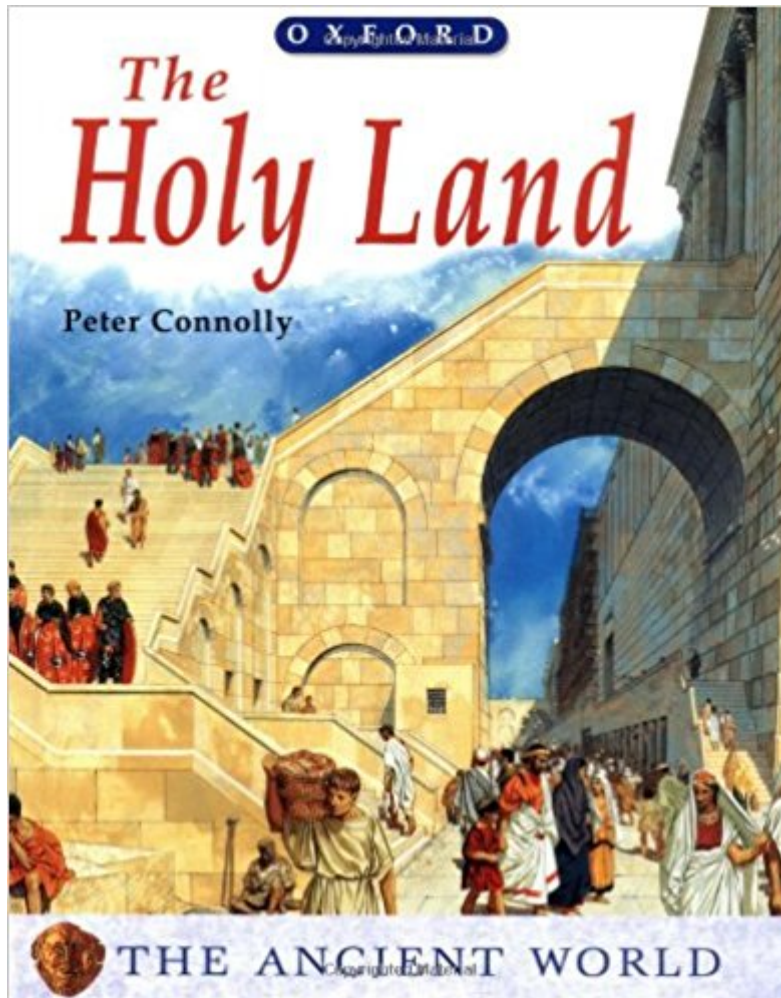




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# The Holy Land (Ancient World)



## Synopsis

Peter Connolly's book brings to life the people and events of a crucial period in the history of the world. Spanning a hundred years that culminate in the fall of Masada in 73 AD, Connolly reconstructs the daily lives--domestic, religious, and military--of the Jewish people in Judea, Galilee, and Jerusalem, mostly under the reign of the great King Herod. The book's fascinating illustrations, based on exhaustive up-to-date research, recreate minute details with stunning precision. The volume features a tour of the geography of the eastern Mediterranean and a review of archaeological excavations and discoveries in the region. For young adults interested in Jewish history, the ancient world, and the beginnings of Christianity, this book offers thorough information with unique clarity.

## Book Information

Age Range: 9 and up

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## Customer Reviews

'Brilliantly illustrated...and bursting with fascinating facts.' Universe

Peter Connolly has written and illustrated many books for children about the ancient world, including the award-winning *The Legend of Odysseus*, *The Roman Fort*, *The Legionary*, and the very successful *The Ancient City*. He is an honorary research fellow of the Institute of Archaeology in London.

## Excellent source

This book is marked for 4- to 8-year-olds. Considering the amount of non-age-appropriate content (from deviant sexual behavior to simply stunning amounts of violence) as well as the sheer density of the text, I would change that to the 10-16 age group. Younger children would be unlikely to understand the narrative, anyway, and if they did, they might get nightmares from it, despite the fact that Connolly doesn't wallow in gory details. I had already read *Ancient Rome* and *Ancient Greece* and had assumed that *The Holy Land* would be in the same style--two-page thematic spreads with a brief political history section followed by topics like "At home," "On the streets," "Shopping," "Social life," etc, each with a short intro with the rest of the page filled with illustrations and blurbs. But it was very different. Though it retains the two-page spreads and the picture-and-blurb format, *Ancient Rome* and *Ancient Greece* are social histories with a few of Connolly's bright illustrations on each page, while *The Holy Land* is a political history narrative with much more text and an emphasis on diagrams and photographs. While *Ancient Rome* and *Ancient Greece* would do well in the late elementary school crowd, *The Holy Land* is intended for older students (like his *The Ancient City*). In addition, the production value of *Ancient Rome* and *Ancient Greece* are much higher, for *The Holy Land* is plagued with copy editing problems like punctuation problems so severe they often change the meaning of sentences as well as blatant typos. The narrative begins with Herod the Great and continues through the Diaspora. It covers not only the sociopolitical Jewish world at the time but grounds it well in the wider Roman world. The narrative (except for bad copy editing issues) is very clear and to the point, and the entire mess is made remarkably easy to understand. The pictures that accompany the text vary in content and purpose. They are many contemporary photographs of sites discussed in the text which, to be honest, are generally the least interesting, as they soon become just another photo of hills covered in desert or semi-arid shrubs and grasses and a few traces of rubble. There are several family trees to help the reader keep the historical figures straight. There are a number of maps, showing political boundaries, rainfall, troop movements, etc. There are illustrations of reconstructions of various ancient sites. And then there are the picture-and-blurb sections meant to illustrate things like the difference between Sadducees and Pharisees, as well as things like domestic life, typical houses, clothing, death and burial customs, agriculture, etc., as the narrative thread advances in the main text section. In addition to the terrible job of editing, another flaw is that Connolly takes a distinctly pro-Roman, anti-Jewish stance that never quite crosses the line to antisemitism but comes awfully close. For example, even though Herod the Great was an unstable, bloodthirsty madman who was easily manipulated and paranoid to the point of

derrangement, Connolly considers him a good ruler because he wasn't very Jewish (in religious conviction) but mostly pagan and so treated the Romans well yet didn't actually persecute the Jews or cause a mass uprising. In contrast, anyone who acts out of religious or nationalistic conviction or who has the bad sense to rebel against Roman rule is portrayed by him as a lunatic or a fool--the unbalance in his treatment is quite remarkable. Some of his discussion of early Christianity and the date of the birth of Jesus of Nazareth also reveal a misunderstanding of current theory and a distortion of at least one Biblical passage. That combined with the bad copy editing keep this book from five stars. But it is still an interesting and clear work for the age group, and I strongly recommend it.

Peter Connolly wrote ancient history books for both children and adults. Well a precocious middle schooler can read the "The Holy Land" I am not sure that a young person would necessarily enjoy the book. "The Holy Land" closely tracks the "Jewish War" written by Romano/Jewish historian Titus Flavius Josephus. This book chronicles the rise of Herod and concludes with the destruction of Temple in Jerusalem. It is an important but nevertheless intricate story that many younger children may find too complex. Nevertheless, the younger reader will enjoy Peter Connolly's beautifully detailed illustrations. However, as an adult, "The Holy Land" is a great book. I have never read Josephus and Connolly's book has whetted my appetite to give it a shot. The "Holy Land" does a wonderful job of putting Jesus Christ in his historical context. Finally, there are two other versions of this book with different titles. "The Holy Land" is the same book as "Jews in the Time of Jesus" and "A History of the Jewish People during the Time of Jesus."

A valuable reference tool for Sunday School teachers or any student of the intertwined political and religious events in first century Palestine. The book spans the period beginning with Herod the Great and ending with the destruction of the Jewish nation by the Romans. It is facinating to see how Herod changes loyalties among wives, benefactors, and potential succesors as often as he changes sandals. Connolly also gives us much detail about the rulers who followed Herod. This book is written from a secular perspective, but students of the Bible will gain insights into the political events surrounding the lives of Jesus and his followers. One can find heavenly humor in the irony that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, within sight of of a mountaintop fortress Herod built only a few miles to the South. Those interested in the history, geography, and topography of this period will not be disappointed. I purchased my first copy in Jerusalem to help me locate ancient places within the modern setting. Connolly's descriptions of seiges at Jerusalem and Masada give a clear picture

of weapons and tactics of a Roman army. The illustrations are very detailed and a few are a bit gory. The vocabulary, complexity of sentences and assumed level of knowledge make this book more suited to adult readers. I've given several to fellow teachers. A 9 - 12 year-old might enjoy the pictures, but very few will comprehend all the nuances.

Insights into historic events explained through simple language and detailed graphics for the discerning reader. How I wish this book or ones like it were available to me as a textbook when I was in school. It certainly kept my interest piqued and explained it simply to the average reader not only through the verbiage but with helpful informative illustrations. I hope not only the Sunday school teachers mentioned in the aforementioned review before mine, but teachers in the school system consider this book a supplement to their textbooks. Use it for enrichment, folks! I find it most beneficial to picture the scenario in my mind and here it was all spelled out and illustrated right before my very eyes. I cannot say enough about this book! I am sure if those students who dislike or did not understand history had more books available in this manner, there would be less students who "did not understand" the history lesson. I am a librarian and I purchased it for the library in which I am employed. We received it a few days ago. What a worthwhile investment!!!! I could go "on and on" as I finished the book less than fifteen minutes ago. I could not put it down. Peruse a copy, yourself, and you will be glad that you did!

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