

# CONTENTS

Copyright © 2009 John Drane  
This edition copyright © 2009 Lion Hudson

The author asserts the moral right  
to be identified as the author of this work

A Lion Book  
an imprint of  
**Lion Hudson plc**  
Wilkinson House, Jordan Hill Road,  
Oxford OX2 8DR, England  
www.lionhudson.com  
ISBN 978 0 7459 5250 5 (UK)  
ISBN 978 0 8254 7913 7 (US)

Distributed by:  
UK: Marston Book Services, PO Box 269, Abingdon, Oxon OX14  
4YN  
USA: Trafalgar Square Publishing, 814 N. Franklin Street,  
Chicago, IL 60610  
USA: Christian Market: Kregel Publications, PO Box 2607,  
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49501

First edition 2009  
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0

All rights reserved

## Acknowledgments

Scripture quotations are from the New Revised Standard  
Version published by HarperCollins Publishers, copyright ©  
1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National  
Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, and are used by  
permission. All rights reserved.

The text paper used in this book has been made from wood  
independently certified as having come from sustainable  
forests.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the  
British Library

Typeset in 9.5/14pt Poppl Pontifex Regular

Printed and bound in China

## Introduction 7

### 1 The Bible and its Context 8

Searching for the New Testament 11

DISCOVERING OLD BIBLES 12

Finding unknown texts 18

Varieties of Bible literature 22

Counting the books 26

### 2 The Beginning of History 30

Origins and meanings in Sumerian culture 38

ANCIENT MESOPOTAMIA: BIRTHPLACE OF CIVILIZATION 39

THE GREAT FLOOD: STORIES FROM THE BIBLE AND  
MESOPOTAMIA 42

Religion, politics and law 45

### 3 By the Banks of the Nile 58

Politics and society in ancient Egypt 60

THE PYRAMIDS OF EGYPT 64

Culture, religion and lifestyles 72

Later Egyptian history 75

PAPYRUS PRODUCTION 76

### 4 Life in the Promised Land 84

Canaanites and Israelites 86

STORIES OF BA'AL FROM THE LIBRARIES OF UGARIT 90

Everyday life in Israel and Judah 97

SAFEGUARDING JERUSALEM'S WATER SUPPLY 102

### 5 The Age of Empires 108

Assyria 111

THE BATTLE OF QARQAR: THE ASSYRIAN ADVANCE IS  
STOPPED 112

Babylon 120

DESPATCHES FROM A BELEAGUERED CITY 121

Persia 123

Greece 127

ALEXANDER'S EMPIRE 129

Rome 133

### 6 Romans and Jews in Palestine 134

Herod the Great 136

After Herod's death 139

The later Herods 142

Roman rulers in Palestine 148

The history of the time 153

### 7 Daily Life in the Time of Jesus 156

Home and family 156

FOOD LAWS AND RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE 162

Religion 164

BODIES AND BONES 165

SYNAGOGUES 168

Religious loyalties 170

Hellenistic influences 176

### 8 Life with the Romans 184

Politicians and rulers 184

RULERS OF THE EMPIRE 191

Everyday living 195

SLAVES AND FREEDMEN IN ROMAN SOCIETY 198

EDUCATION IN THE ROMAN WORLD 205

TRAVEL AND TRADE ROUTES OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE 209

Bureaucrats, magistrates and kings 213