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| THE ROMAN EMPIRE IN THE TIME OF JESUS | Jesus was born in Judaea, a remote vassal-state of Rome, during the reign of Herod the Great (37-4 BC). He spent most of his life in Nazareth, a tiny village in Galilee. This was a time of peace and prosperity for the Empire. Rome had just ended a civil war with the defeat of Antony and Cleopatra. Caesar Augustus, the victor, established the Principate, a monarchy that preserved the external forms of the old Republic, and he consolidated Rome’s control over its conquests. | Meanwhile in Judaea, Herod the Great, though cruel and despotic, was nonetheless a great builder. To please his Roman patrons and his Jewish subjects, he renovated many cities according to Graeco-Roman fashion and rebuilt the Temple in Jerusalem. Upon his death, the kingdom was divided amongst his sons: Archaelaus inherited Judaea, including Jerusalem; Herod Antipas, Galilee; and Philip, Ituraea in the north. Archaelaus, however, proved an unworthy successor, and Rome took direct control over Judaea, appointing a procurator based in Caesarea.This was the situation in the Roman Empire and Judaea when Jesus started his public ministry. | Source: “Digital Atlas of the Roman Empire” http://dare.ht.lu.se/This digital map represents the state of the road network and administrative divisions of the Roman Empire, more than 300 years after Jesus. |
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