

# 3 The Religious Background to the New Testament



## Guiding Questions

1. What were the various options of religious belief and practice open to non-Christians in the Graeco-Roman era?
2. Describe the religious institutions to which Jews in the New Testament era devoted themselves.
3. Describe the features of the non-Christian and Jewish religious scene that assisted or influenced the spread of Christianity.

## Paganism

### The Graeco-Roman Pantheon

The religion of early Rome was animism. In the largely rural society farmers worshipped those gods which personified the forces they faced daily, gods of the field, forest, and stream. They appealed to their gods to aid them in sowing and harvesting. These gods had no distinct personalities, and we may best view them as influences or sources of power.

As Rome made contact with Greece, the Romans adopted the personalities and fables of the Greek gods into their own pantheon but changed their names. Zeus, the father of the gods to the Greeks, became Jupiter (Acts 14:12). Hera, the wife of Zeus,

# The New Testament Its Background And Message

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