported the Maccabean revolt and subsequent independence movement. These Pharisees lost influence during Herod's reign. They "became less a political party and more a loose association of religious brotherhoods."<sup>11</sup> They turned from "politics to piety."<sup>12</sup>

Thus, the large peasant population in Palestine had little recourse for their social and economic ills. The temple priesthood was beholden both to Herod the Great and to his sons who divided Palestine among themselves after their father's death with Roman imperial blessings. Thus the priests were also beholden to the Herodian patrons, the Roman imperial court. For the most part, Pharisaic leadership yielded little power as they increasingly paid more attention to legal-religious interpretation of Jewish life and religion rather than the social-economic well being of the Jewish masses.<sup>13</sup> Roman invasion meant more taxation and "a situation of imperial domination (occupying troops, intercultural misunderstandings, etc.)."<sup>14</sup> Things only got worse when Rome took direct control of Judea, and, therefore, the heart of Jewish life, Jerusalem, by bringing it under control of the provincial governor of Syria and assigning a Roman pro-consul, Pontius Pilate, to oversee Judean affairs directly in 26 C.E. Unlike the gospels' picture of him as a benign, distant dictator, beholden to the Jewish masses and their leaders, Pilate ruled with a particularly repressive hand.<sup>15</sup>

During Pilate's rule the Jewish aristocracy, which included the high priests, the elders, and the scribes, all protected their own status as elites,

centering their power on the Jerusalem temple and its ruling council, the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin consisted of the high priest, elders, and the scribes (cf. Mk. 15: 1). The high priests represented the “aristocracy of worship,” the elders, the “aristocracy of the rich,” and the scribes, “the aristocracy of the educated.”<sup>16</sup> Entry into the first two groups depended on “dynastic or economic privileges”; the third depended on education in the law and religion. Thus a “circulation of elites” predominated the political scene in Judea. Some Pharisees became scribes, but for the most part Pharisees stayed away from the political center of Judaism and concentrated on exercising “spiritual power.”<sup>17</sup> The other groups combined their political power to ensure their survival in the face of the real power—the Roman Empire.

### ***Resistance Movements***

The collusion between the Jewish aristocracy and Rome created a vacuum of leadership at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder. First under Hellenistic rule and then under Roman, the loss of economic well being and cultural dominance persisted for three hundred years in Palestine and so did a period of peasant revolt (approximately 200 B.C.E. to 132 C.E.). Now economic power ruled in Palestine rather than religious or cultural traditions. By aligning themselves with the building and tax programs of first Alexander’s Hellenists and then the Roman imperialists—including Herod the Great and his sons—the temple elite promoted “a new kind of power based on financial influence” rather than “traditional theocratic authority” (i.e., “the rule of God”). Financial success by certain families secured entrance into Jerusalem’s ruling classes, whereas previously ancestral ties and Torah observance were fundamental for such inclusion. The combination of political-economic alliances with the outsiders and decreased Jewish cultural and religious influences created further gulfs between the Judean peasantry and the temple elite.<sup>18</sup>

Resistance and revolt became the answers for many peasants. Popular movements led by grassroots, charismatic leaders persisted throughout the era of Hellenistic and Roman domination. Some experienced great successes like the Maccabean revolt in the 160s B.C.E., but most proved to be terrible failures like the Jewish Wars of the 60s C.E. In between sporadic peasant uprisings dotted the landscape of Jewish-Roman relations in the first century C.E. in response to increasing Roman domination.<sup>19</sup> These popular movements shared several common characteristics.

First, they sought to restore the notion of theocratic rule in Palestine. Such religious movements as the Essenes, especially their extreme manifestations such as the Dead Sea Scrolls community in Qumran who withdrew to the hills from their regular life in Palestine, awaited divine deliverance from their oppressed situation.<sup>20</sup> They lamented the shift in Judea from an “ethnos,” a separate people, to a “polis,” a Hellenistic citizen-body, which

favored the rich and educated. This shift, in which Greek traditions replaced the Torah, galvanized peasant revolts. Moreover, grassroots leadership emerged in the countryside, rather than depending on the established leadership of the Jerusalem elite.

Second, these movements responded to increased socioeconomic pressures, including taxation and Hellenization, with a climate of protest. However, it was protest from the bottom up, with leaders from among “the common people, lower-class Jerusalemites, or peasants, or both.”<sup>21</sup>

Third, what precipitated many of these protests was the failed leadership of the aristocracy, both Jewish and Roman: “The high priestly families, Herodians and much of the wealthy aristocracy...were engaged in mutually beneficial collaboration with the Roman imperial system in maintaining control in Jewish Palestine.”<sup>22</sup> Thus the established leaders of the community, both religious (the temple aristocracy) and political (the Herodians), failed the peasantry. Rather than help the peasantry in the midst of increased economic woes, they sought to protect their own interests. Indeed, they often intensified violence against the peasantry. They would call upon Rome to send troops to put down any peasant rebellion. Roman governors like Pilate paid little heed to the common people’s cry for help, while the people’s supposed representatives “sat idly by or collaborated in their oppression.”<sup>23</sup>

Thus a variety of movements flourished in the first century C.E. These included social banditry, much like the Robin Hood stories we read about from centuries later in England. In the mid–first century, bandits “provided leadership for Judean peasants seeking justice when the Roman governor was slow to act.”<sup>24</sup> The peasantry supported their leadership because, as in Robin Hood, brigands righted the wrongs of “the usual enemies of the poor: wealthy landowners and overlords, church prelates and genteel clerics who live in leisurely style off the labor and tithes of the peasants, and foreign rulers and others who have upset the traditional order of life.”<sup>25</sup> Many examples illustrate how local village leaders and elders in the Judean and Galilean countryside supported social bandits or “brigands” and protected them from the arm of the law, and even got punished for it. These peasant brigands stood against “the wealthy Galilean gentry who had joined forces with Herod in order to reassert their control over the country.” Eleazar ben Dinai fashioned a twenty-year career of opposing Rome and the Jerusalem elite with forays and robberies in support of the peasant classes of regions such as Galilee.<sup>26</sup>

Social banditry flourished in the mid–first century C.E. because peasant appeals to established leadership for justice repeatedly fell on deaf ears. Peasants wanted restoration of the “legitimate, traditional state of affairs.” However, when, for example, “Galilean families journeyed to their holy city looking to the central political-religious institutions as their court of justice” to redress grievances related to economic woes, they were continually rebuffed by the “king-high priest and the Sanhedrin.”<sup>27</sup> Failed

leadership from established authorities fueled the development of grassroots leadership from among the peasantry at the bottom of the social-economic rung.

Other more overtly religious expressions of protest and resistance also developed during this period. Harking back to the golden days of Israel's kingships of David and Solomon, certain royal pretender and messianic movements flourished, particularly at the turn of the century after the death of Herod the Great, and later during the war years of the 60s. Such figures as Judas son of Hezekiah (c. 4 B.C.E.) and Simon bar Giora (68–70 C.E.) aroused the messianic expectations of peasant populations because of Roman domination, puppet kings, and failed religious leadership.<sup>28</sup>

Another form of protest movement was related to yet another ancient tradition from Israel's history—prophecy. Both popular prophetic movements led by grassroots charismatic leaders in opposition to established authorities and oracular prophets who denounced the Jerusalem elite in public arenas flourished at about the time of Jesus of Nazareth. Such figures as John the Baptist (late 20s C.E.), the "Samaritan" (c. 26 to 36 C.E.), and the "Egyptian" (c. 56 C.E.) gathered followers by denouncing Roman and Jewish leadership and proclaiming a divine intervention. They tended to be eschatological and apocalyptic in their style and approach.<sup>29</sup>

All of these movements fed into the development of the final revolt against Rome in Jerusalem in the 60s. They all shared certain characteristics:

- They were peasant movements led by unofficial leadership.
- They protested against established leadership, both Roman and Jewish.
- They failed terribly in the final assault, the Jewish Wars of 66–70 C.E.

Practically the only surviving Jewish groups of that war were the Pharisees, who over time went on to redefine postwar Judaism into Rabbinic Judaism, and the Jesus movement, which did not remain part of Judaism, but eventually became the Christian movement. The postwar era was also the time the first gospels developed, beginning with Mark around 70 C.E. and in the following decade or so Matthew and Luke. They represent a particular picture of the Jesus movement and its leadership. How did their perspective compare to the picture of the movements and the leadership we just discussed in these other first-century Jewish peasant resistance movements? I turn to this question in the next section of this chapter.

## **The Jesus Movement**

### ***Wandering Charismatics***

Jesus and the movement he fostered have been called a movement of "wandering charismatics."<sup>30</sup> Jesus himself has been designated as a "Spirit person," a "sage," a "movement founder" and a "prophet."<sup>31</sup> All of these designations, and others, agree on one fundamental factor from the context



of the historical Jesus: He was a Jewish peasant of the first-century C.E. Palestine, a member of that oppressed class that I have discussed above.<sup>32</sup>

The notion that Jesus was the founding leader of “wandering charismatics” derives from the gospel picture of him traveling in and around Galilee and then from Galilee to Jerusalem with a group of followers. Moreover, his followers continued beyond his death preaching and proclaiming his message as a traveling movement. Jesus started a movement of “traveling apostles, prophets and disciples who moved from place to place and could rely on small groups of sympathizers in those places.”<sup>33</sup> Scholars refer to such activity as “charismatic” because the role of its leaders involved a call to action, rather than any institutionalized position.<sup>34</sup> In fact, as a renewal movement within Judaism, the early Jesus movement could be characterized, like the others we have discussed above, as founded in opposition to the established leadership of the Roman and Jewish elite.

One characteristic of the Jesus movement of wanderers was their *homelessness*: “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head” (Mt. 8:20). The discourse sending out the Twelve in Matthew 10 and parallels describes this life of wandering expected of Jesus’ followers:

Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts, no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for laborers deserve their food. Whatever town or village you enter, find out who in it is worthy, and stay there until you leave. As you enter the house, greet it. If the house is worthy, let your peace be upon it; but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town. (Mt. 10:9–14)

The motifs of journey, hospitality, and staying and leaving signal the sense of homelessness and the need for local support in this traveling ministry.

Second, the *lack of family* characterizes these wanderers. After all, these are leaders called to “hate” their families in comparison to the traveling ministry that they must carry out if the ministry is to be successful (Lk. 14:26). Also, they exhibit a *lack of possessions*, indeed a *criticism* of possessions. The parable of the “rich young ruler” (Mk. 10:17–22) indicates the requirements of leadership in this movement. Leaders must be willing to leave behind their possessions, if need be, to serve in this movement, especially because it is an itinerant movement. Possessions could otherwise hold one down. In the book of Acts, the author cites Barnabas as one movement leader with possessions willing to give them up for the cause (Acts 4:36–37). The words of encouragement in Matthew 6:25–32 (“Do not worry”) point to “the harshness of the free existence of the wandering charismatic, without homes and without protection, traveling through the country with no possessions and no occupation.”<sup>35</sup>

Finally, the wandering charismatic leader of the early Christian community *lacked protection*. He or she could only “turn the other [cheek]” (Mt. 5:38–42). Their only protection was the Holy Spirit, who would give them words to speak when they needed them (Mt. 10:16–23). Any retaliation would be counterproductive to the message of peace and love that was their responsibility.

Thus, ethical radicalism marked Jesus and his movement of wandering charismatics. It was a movement, similar to others in first-century Palestinian Judaism, of outsiders: the sick and crippled, prostitutes, tax collectors, and prodigal sons. As with prophetic and messianic movements, *eschatological expectation* marked this movement and fueled its lifestyle. That’s why they could be so disinterested in permanency, family, possessions, and protection. The end was near.<sup>36</sup>

This end-time expectation issued into another characteristic: *intimacy*. Any group formed in opposition to an existing order (including the established political and religious leadership of Rome and Jerusalem) and awaiting the end of that order creates a close bond around itself. Insider stories, nicknames, and even jokes tighten these bonds.<sup>37</sup> Many of the parables Jesus told carried special meaning that only insiders could understand: “To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside, everything comes in parables” (Mk. 4:11; cf. Mt. 13:10–16; Lk. 8:9–10).

Such intimacy and sense of insider status creates a close-knit community where everyone has a voice in its ongoing development. True, these are usually centered around a singular individual, as was the case of the Jesus movement, with Jesus as the founding leader; but everyone else has a feeling of belonging to a family where voices are equal, and everyone belongs to one another rather than to an elaborate organization.<sup>38</sup> In fact, having Jesus as the singular founder-leader allowed the group to focus on his person as the centering experience for all of them, thereby creating a cohesion that no institutionalized group could have. Their relationship to Jesus sustained them in their ministry as wandering charismatics and made each wanderer one with the other.

Such intimacy, of course, begins to change once a movement becomes more settled. In the case of the Jesus movement that happened almost immediately because the wandering charismatics needed settled believers to sustain them while they traveled. Settled local communities of the movement became the initial ground for a more institutionalized movement within a generation or two after its initial beginnings.

### ***The Nature of Settled Christian Communities***

Wandering charismatics needed a settled group of sympathizers. In the gospels, we find examples of homes where Jesus found a welcome: in Peter’s house (Mt. 8:14, when Jesus heals Peter’s mother-in-law); with Mary

and Martha (Lk. 10:38–42); with Simon the Leper (Mk. 14:3–9, where Jesus’ feet are anointed by a woman with expensive ointment); and with the women supporters of his ministry (Lk. 8:1–3). “Such sympathetic families were probably the nucleus of later local communities.”<sup>39</sup> While these may have not been the exact names and homes of movement sympathizers, they certainly represent examples of the types of homes that became the “settled communities,” especially “the communities of God in Judea.”<sup>40</sup>

What was leadership like for such communities? First, it should be noted that the wandering charismatic leaders remained the authorities for these local communities as long as their size remained relatively small. The gospel saying, “Where two or three are gathered in my name, I [Jesus] am there among them” (Mt. 18:20) reflects this early loose structure of authority, where “hierarchy was superfluous.”<sup>41</sup> When problems did arise, the whole community resolved them, as in Matthew 18:15–19, which may very well reflect an early tradition. In this text, the community has the authority to “bind” or “loose.” Otherwise, they must wait for the wandering charismatic, as in Matthew 16:19, where the author depicts Peter as a wandering charismatic leader who has the power to “bind” or “loose” as well.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, this self-reliance, whether in the leadership of the local believing community or its charismatic leader, is a direct challenge to the established political and religious leadership in the world outside of the settled community, in this case, Matthew’s. “Matthew claims that where the recent and current leadership has failed, his group, and their leaders as exemplified by Peter, will succeed.”<sup>43</sup>

A text from Matthew 23 further illustrates this tension between community authority and the authority of a single leader. Jesus warns against the official authority of Jerusalem (scribes and Pharisees) and against earthly teachers such as “rabbis,” “fathers,” and “instructors” (Mt. 23:1, 8–10). Disciples should follow their heavenly Teacher, Father, and Messiah, who are one authority, not many. However, the text later supports the authority of Christian “prophets, sages, and scribes,” sent directly from God (Mt. 23:34), i.e., the wandering charismatics. Why accept one set of multiple leaders and not the other? The answer lies with the stages of church and community development in the period of the gospels’ writing:

The less the structures of authority in local communities had come under the control of an institution, the greater was the longing for the great charismatic authorities. And, conversely, the greater the claim of these charismatics to authority, the less interest there was in setting up competing authorities within the communities. But when the local communities grew in size, they experienced a need for internal government that inevitably competed with the wandering preachers.<sup>44</sup>

The gospels thus reflect several stages of the Jesus movement’s leadership approach. First, we can see instances of a more *egalitarian approach*

locally, with equal voices by all in expectation of visits by wandering charismatic leaders who may have carried the final word on a variety of community issues.<sup>45</sup> Second, over time more *institutional leadership* within the local gospel communities emerged. This eventually led to a more hierarchical approach to leadership, certainly by the time we reach the second century of the movement's history.

Our efforts at a historical and sociological reconstruction of the earliest stages of the Jesus movement in the aftermath of his departure from the scene discover these discernible aspects of leadership. However, we also have indications, especially in the synoptic gospels, of what Jesus himself might have pronounced with regard to leadership, particularly in light of the political, social, and religious controversies that he and his followers faced in the volatile climate of first-century C.E. Palestine. The next chapter will take a closer look at some of these texts, as well as at how the gospel writers utilized the traditions about Jesus and his leadership for their own understandings of the leadership needed in their late first-century C.E. communities.

### **Summary of Jesus and His World**

This chapter has established the world of Jesus as one that demanded the response of grassroots leadership to the domination system of the Roman Empire, especially given the negligence of those in power locally. A variety of renewal and resistance movements from the peasantry emerged in Palestine, especially during the first half of the century, in reaction to social and economic oppression from the Empire and its local supporters. Among these one must consider peasant movements started by John the Baptist, and a related one by one of his followers, Jesus of Nazareth. Spiritual and prophetic leadership in response to political and economic crises among the peasant poor and their sympathizers characterized these movements. Both grassroots leaders, John and Jesus, as in the case of other movement leaders of the era, paid for their activity with death at the hands of the established leadership of the Empire. However, the Jesus movement survived its martyred leader, as his followers, led by charismatic itinerant preachers, carried the movement forward.

### **Paul and His World**

One of those who carried the message about Jesus forward, even beyond Palestine, was the apostle Paul. Although he apparently began his ministry soon after the death of Jesus, Paul practiced his gospel leadership in a world somewhat different from that of Jesus precisely because he took the movement into the broader Greco-Roman context, beyond Palestine. Moreover, Paul's ministry focused on the major cities of the Empire in the largely Greek-speaking world of the Eastern Mediterranean. Such cities as Corinth, Philippi, Thessalonica, and Ephesus represented the major urban centers of the Roman Empire's domination over Greece and Asia Minor.

Former Greek cities with local democratic assemblies (*ekklēsiae*, in Greek) were now in the process of being transformed into Roman colonies. Paul established his gospel communities in these cities because they afforded him a broad constituency from which to solicit converts. Also, he could easily find work in their bustling economies to support his ministry and that of his associates. Third, the cities, with their Roman roads protected by Roman armies, offered easy access in and out for travel to the next city once his faith communities were founded and able to function on their own (more or less, as a study of Paul's letters shows).

Paul called his newly formed communities *ekklēsiae*, "assemblies," or as they came to be known in the English translations, "churches" (from the German word for *ekklēsia*, "*Kirchen*"). Paul borrowed a word from the language of the former Greek democratic assemblies, a word the Romans had made obsolete.<sup>46</sup> One scholar argues that, therefore, "Paul's assemblies were political as well as religious."<sup>47</sup>

I will return to these matters from Paul's context in subsequent chapters. Already we see how the urbane, cosmopolitan world of the Greco-Roman city in which Paul exercised the bulk of his ministry is somewhat removed from the largely agricultural world of Jesus and his initial movement in Galilee.<sup>48</sup> Yet, at the same time, both Jesus and Paul seem to address the crisis of Roman domination by exercising leadership in what Richard Horsley calls "an alternative society."<sup>49</sup> As we shall see throughout this book, the message of Jesus, including attention to the poor and oppressed in the face of domination, lay at the heart of gospel leadership and remained consistent throughout the ministry of Jesus, his immediate followers, and the apostle Paul.