

Intertestamental Period

Adult Small Group

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Note: Much of the material in this document derives from Everett Ferguson's *Background of Early Christianity* (Eerdmans, 2003) and supplementary materials from Dr. Justin Rogers's course "New Testament World" taught at Freed-Hardeman University's School of Theology in Spring 2013. The author of this document has conducted further, independent research to supplement the above. Sources are cited when appropriate.

Part I

Backgrounds and History

Why Study the Intertestamental Period?

1.1 Reasons for Studying the Intertestamental Period

To Understand the Jewish World behind the New Testament

1. **Jewish Literature** — paint the historical picture behind first-century Judaism. These include Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Septuagint, and Targums.¹
2. **Jewish Sects** — groups like the Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Zealots, and Herodians formed. Each had its own expectations about the Messiah (e.g. political-military).
3. **Jewish Theology** — angels, demons, monotheism. Legalism, etc.

To Understand the Greco-Roman World behind the New Testament

- **Religion** — mythology, philosophy, emperor-worship (imperial cult), mystery cults, seers, etc.
- **Social Life** — senators, equestrians, plebeians, free-men, slaves. Honor/shame, kinship, reciprocity (of favors/dinner parties).
- **Racial Superiority** — suspicious of Jews, “barbarians.” Total domination mindset of the Mediterranean world.

To Anticipate the Coming of Jesus

- **Literature** — what kinds of writings were in the minds of Jews and early Christians?
- **Politics** — what events were important to Jews, Greeks, or Romans?
- **Religion** — what did the “Jesus movement” and Christian church have to face when evangelizing?
- **Social Life** — how did early Christians live?

1.2 Key Dates

The End of the Old Testament

- **586 BC** — *Fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians* — begins the “Babylonian captivity.” Book of Daniel is written.²

¹ Craig Blomberg, “Why Should Believers Study the Intertestamental Period,” (paper presented at the Graduate Bible Research Symposium of the Freed-Hardeman University, Henderson, Tenn., 25 October 2013).

² Mark Krause, “The Intertestamental Period,” n.p. [cited 27 August 2014]. Online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VPE-k_X_CyY.

- 539 BC — *Fall of Babylon* — Cyrus I subsequently allows some Jews to return to Jerusalem to reestablish the Temple. Maybe about 50,000 returned.
- 515 BC — *Second Temple Dedicated* — Haggai, etc.
- 456 BC — *Ezra comes to Jerusalem to teach the Law*
- 445 BC — *Nehemiah comes to Jerusalem to rebuild the wall*
- 440 BC — *Malachi was written* — last book of the prophets. So-called “400 years of silence begins”

Intertestamental Period

- 332 BC — *Alexander the Great and Greeks conquer Palestine*
- 323 BC — *Alexander dies, his kingdom is divided between his generals Seleucus (Syria) and Ptolemy (Egypt)*. [show map].
- 250 BC — *Septuagint Produced in Alexandria, Egypt* — very important event. The Jewish Scriptures / Hebrew Bible is translated into Greek. Greek OT /LXX (70).
 - Lots of Jews in Alexandria (100,000–200,000) and began to lose their Hebrew.
 - It was necessary to have a translation of the Hebrew Scriptures in Greek so that Jews, who are living outside of Judea in the Diaspora, could know their Scriptures.
- 167 BC — *Temple Defiled by Antiochus IV “Epiphanes”* — Antiochus IV viewed himself as a god. Converts Jerusalem Temple to pagan Temple. They constructed an altar to Zeus above the altar of the Temple.

Hasmonean Period

- 167 BC — *Maccabean Revolt* — Judas “the Hammerer” leads his people to successful military victories against the Seleucids.
- 164 BC — *Temple cleansed; Worship restored* — Judas and the Maccabeans recapture Jerusalem.
 - They wanted to light some lamps and didn’t have enough oil for celebration. There’s a little bit of oil left, but it lasted for the entire celebration.
 - This became the “Festival of Lights/Dedication” (John 10:22–23) or “Hanukah.”
 - About this time, the Samaritans build a “legitimate Temple” on Mt. Gerizim in Shechem. This temple was destroyed by John Hyrcanus in the 2nd century BC before Jesus met the woman at the well.
- 160s–60s BC — *Hasmonean Dynasty rules*

1.3 Roman Period

- 63 BC — *Pompey the Great captures Jerusalem for the Romans*. Initiates Roman rule in Judaea. Ends Hasmonean Dynasty.
- 40/37 BC — *Herod the Great appointed Roman Governor/King of Judea*

- He was an Idumean (Edomite). Served as a “puppet/client-king” for the Romans. He was a manager without power.
- Served alongside procurators. His son Herod Antipas was in power when John the Baptist and Jesus were executed. Antipas served with Pilate.

• 20 BC — *Herod's Temple construction begins*

- Herod, in desiring to become popular with the Jews, reconstructs his version of the Temple over the old one. Only constructed by Priests.
 - Not finished until AD 62 (was under construction during Jesus' life).
-

The Greek Empire: From Alexander to the Diadochi (382–301)

- After the close of the Old Testament, as the Jews are rebuilding their Temple in Jerusalem and others continue to return from the Exile, a new world force threatens the Jewish way of life.
- We begin with the first of the two relevant worldwide empires — the Greeks. Their conquest created a profound cultural and political impact across the Mediterranean world including Palestine and Jerusalem.
- This week will survey the beginnings of the Greek influence upon the Jews as told from the perspective of Greek history.
- We will focus broadly on the world picture to understand the Christian evangelistic challenge, then move to discussing the narrow history of Jews in Judea with consideration for studying the NT.

2.1 Philip II of Macedon (382–336 BCE)

- King of Macedon from 359 to 336 BCE, father of Alexander the Great, and coined the term *divide et impera* ('divide and conquer').
- Philip conducted a number of military campaigns and conquered a number of cities included Crenides (which he named Philippi after himself).
- The political situation between the Macedonians and the Grecians was complicated. The Athenians were not always united with him, nor was Sparta.
- Philip II was assassinated in 336 BCE for unclear political reasons.

2.2 Alexander the Great (336–323 BCE)

- Born in 356 to Philip II of Macedon. At a very young age he demonstrated his skill in battle.¹
- Philip II hired the Greek philosopher Aristotle to tutor Alexander. He was trained in rhetoric, literature, science, medicine, and philosophy.
- Alexander was left in charge when Philip went to war. Alexander led successful campaigns to protect the Macedonian borders against Thrace.

¹ <http://www.historyofmacedonia.org/AncientMacedonia/AlexandertheGreat.html>

Alexander's Conquests

- After the death of his father, Alexander advanced into Southern Greece and captured Athens — doing what his father attempted via politics.
- From there, Alexander proceeded to conquer Asia minor. Upon landing there, Alexander led 25,000 Macedonians, 7,600 Greeks, and 7,000 Thracians and Illyrians into battle. They clashed with the Persians who had 40,000 Persians and 20,000 Greeks who had joined them following Philip II's defeat. They fought at the river Granicus near the ancient city Troy. Alexander and his Macedonians won out.
- Alexander conquered a number of Greek cities on the coast — they provided significant resistance. *Greek cities were already established in Asia Minor as early as 300s BCE!*
- Alexander's army entered Syria and defeated Darius III at a mountain pass called Issus. The Macedonians were again outnumbered, but they won.
- Alexander assaulted Tyre, in a very difficult battle, but won. Gaza likewise was captured, although with struggle.
- Alexander marched through Palestine and arrived in Egypt where he founded the city Alexandria.
- Alexander returned to Tyre and reorganized before marching to Babylon. After finally killing Darius II, Alexander marched on India. He fought the king Porus who fought with elephants. At this battle, his horse Bucephalus died.
- Alexander and his army returned to Persia. Alexander became sick and eventually died at age 33.

2.3 The Διάδοχοι (Diadochoi /Successors)

- These were the rival generals who fought for control over Alexander's Empire after his death. Alexander had not appointed a successor or heir — so chaos ensued.
- Perdikkas, a loyal cavalry commander to Alexander, divided up the Babylonian conquests into satraps. Notably:
 - **Antipater** — received Greece and Macedon (most important).
 - **Ptolemy** — received Egypt.
 - **Laomendon** — received Syria and Phoenecia
- This structure did not last, and the power struggle continued. The more powerful generals: Antigonus, Ptolemy, Lysimachus, and Cassander battled for control of territory. King Alexander IV and Alexander's wife Roxane virtually held no power and were eventually murdered by Cassander.
- After many wars, the following Dynasties were setup:
 1. **Antigonid Dynasty** — in Macedon and central Greece.
 2. **Ptolemaic Kingdom** — Egypt, based in Alexandria.
 3. **Seleucid Dynasty** — Syria and Mesopotamia/Persia.
 4. **Attalid Dynasty** — Anatolia at Pergamum (in Asia Minor).

Ptolemaic Dynasty

- Controlled Egypt. Egyptians accepted the Ptolomies as *successors to the Pharaoh*.
- All the male rulers were called Ptolemy, the female rulers called Cleopatra (including Cleopatra VII who married Marc Antony — she was the last of the Ptolomies).
- Ptolemy I captured Palestine because he feared attack from them.²

Seleucid Dynasty

- One of the more powerful of the three dynasties.
- **Was a major center of Hellenistic culture**
- Many Greeks emigrated from Greece itself to Syria/Asia Minor.
- Land in the far east was lost to the Parthian Empire (an enemy of the Romans as well).
- Seleucids cumulated lots of war debt and were in very rough shape. They paid tribute to Rome beginning in 190 BCE. Eventually defeated by Roman General Pompey.
- **Antiochus Epiphanes IV (175–63 BCE)**
 - Most important ruler for our purposes.
 - Was in need of money = partial motivation for invading Judea.
 - Tried to secure Judea by Hellenization (desecrated Temple).

Diadochi Interference in Palestine

- Antigonos captured Syria from Seleucus, then Antigonos captured Syria.
- Antigonos gave control of Palestine-Syria to his son Demetrius who defeated Ptolemy. But Ptolemy finally defeated Demetrius and gave Syria back to Seleucus.
- But Ptolemy and Seleucus became rivals and would continue to fight.
- Ptolemy conquered Jerusalem in 301 BCE and exported 100,000 Jews to Egypt — they would largely remain here.³

2.4 Hellenization

- Perhaps the most important aspect of the Greek period was not the complicated power struggles in the west, but the cultural war which began with the arrival of Alexander's armies.
- Greek culture had existed on the coast of the Mediterranean before Alexander's conquest. Alexander accelerated this development.⁴

² Henk Jagersma, *A History of Israel from Alexander the Great to Bar Kochba* (trans. John Bowden; London: SCM, 1986), 16.

³ Jagersma, *History of Israel from Alexander the Great to Bar Kochba*, 19.

⁴ Jagersma, *History of Israel from Alexander the Great to Bar Kochba*, 10.

Why it Happened

- Alexander's army was moving east through Palestine and previously un-Greek cultures.
- Greek rulers (and their supporters) were awarded territory as far as India. For every Greek ruler, there were accompanying groups of people who practiced Greek culture.
- Greek soldiers were often permitted to settle down in conquered lands — bringing Greek culture with them.

Hellenization in Judea

- **Dan 8:5–8** — Alexander = the Goat (8:21) who would conquer Media and Persia = the ram w/two horns (8:20). The broken horn and four in his place are the Diadochi (8:22). One of these horns would disturb sacrifices in the Temple (8:11) — probably Antiochus IV and eventually a greater king (Rome) would rise up (8:24).
 - Likely that Alexander passed over Israel and tolerated their religion. Greater interference was predicted and would come from Antiochus IV.
-

A Survey of Second-Temple Judean Judaism

3.1 Some Dates

- 538 BC — Jews released from Babylonian Captivity.
- 521–515 BC — Second Temple Construction.
- 323 BC — Alexander the Great dies, Judea falls under Ptolemaic Rule
- 198 BC — Seleucids seize Judea.
- 167 BC — Antiochus IV desecrates Temple.
- 164 BC — Maccabbean Revolt
- 63 BC — Herod the Great Made King
- 69 AD — Jewish Revolt.
- 70 AD — Fall of Jerusalem to Romans; Temple Destroyed
- 135 AD — Bar Kochba Revolt.

3.2 The Second Temple

- Not much is known about it, theologically.
- However, in *b. Yoma 21b* (a Rabbinic source), the Temple did not claim to have:
 - The Ark of the Covenant
 - Urim and Thummim (cf. Exod 28:30)
 - The Holy Spirit
- So this Temple was not necessarily claiming to be equal to Solomon's Temple (the First Temple).

3.3 The Origin of Diaspora Judaism

- After the Babylonian captivity, some Jews remained.
- Other Jews had fled to Egypt before the Exile (Jer 44:28)
- By the end of the OT period, the Jews were spreading out.

3.4 The Samaritan Schism

- Samaria was the former capitol of the Northern Kingdom of Israel.
 - Purchased and built by Omri (1 Kgs 16:23ff)
 - In 722, Persian King Sargon II destroyed Samaria, exiled inhabitants, and resettled other conquered peoples there.
 - This meant that Israelites who were not exiled intermarried with Gentiles.
- Judaism, in Samaria, became compromised and were considered as half-breeds and inferior by the Jews of Judea/Jerusalem.
 - Samaritans asked to join building of the Second Temple (Ezra 4:1–3ff), but the Jews rejected their request.
 - Samaritans appealed to the Persians and temporarily halted their construction.

The Samaritan Temple

- In response, the Samaritans built their own temple in the 5th century BC (based on archaeological evidence).
- It was built on Mt. Gerizim in Samaria near Schechem (cf. John 4:20).
- Temple was destroyed by the Jewish King John Hyrcanus (134–104 BC).

Samaritan Theology

- Only accept the Pentateuch (Gen–Deut) as Scripture.
- Samaritans believed schism occurred in the time of Eli (1100s BC) who they say left Mt. Gerizim for Shiloh.
- In Shiloh gathered apostate Jews and organized tabernacle worship.
- Their Pentateuch reads a little differently to favor Mt. Gerizim as the only acceptable place for sacrifices.

3.5 Hellenism in Judea

1. Geography and New Political Divisions (post Alexander)
2. Decline in traditional intellectual influences (Egypt, Mesopotamia)
3. Proliferation of the Greek *polis* (inspired by influx of Greek peoples moving east into the Hellenistic kingdoms)
4. Greek philosophy provided a distinctive humanism.
5. Willingness by people to assimilate artistic, cultural, and religious traditions.

3.6 Ptolemaic Rule in Palestine (301–200 BCE)

- Did lots of building and rebuilding.
- Hellenization developed slowly, even in remote villages.¹
- Ptolemies wanted to exploit Palestine for taxes and resources.
- Continual tensions between the high priests (especially Oniads who resisted Hellenism) and the Ptolemies. On the other hand, the Tobiads were tax farmers for the Ptolemies and were favorable to Hellenism.
- Five Syrian Wars occurred in this period, with most of the fighting in Palestine.
 - Fourth Syrian War (219–217) Ptolemy defeats Antiochus III.
 - Fifth Syrian War (201–198) Seleucids defeat Ptolemies at Panion (200)
 - Antiochus III took Jerusalem around 201, it was retaken by Scopas (Ptolemaic general), and passed again to Antiochus after the Battle of Panion.

3.7 Seleucid Rule in Palestine (198–175 BC)

Antiochus III (223–186 BC)

- Antiochus III went to Asia Minor to add to Selucid kingdom.
- Was defeated at Battle of Magnesia by Romans (190 BC).
- Forced to pay tribute to Rome.² His Son was sent to Rome as a hostage. Antiochus III was known to rob pagan temples (e.g. Bel), but he died in one of these.
- Antiochus III was supportive of Jewish religious practice.

Seleucid Charter for Jerusalem

1. Made provisions for the Temple and its worship
2. Allow city to govern itself by its own laws (*ethnos*)
3. Exempts members of the *Gerousia*, priesthood, scribes, and singers from some taxes.
4. All citizens are exempt from taxes for 3 years.

Tobiads and Oniads

- Oniad family was the high-priestly family. They controlled the *Gerousia* and the Temple.
- The Tobiads were an aristocratic family whose wealth and political influence spanned 300 years (cf. Zech 6:10). They are credited with those supportive of Hellenistic reforms (Josephus, *Ant.* 12.24off).

¹ Jagersma, *History of Israel from Alexander the Great to Bar Kochba*, 25.

² Jagersma, *History of Israel from Alexander the Great to Bar Kochba*, 36.

Antiochus IV ‘Epiphanes’ (175–164 BC)

- Ruled 12 years.
- Had *epiphanes* inscribed on coins, meaning “manifest” (of God).
- Polyibius played on this and called him *epimanes* “madman” (*Poly* 26.10).
- According to *1 Macc* 1:41–52, he tried to unify his empire via religion and culture:

1 Macc 1:41–52 KJVA Moreover king Antiochus wrote to his whole kingdom, that all should be one people, And every one should leave his laws: so all the heathen agreed according to the commandment of the king. Yea, many also of the Israelites consented to his religion, and sacrificed unto idols, and profaned the sabbath. For the king had sent letters by messengers unto Jerusalem and the cities of Juda that they should follow the strange laws of the land, And forbid burnt offerings, and sacrifice, and drink offerings, in the temple; and that they should profane the sabbaths and festival days: And pollute the sanctuary and holy people: Set up altars, and groves, and chapels of idols, and sacrifice swine’s flesh, and unclean beasts: That they should also leave their children uncircumcised, and make their souls abominable with all manner of uncleanness and profanation: To the end they might forget the law, and change all the ordinances. And whosoever would not do according to the commandment of the king, he said, he should die. In the selfsame manner wrote he to his whole kingdom, and appointed overseers over all the people, commanding the cities of Juda to sacrifice, city by city. Then many of the people were gathered unto them, to wit every one that forsook the law; and so they committed evils in the land;

3.8 Juxtaposition of Judaism vs. Hellenism

- Parallel forces were vying against the other for power and influence.
- For every ruling power, the Jews also had their own local Jewish rulers.
- Two parties emerged that would setup the scenario for the Maccabean Revolt
 1. *Hellenists* — priesthood, *Gerousia*, and aristocrats.
 2. *Hasidim* (“pious ones”) — opposed Hellenists, but lacked political clout to make change (*1 Macc* 2:42; 7:14)

3.9 Stages Leading to Maccabean Revolt

1. Hellenistic reform (174 BC onward)
2. Political changes (168 BC?)
3. Persecutions of Seleucids (167–164 BC)

3.10 The Outcome

- As a result of Hellenistic Reform, Political Changes, and Persecutions of Seleucids — Jerusalem erupted in the Maccabean revolt.

- The Jews would be ultimately victorious, but at great cost.
-

Second Temple Judaism — Part 2

4.1 Hasmonean Dynasty

Simon's Maneuvers

- Of the sons of Matthias (Judas the Maccabean, Simon, etc), Simon would come out on top and establish the Hasmonean Dynasty.
- Negotiated a release from Seleucid taxation — first time since before Babylonian Exile (over 400 years ago) that Jews were independent from foreign overlords. Judea went from Temple state to Hellenistic kingdom.¹
- Was nominated high priest as a reward for his service to the Jewish people (1 Macc 14:41), but this was unpopular.²
- Through politics, he negotiated the independence of Judea from the Seleucids.
- Was slaughtered by Ptolemy (son-in-law) at a feast.

John Hyrcanus' Conquests (134–104)

- Son of Simon; immediately had Ptolemy killed.
- Antiochus VII and the Seleucids invaded Jerusalem, but Rome stopped the siege.
- Hyrcanus proceed to capture Transjordan, Idumaea, Samaria, and destroyed the Samaritan Temple at Gerizim. The soldiers he used were foreign mercenaries.
- Hyrcanus focused on a good relationship with Rome.
- Pharisees wanted Hyrcanus to surrender the office of High Priest, so he turned to the Sadducees who had more political power.

Decline of the Hasmonean Dynasty

- After Hyrcanus I, the Hasmonean Dynasty became increasingly political and neglected the principles of the Maccabean Revolt.³

¹ Louis H. Feldman and Meyer Reinhold, eds., *Jewish Life and Thought among Greeks and Romans: Primary Readings* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 148.

² Jagersma, *History of Israel from Alexander the Great to Bar Kochba*, 80–81.

³ Feldman and Reinhold, *Jewish Life and Thought among Greeks and Romans*, 155.

- **Aristobulus I** (104–103 BC) — son of Hyrcanus. Had mother and brothers thrown in prison. Put Antigonus to death. Conquered Galilee. Died suddenly in 103.
- **Alexander Jannaeus** (103–76 BC) — married Alexandra Salome. He was concerned with conquest and military power. Faced conflict with the Sadducees and the anti-Hasmonean Pharisees.⁴ Seleucid-Nabataean conflict spilled over into Judea. Was most significant Hasmonean king besides Hyrcanus.
- **Salome Alexandra** (76–67 BC) — took over after Jannaeus died. Pharisees maintained power during her reign. *Gerousia* was created, which benefitted the scribes and Pharisees.
- **Aristobulus II** (67–63 BC) — conflict with Hyrcanus II (Pharisees) against Aristobulus II (Sadducees). Hyrcanus II lost battle at Jericho. Nabateans betrayed treaty with Jews and sieged Rome. Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II appealed to Rome.
- **Pompey, Roman General** — was sent to quell conflict. He sieged the Temple and entered the Holy of Holies. Aristobulus II was taken to Rome as a prisoner, but was later freed.
- **Hyrcanus II** (63–40) — served as a puppet of Rome and had little influence. Sided with Antipater (Herod the Great's father) with Julius Caesar to defeat Ptolomies in Egypt.
- **Antigonus** (40–37 BC) — puppet of the Parthians (Rome's enemy). Herod the Great, however, was made king over Judea as approved by Mark Antony and Octavian/Augustus. Herod, with the Romans, sieged Judaea. Eventually the Roman General Ventidius won this for Herod. Antigonus was beheaded in Antioch.

4.2 Religious Situation of Second Temple Judaism

Emergence of the Pharisees

- Began developing in the reign of Jonathan Maccabaeus (160–143)
- Probably succeeded the *Hasidim* (pious ones) who opposed the Hellenistic rulers.
- Originally supported John Hyrcanus, but the Pharisees may have seen him as an illegitimate child. Hyrcanus swapped to the Sadducees.
- Conflict with Hasmonean family escalated under Alexander Jannaeus (103–76).
- Close agreement with Salome Alexandra who helped them regain their popularity.
- Josephus though there was about 6000 in total.

Emergence of the Sadducees

- Origins are less clear. Saw themselves connected to Zadok, High Priest during David's time (Greek = *Zakkodites*).
- They were all priests & wealthy aristocrats.
- Participated in the Hellenistic government.
- Center of their power was the Temple.

⁴ Jagersma, *History of Israel from Alexander the Great to Bar Kochba*, 90.

- Less than 1,000 in all.
- Largely disappeared after destruction of the Temple in 70.

The Temple

- Worship was characterized by inconsistency.
 - Desecration of Antiochus IV, re-dedication of Judas Maccabaeus (read Feldman 149).
 - Political maneuvering for High Priest (Hyrcanus, etc)
 - Priests /Sadducees were often associated with Hellenists.
- General distrust in the religious system by the people.
- This seems to stabilize more under Roman rule and *pax Romana*. Romans respected Jewish religion. Augustus' expensive daily sacrifices (Josephus).
- In Jesus' day, we largely see worship normalized with some corruption (e.g. "den of robbers" Matt 21:13)

Messianism

- Apocryphal works *Jubilees* and *Psalms of Solomon* anticipate a political Messiah.
 - Expectation that God would once again deliver people from oppression.
 - Qumran writings (Dead Sea Scrolls /DSS) wrote much on this.
 - Such expectations were carried, violently, by the Zealots and into the Bar Kochba revolt. \cite[94]{Jagersma1986aa}
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Roman Influence in Judaea

5.1 Brief Overview of the Roman Empire

- **Foundation of Rome** — often dated to around 753 BC.
- **Roman Kingdom** (ca. 753–509) — monarchical government. Very little known about this period. Contemporaneous with the Divided Kingdom and the Babylonian Exile.
- **Roman Republic** (509 BC – 27 BC) — Rome was largely a poor farming village until about the 3rd century BCE. Shift occurred in the Punic wars against the Carthaginians (Phoenicians) and Hannibal's army of Elephants. Fall was attributed to:
 1. **Loss of private farms, rise of *latifundiae*** — Hannibal had ransacked the farms. The Roman government reclaimed the land and made it public, leased it out to wealthy patricians who had slave laborers.
 2. **Influx of slaves and migrants** — thousands of slaves from Punic war entered Rome. Tenant farmers lost their jobs because slaves were cheap labor. Problems of water and sanitation. Brutal living conditions for slaves. Slave revolts were frequent (Spartacus).
 3. **Land reforms of Tiberius Gracchus (133 BCE)** — argued that land acquired from war should be redistributed to the people. Senate shut down the *concilium plebis* (similar to House of Reps). Senate provoked riots and had Gracchus beat to death with chairs.
 4. **Tension between *optimates* and *populares***
 5. **Rise of dictators** — Sulla, Pompey, Crassus, Julius Caesar. Triumvirate (of which Herod the Great played sides).
 6. **Julius Caesar** — appointed dictator. Created a stronger centralized government through regulations.
- **Roman Empire** (27 BC – 476 BC [330–1453 Eastern/Byzantine]) — assassination of Julius Caesar marked the establishment of the Roman Empire. The decline of democracy and the rise of the aristocratic rule, civil wars, and internal turmoil brought about this shift. primary for Intertestamental purposes. Most contact with Judaea in and around the New Testament.

Augustus & the *pax Romana*

- Augustus was given the highest honor as *imperator*.
- Augustus was popular with the people, distributed money to soldiers.
- Ruled for a very long time, established a period of peace and increased economic activity.

Pax Romana

1. Time of increased attention to family values and relative orality.
2. Expansion of the Empire under Augustus = world-wide military domination.
3. Being a soldier received greater perks at retirement (citizenship, land, social-status).

5.2 Judaea as Client-Kingdom

Pompey

- Hasmonean alliance turned Judaea into a client-state.¹
- Pompey captured the Temple and massacred over 12,000 Jews.
- Judea was a client-state under Syrian Province.

Antipater

- First client-king of Judaea
- Notably sent aid to help Julius Caesar capture Egypt.
- In reward, Antipater received Roman citizenship and tax free status²

Herod the Great

- Born ca. 73 BC.
- Gradual rise to power, began in Galilee.
- Secured confidence and support of Julius Caesar, Crassus, Cassius, Mark Antony, General Agrippa, and Caesar Augustus. \cite[171]{Feldman1996aa}—>
- Was eventually named tetrarch by Mark Anthony.
- Temporarily fled to Rome during Parthian invasion.
 - Appointed client-king in 40 BC.
 - Returned in 37 and took control of Jerusalem with a Roman army. Had Antigonus killed at Mark Antony's command.
- Mark Antony, however, took his territory later on and gave it to Cleopatra. Herod, however, swapped sides to Octavian (Augustus) who gave Judaea back to him.
- **Herod ruled over largest Palestinian kingdom since David**

¹ Feldman and Reinhold, *Jewish Life and Thought among Greeks and Romans*, 167.

² Josephus, *Ant.* 14.127–30, 133–34, 136–37.

Notable Accomplishments

- 35–27 — Executed Aristobulus III, brother-in-law Joseph (1st husband of sister Salome), Hyracanus II, Mariamne (wife), Alexandra (Mariamne's mother), Kostabar (2nd husband of sister Salome).
- 25 BC — rebuilt city of Samaria as Sebaste (*Ant.* 15.292–98)
- 20/19 BC — commissioned building of Temple (*Ant.* 15.380).
- 8–4 BC — had children killed in response to birth of Jesus.
- 4 BC — Herod dies (*Ant.* 17.191)

Other Accomplishments

- Stabilized political situation in Judaea.
- Established agriculture and commerce. Brought wealth.
- Built cities, ports, theaters.
- — Herod was exceedingly wealthy and donated to other cities to build gymnasia, baths, pagan temples, etc (Antioch, Tyre, Athens, Sparta, etc).
- Herod's rule was secured on the global scale, but locally he was challenged by:
 1. *Pharisees and people influenced by them.*
 2. *His own family* — became excessively paranoid towards the end of his life. Had his wife Mariamne killed and her two sons (*Ant.* 16.184–85, ca. 10 BC) [173]. Augustus supposedly said “I would rather be his swine than his son” [176].
 3. *The nobility in the Sanhedrin*
 4. *The Hasmoneans whom he had removed*
- Made significant tax breaks on the people which aided his popularity some [172].
- Promoted athletic contests, horse racing, and theater in and about Jerusalem. Caused strife with Jews over this [174].
- Herod even advocated for Jews in the Diaspora spread throughout the Roman Empire (esp. Asia Minor; cf. *Ant.* 16.60–61) [175].

Division of Herod's Kingdom

1. **Philip** (4 BC — 34 CE) — tetrarch of Iturea and Trachonitis.
2. **Antipas** (4 BC – 39 CE) — tetrarch over Galilee and Perea.
3. **Archelaus** (4 BC – 6 CE) — ethnarch over Idumea, Judea, and Samaria. Banished to Vienna after Jews and Samaritans appealed to Rome (*Ant.* 17.342–44).

5.3 Judaea as Procuratorial Province (AD 6–66)

- Not as important as Syria, overall.
- **Significant Changes**
 1. Jews were directly taxed, no longer could mint their own coins.
 2. Procurator becomes supreme judge, commander of army, and appointed high priests.
- Coponius (6–9 CE), Marcus Ambibulus (9–12 CE), Annius Rufus (12–15 CE), Valerius Gratus (15–26 CE), **Pontus Pilate** (26–36 CE), etc.
- These were all subject to Syria.
- In 44, Judaea became an independent Roman province and procurators had more power.

Pontius Pilate (26–36 CE)

- Supported by Praetorian guard in Rome.
- Pilate was removed in 36 CE by Rome over a dispute in Samaria.
- **Major Actions**
 1. **Brought Roman Ensigns (image of emperor) to Jerusalem.** Eventually removed these since they were threatened.
 2. *Robbed the Temple Treasury* — tried to finance a 25-mile aqueduct into Jerusalem. Had many Jewish protestors killed in response.
 3. *Mingled Blood of Galileans with Sacrifices* (Luke 13:1–4).

5.4 Attitudes between Jews and Romans

- Jews, naturally, disliked Roman rule because of:
 1. *Taxes* (Matt 22:17–21; Mark 12:14–17; Luke 20:24–25; 23:2)
 2. *Removal of Jewish independence* (loss of Hasmonean state)
 3. *Influx of Roman culture* — disrespect by Pilate.
 4. *Hope of Messiah, Teachings of Jesus (new kingdom)* — have to remember that misconstrued understanding of Jesus' teaching on Rome along with reaction to persecutions, generated disdain for Romans.
- Romans generally saw Jews as a pestilence. They, notably, didn't trust Jews to rule themselves and had to install client-kings (Herods) or Roman procurators (Pilate) to rule over them. Finally squashed their rebellion in 70 CE when the Temple was destroyed.

5.5 Further Study, NT Parallels

- Augustus (Luke 2:1)
 - Tiberius (Luke 3:1)
 - **Six Herods of the New Testament**
 1. Herod the Great (Matt 2:16–18)
 2. Herod Archelaus (Matt 2:22)
 3. Herod Philip (Luke 3:1)
 4. Herod Antipas (Matt 14:6–10)
 5. Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12:1ff)
 6. Herod Agrippa II (Acts 25–26)
-

Part II

Approaching the New Testament

- First century sources
 - Josephus
 - Philo
 - Greco-Roman authors
 - New Testament — regarded by even atheist scholars as an accurate representation of the First Century World.
-

Daily Life in the Greco-Roman World

6.1 Religion

- The term “religion” does not have an explicit connotation in the ancient world.
- Cicero called it “pious worship of the gods” and “justice towards the gods.”

“Balance” in Religion (Aristotelian Mean)

- *Atheiotes* – “atheism” – too little religion. This was a very nuanced category which could mean:
 1. *Regional/Verbal Atheism* One’s geographical region didn’t have a god and by extent those living in it were godless.
 2. *Philosophical objection to religion*: e.g. Epicureanism said that the gods do not interfere with men or that gods cannot assume the forms as the myths say.
 3. *Aniconic atheism* — failure to worship pagan images (e.g. Christians/Jews).
- *Deisidaimonia* (Grk) – *superstitio* (lat) – “superstition” – too much religion but not superstition in the modern sense.
- *Eusebeia* (Grk) – *pietas* (lat) – “piety” – right amount of religion.
 - Dutiful behavior towards the gods, family, and gov’t/emperor.
 - NT uses this word in sense of family (1 Tim 5:4) and religion (Acts 17:23), et al.
- One was called an atheist when they did not conform to Greco-Roman societal norms for proper amount and kind of religious devotion.

Origins of Greco-Roman Religion

- Ancient poets formed the basis for the gods and their nature.
- **Homer** (*Iliad*, *Odyssey*)
 - Most ancient Greek poet. Poems date back to 700s BCE (around the time of Isaiah, Amos, Hosea, Jonah, etc).
 - Unclear whether he was one person or figurative.
 - Homer was viewed as source of all wisdom, but with some skepticism by the educated.

- Homer’s wisdom could be applied to religion, diplomacy, farming, etc.
- **Hesiod** (*Theogony*)
 - Came later, secondly important.
 - Like Homer, attributed inspiration to the “Muses”
 - Writings discussed the creation of the world, the afterlife (*Gaia*), and the underworld (*Tartarus*) which were deities themselves.
- These figures were embraced by Greeks. In Roman times, however, they were viewed with much more skepticism.

Worship and Identity

- *Belief* was not necessary — this was a Jewish concept. Religion was very pragmatic and non-emotional. There was no relationship with the deity: it was all very business-like.
- Deities were linked to the identities of cultures and to cities which their god oversaw (Athena=Athens, etc.)
- **Early On** — Groves of trees were associated with this kind of worship. People did not necessarily enter the temple. Sacrifices were necessary to get a “prayer” answered.
- **Classical Period** — more skepticism about gods. Homer/Hesiod not necessarily literal. Philosophy begins to replace “religion.”
- **Roman Period**
 - Romans wanted to identify their gods with foreign counterparts. Didn’t want to feel insecure about their own gods so they assimilated them as their own (syncretism, “ecumenism”). They claimed YHWH as “Zeus.”
 - Popularity of the gods was tied to the reputation of the cities they were associated with.
 - Romans had more organized worship with priests and structure.
 - Priests were often politicians.

Emperor Worship

- “Emperor Worship” or the “Imperial Cult” was a significant part of Roman life.
- Julius Caesar was the first. Caligula, Nero, Domitian were among those more engrossed with it.
- It included worship of deceased emperors, worship of living emperors in the provinces, local cults collecting funds for building things to honor the emperor, and family shrines/monuments.
- Really involved gaining favor with emperors.
- Huge struggle for Jews and Christians (images, man≠god, etc).

Pliny's Letter to Trajan (ca. 111–113 AD)

Pliny, Letters 10.96–97

Pliny to the Emperor Trajan

It is my practice, my lord, to refer to you all matters concerning which I am in doubt. For who can better give guidance to my hesitation or inform my ignorance? I have never participated in trials of Christians. I therefore do not know what offenses it is the practice to punish or investigate, and to what extent. And I have been not a little hesitant as to whether there should be any distinction on account of age or no difference between the very young and the more mature; whether pardon is to be granted for repentance, or, if a man has once been a Christian, it does him no good to have ceased to be one; whether the name itself, even without offenses, or only the offenses associated with the name are to be punished. Meanwhile, in the case of those who were denounced to me as Christians, I have observed the following procedure: I interrogated these as to whether they were Christians; those who confessed I interrogated a second and a third time, threatening them with punishment; those who persisted I ordered executed. For I had no doubt that, whatever the nature of their creed, stubbornness and inflexible obstinacy surely deserve to be punished. There were others possessed of the same folly; but because they were Roman citizens, I signed an order for them to be transferred to Rome. Soon accusations spread, as usually happens, because of the proceedings going on, and several incidents occurred. An anonymous document was published containing the names of many persons. Those who denied that they were or had been Christians, when they invoked the gods in words dictated by me, offered prayer with incense and wine to your image, which I had ordered to be brought for this purpose together with statues of the gods, and moreover cursed Christ—none of which those who are really Christians, it is said, can be forced to do—these I thought should be discharged. Others named by the informer declared that they were Christians, but then denied it, asserting that they had been but had ceased to be, some three years before, others many years, some as much as twenty-five years. They all worshipped your image and the statues of the gods, and cursed Christ. They asserted, however, that the sum and substance of their fault or error had been that they were accustomed to meet on a fixed day before dawn and sing responsively a hymn to Christ as to a god, and to bind themselves by oath, not to some crime, but not to commit fraud, theft, or adultery, not falsify their trust, nor to refuse to return a trust when called upon to do so. When this was over, it was their custom to depart and to assemble again to partake of food—but ordinary and innocent food. Even this, they affirmed, they had ceased to do after my edict by which, in accordance with your instructions, I had forbidden political associations. Accordingly, I judged it all the more necessary to find out what the truth was by torturing two female slaves who were called deaconesses. But I discovered nothing else but depraved, excessive superstition.

I therefore postponed the investigation and hastened to consult you. For the matter seemed to me to warrant consulting you, especially because of the number involved. For many persons of every age, every rank, and also of both sexes are and will be endangered. For the contagion of this superstition has spread not only to the cities but also to the villages and farms. But it seems possible to check and cure it. It is certainly quite clear that the temples, which had been almost deserted, have begun to be frequented, that the established religious rites, long neglected, are being resumed, and that from everywhere sacrificial animals are coming, for which until now very few purchasers could be found. Hence it is easy to imagine what a multitude of people can be reformed if an opportunity for repentance is afforded.

Trajan to Pliny You observed proper procedure, my dear Pliny, in sifting the cases of those who had been denounced to you as Christians. For it is not possible to lay down any general rule to serve as a kind of fixed standard. They are not to be sought out; if they are denounced and proved guilty, they are

to be punished, with this reservation, that whoever denies that he is a Christian and really proves it—that is, by worshiping our gods—even though he was under suspicion in the past, shall obtain pardon through repentance. But anonymously posted accusations ought to have no place in any prosecution. For this is both a dangerous kind of precedent and out of keeping with the spirit of our age.

Olympian Dieties

1. Zeus = Jupiter
2. Hera = Juno
3. Poseidon = Neptune
4. Apollo = ?
5. Artemis = Diana Vulcan
6. Athena = Minerva
7. Hermes = Mercury
8. Ares = Mars
9. Aphrodite = Venus
10. Demeter = Ceres
11. Dionysius = Bacchus
12. Hephaestus = ?

Artemis

Acts 19:35: "And having quieted the crowd, the town clerk said, 'Men of Ephesus, who is there among men who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is the temple keeper (*neokoros*) of the great Artemis and of what fell from god [i.e. Zeus]?"

- This temple was one of the 7 ancient wonders of the world.
- Pliny the Elder says it was 435 feet long, 220 feet wide, and 60 feet high, making it ca. 4x the size of the Parthenon in Athens.

Summary of Greco-Roman Religion

1. Greco-Roman Religion was nonexclusive (polytheism).
2. Greco-Roman religion was syncretistic (deities blended together from different places).
3. Greco-Roman religion focused on the power of the god rather than the personality of the god (as in Greece) – concern for what the god *can do* as opposed to what the god has done.
4. Deification of abstract ideas (naming a deity after a desired quality, e.g., Fortuna, Libertas, Concordia, etc.)
5. Prominence of fate and astrology to unlock one's fate (Eastern concept).

6. Religion could not be divorced from cult (no personal religion).
7. Religion was a-moral (neither positive nor negative).

6.2 Organizations, Associations, and Guilds

1. **Ethnic/Geographic Associations** (e.g. Jewish synagogues)
2. **Occupational Associations/Guilds** (silversmiths, Acts 19:24f)
3. **Cultic/Temple Associations**

Ethnic Associations

- Greek word Ἰουδαῖος can mean “Jew” or “Judean.”
- People who are a cultural and linguistic background tend to congregate.
- There are 11 ancient synagogues attested in Rome, certainly indicating a substantial population of Jews.
- Those of Judean descent could find a welcome place here.

Occupational Associations

- Very similar to modern labor unions. Held group meetings and resources for those of similar trade.
- Membership was mostly compulsory. Could belong to multiple groups.
- Guilds of Bakers, Fishermen, Farmers, Doctors, Textile workers, etc. Covers almost every occupation.

Cultic/Temple Associations

- Virtually all associations maintained religious connections (e.g. a patron deity / “patron saint”).
- Difficult for Christians to be involved with associations.
- Best associations known were Dionysius/Bacchus.

Relation to the New Testament

- Associations regularly shared common meals (e.g. 1 Cor 11)
- Their meeting place was called a “house” (cf. Col 4:15; Phlm 2)
- Sometimes called an *ekklesia* or “church”
- Leadership was described as an “overseer” (*episkopos*), “elders” (*presbyteroi*), “deacons” (*diakonoi*).
- Churches were probably viewed in these terms. Paul “spoke their language” when instructing how to setup the churches. Jews probably understood notion of “elders” because of the Sanhedrin / Jewish *gerousia* leadership.

6.3 Survey of Philosophy

- Word *philo* (“love of”) — *sophy* (“wisdom”). Equated to “love of practical knowledge.”
- Began as investigation of nature; turned into investigation of man. Expected a kind of lifestyle accompanied with theoretical teaching.
- Romans did not develop philosophy, adapted from Greeks. Romans often blended ideas based on pragmatism.
- Figures such as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle were concerned with observing nature. Very abstract.
- Later groups such as Platonists, Aristoteans, Stoics, and Epicureans were more concerned with a lifestyle.

Philosophical Ideals

- **Platonists** — denied all knowledge
- **Stoicism** — “live in accord with nature.”
 - The *Logos* (same as “Word” in John 1:1) was a divine substance embedded in nature.
 - Virtue is necessary for happiness. Eradicate passions.
 - Christians adapted Stoic ethics.
- **Epicureanism** — focused on happiness and pleasure. Do not pursue pleasure if it has an evil outcome. Happiness is subjective and individually determined.
- **Moral Philosophy** — *Musonius Rufus* (30–100 AD) — vegetarianism, sex inside marriage & only for procreation, equality between men and women. Other philosophers like Epictetus and Seneca shared characteristics with Christianity.

Education

- Education was private with a single teacher.
 - Three levels
 1. **Primary** (studied w/*grammatistes*) — reading, writing, heavy memorization.
 2. **Secondary** (w/a *grammatikos*) — 11–12+ yrs/old. Grammar, rhetoric, dialectic, geometry, arithmetic, astronomy, and music.
 3. **Advanced** (w/a *rhetor*) — select few. Law, philosophy, rhetoric.
-

People and Culture in Ancient Rome (Rogers 4.2–4.3)

7.1 The People

- Basic social structure:
 1. **CITIZENS** (*cives*)
 - a) *Patricians* (*patricii*) — senatorial order. Land owners.
 - b) *Equestrians* (*equites*) — “knights,” businessmen. Descendants of military officers.
 - c) *Plebeians* — the poor.
 2. **Foreigners** (*peregrini*) and **Non-Citizens**
 - a) *Slaves* (20–30% of Rome’s population)
 - b) *Provincials* (lived in Roman provinces, non-citizens cf. Acts 22:25ff). They paid taxes to Rome and financed it. Citizens did not pay these taxes.

Patricians /Senatorial Order

- From Augustus onward there were *only* 600 families.
- You had to own 250,000 denarii of property (~\$20 million).
- One became a Roman senator through election to *quaestor*, *praetor*, *consul*.
- They wore a purple sash on their togas to signify status.
- Were called *nobilis* at end of Roman republic (1st c. BC), there were only twelve families then.

Cursus Honorum

- All patrician males were expected to follow the “Honorable Course.”
 - At age 20, they would hold a minor post in Rome.
 - Next they would serve in the military.
 - They would become a *quaestor* (financial officer) in Rome or elsewhere.
 - They could be elected to higher offices after this.
- Some chose to be *praetors* (judicial officers)
 - They could qualify to be provincial governors, legion commanders, or judges.
 - One could become a consul in Rome or govern a major province (Egypt, Asia Minor, Syria).

Equestrian Order

- Larger class of people, only required 100,000 denarii (\$8–12mil).
 - Senators could come from this order if the most wealthy.
 - Easy to advance into the Equestrian order from military career.
 - Equestrians, unlike Patricians, did not conduct business so *equites* became very wealthy.
- Equestrians could work as
 - **Military** (legionary tribune, commander of auxilia, navy, cavalry)
 - **Procuratorial** [financial] (mines or other state properties, provincial finance officer, prefecture positions).
 - **Secretaries** (in Rome: commanders of police and fire brigades, in charge of grain administration, commander of praetorian guard; in Provinces: procurator of small province).

Freedmen/Plebians

- Usually worked for Patricians.
- They were often former slaves — served former masters in patron-client relationship.
- In Rome (only), could a former slave could become a citizen and their sons could qualify for equestrian rank.
- Felix (Acts 23:26) was a freedman.

Slavery

- Slavery was a normal condition in ancient society.
- Aristotle viewed them as “living tool” and “living property”¹
- 20% of Rome’s residents were slaves.
- **Slaves were acquired through** (1) slave dealers; (2) inheritance; (3) children of owned slaves.
- **One could become a slave by** (1) being a prisoner of war; (2) child exposure; (3) sale of self or a child to pay debt; (4) as a legal punishment from court; (5) birth to slave mother.
- *Slaves could not marry — possibly a problem for the early church.*

Roman Citizenship

- Could be obtained in 1 of 4 ways:
 1. Birth to citizen parents (children received birth certificates to this effect).
- Manumission of slaves belonging to a citizen in the city of Rome.

¹ Aristotle, *EN* 8.11 and *Pol* 1.2.4–5, 1253b respectively.

- As the special gift from the emperor for services rendered to himself or the state.
 1. Honorable discharge (retirement) from the military.
- As a citizen one could
 1. Vote (but only in Rome)
 2. Be freed from certain forms of punishment (scourging or crucifixion cf. Acts 22:25)
 3. Right to appeal sentences to Rome (cf. Acts 25:10–12)

Roman Family

- Society was heavily family-based.
- A *familia* consists of a man, his wife, their sons and their wives, and all property (including slaves).
- Adultery became a punishable crime. There was a double standard: a woman could only prosecute her husband when it was with another married woman, slaves and or prostitutes did not count. Another man however could prosecute me for being with an unmarried girl or a widow or for homosexuality. Just not necessarily decrease immorality they increased a lot of political maneuvering and blackmail.²
- The head of every family was a *paterfamilias*. He was the religious official, economic administrator, and held power of life/death over the family (could have a slave killed).
- If a divorce occurred, children went with the father even if the woman initiated the divorce.³
- Marriages were mostly arranged around age 12–14 for girls. Most weddings occurred in June (superstition). Wedding ceremony conducted by pagan priest. Bride's father would hold reception.
- Childbirth was very dangerous. Girls were expected to birth children young. After birth, the child was laid at the feet of the father who decided whether or not they would accept the child.

Death

- Soul was ferried across river Styx to Hades (coin placed in mouth to pay toll). The soul was judged whether one would to to Elysium or Tartarus.
- There was a viewing of the body in the home.
- Body was buried outside the city in a sarcophagus (marble, stone).
- Sometimes bodies were cremated.

² Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (3d ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 75–76.

³ Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 75.

7.2 Roman Military

Roman *Legio*

- General was called *legatus*. Led 6000 soldiers (inc. 700 cavalry).
- 10 cohorts of 6 centuries. Each century led by *centurion*. Centurions could gain Equestrian status.
- Service lasted about 20–25 years.
- Under Augustus legionaries were paid 225 denarii /yr. Domitian raised it to 300.
- Legions carried an eagle and standards and a tent to house these and statues of the gods and emperor.

Roman *Auxilia*

- Not Roman citizens. Not as disciplined.
- Kind of a local militia. About 500 or 1000 in number.
- Could receive citizenship for them and their families after 25 years.
- Judea had 1 auxiliary unit of cavalry and 6 units of cohorts.

Praetorian Guard

- Emperor's personal bodyguard. Between 500–1000 men.
- 9–12 cohorts, each commanded by a tribune.
- Entire guard was commanded by prefects.
- This appointment was the most important posting, high status.

Police, Firefighters, and Homeland Security

- 3 urban cohorts in each city commanded by city prefect.
- Provided city security.
- *Vigiles* served as police and fire source.
- These all were freedmen, about 3000 in Rome.

7.3 Customs

Patronage

- Relationship between a patron who paid (gifts or money) to a client for services.
- The more clients one had, the greater they were.
- Often wealthy politicians used this relationship for their political campaigns.

Friendship

- Highly valued. Was not necessarily patron-client relationship.
- Friendship was between two equal people.
- Expected to support friendship, build trust. Breaking this was socially unacceptable.

Honor and Shame

- Not like Jewish “guilt culture.”
- Public opinion determined morality.
- Not “right and wrong” but “honor and dishonor.”
- Wealth, benevolence, courage, etc. were seen as “honorable.”

Sexuality

- Adultery was not a major offense unless one slept with another's wife.
- Common to sleep with slaves and have illegitimate children.
- Homosexuality was accepted in male teenage years through their twenties. Was regarded as “peak of friendship” in Classical Greece and “part of growing up.” It was not tolerated for entirety of one's life. Technically illegal in Athens, but not enforced.
- Prostitution was also common and accepted. Temples and brothels encouraged the practice. Sex = worship in some places. Corinth allegedly had 1000 sacred prostitutes in the Temple of Aphrodite.

Economy

- Primarily agrarian /farming.
- Trade consisted of grain, oil, wine & also pottery, mined ores, textiles, and glasswork.
- Cities built around an *agora* /*forum* (market) = city square.
- Egypt and Asia Minor most productive economically.

Taxation

- Direct taxes collected by a province's governor (*tributa*): (1) produce tax; (2) property tax like slaves.
- Indirect taxes (*vectigalia*) which consisted of *portoria* “frontier dues” collected by tax collectors (*publicani*). “Pyramid-type” collection process setup.

Entertainment

- “Spectacle” entertainment was very popular.
 - Christians objected to the theatre, arena, and the circus.
 1. **Theatre** — dramas, connected to Dionysius. Very vulgar /inappropriate kind of entertainment. Largest civic structure in a city. Used for other purposes (Acts 29:19ff).
 2. **Athletics** — competitions held in honor of deity or person. Held in stadiums (running, boxing, pentathlon), arenas (naval battles, gladiatorial shows), and circuses (chariot racing).
 - *Gymnasia/Baths* also considered entertainment. Used for conducting business, exercise, relaxation, etc. Mixed bathing occurred.
-

Jewish Sectarianism

- There were “24 sects of heretics” at 70 CE (y. *Sanh* 10.6.29c).
- There were similarities in all of these groups with Christianity. Easy to see how “cross pollination” occurred.
- ***Judaism was not a monolithic entity*** — it cannot be squarely placed and identified holistically. There were fundamental beliefs but practice and theology differed widely. Same goes for contemporary “Christianity” or even “Catholicism” which has a variety of “religious orders” (Jesuits, Cistercians, Franciscans, etc.)

8.1 Chief Sources

- **Josephus**, Jewish general and later client of Emperor Domitian.
 - *The Jewish Wars* (*B.J.*) — account of wars leading up to 70 CE.
 - *The Jewish Antiquities* (*Ant.*) — retelling of Jewish history from Gen onward.
 - *Vita* — Josephus’ personal biography.
- **Philo of Alexandria**, Jewish Philosopher in Alexandria. Various writings.
- **New Testament** — this is one area in which the NT provides information about the Pharisees unavailable elsewhere.
- **Dead Sea Scrolls** — depict community life at Qumran.
- **Various Rabbinic and Greek Sources** — including Talmudic sources, Greek writers (Pliny).

8.2 Samaritans

- This is a group that chose Schechem and Mt. Gerizim instead of Jerusalem and Mt. Zion as their center of religious life.
- Josephus accused them of taking on Jewish practices only after receiving an oracle and that they only considered themselves Jews when it was convenient for them (*Ant.* 9.288–91).
- There was disagreement in the Rabbis over whether Samaritans, who were essentially foreigners from Chutha, were actually proselytes (*b. Qidd.* 75b–76a).
- At some point a “separation occurred” but this was more of a long process than a decisive event.
- They were religiously conservative and did not embrace syncretism or paganism.

- But they were largely viewed as foreigners (Lk 17:18; Matt 10:5) despite their religious similarities with the Jews (belief in YHWH, loyalty to the Law, “people of the land,” and a hope for the glorious future.)
- Their Temple was ransacked by John Hyrcanus, but they still considered the site sacred even after destruction (cf. John 4).
- **Notable Teachings**
 1. *Only accepted the Torah (Pentateuch) and **not** the Prophets or Writings.*
 2. *Denied the resurrection (Acts 23)*
 3. *Community was led by the high priest (and not rabbis).*
 4. *Different approach to halakhah (Law + Oral Law), liturgy, and historiography.*

8.3 Pharisees

History of Pharisees

- Name is from Hebrew *parush* meaning ‘separate’ or ‘interpret.’ Their name was primarily used by outsiders.¹
- Origins traced back to John Hyrcanus in Hasmonean Period.
 - Pharisees adapted the Law to meet new circumstances.
 - Sadducees wanted new circumstances to stay outside this.
 - Qumranians/Essenes withdrew from public life.
- Pharisees vehemently opposed Hyrcanus’ claim to king and priest. So he supported the Sadducees instead.
- Conflicted with Alexander Jannaeus, but gained favor with his widow Alexandra.
- They eventually wrested power of interpretation from the priests, became lay authorities of the Law, and took over the governing council.
- With Aristobulus and the rise of Roman power, Pharisees lost influence.²
- Pharisees were both a “fellowship group” (table group) and a political group.
- Pharisees both in NT and Josephus were most concerned with accurate interpretation of the law and promoting their own tradition.
- Pharisees likely took initiative in leading Jewish life post-70 destruction.

¹ Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 514.

² Ferguson, 515.

Pharisees & Religion

- The Pharisees insisted on a bipartite authority that revolved around the *Torah* /Pentateuch.
 - But the word “Torah” also indicated the *interpretation* of it.
 - They thought that the Torah was essentially open for interpretation.
 - This interpretation was accomplished by the scribes who were the “official scholars.”
 - They assigned divine authority to the *interpretation* as well as the Torah itself.
 - Therefore, they bound the *interpretations* to be as authoritative as the Torah itself (e.g. “traditions of the Elders” Mark 7:3–5; Matt 15:2).
 - One Rabbi wrote, “It is more culpable to teach against the ordinances of the scribes than against the Torah itself” (*b. Sanh.* 11.3).
- So their distinguishing feature is insistence on the validity of the Oral Law *in addition to* the Written Law /Torah.³
- On this point, Jesus challenged them for making additional laws.
- The Pharisees placed themselves at a higher position than the Priesthood who were the interpreters of the Law (Lev 10:10; Deut 17:8–13). This was partially in response to what they saw as the failure of the priestly class.
- But in reality, they were really only common land-owners, shopkeepers, and artisans. A kind of middle class.
- Most of their tradition (2/3rd) was concerned with *ritual purity*
 1. Preparation of food (Matt 15:2)
 2. Observance of agricultural laws.
 3. Observance of the Sabbath (cf. Matt 12:1; Mark 3:2; etc.)
 4. Tithing.
- Pharisees were more popular with the people (*Ant.* 13.297–98).
- **Notable Teachings**
 1. *Would not associate with sinners* — “*separated ones*” (Luke 15:2)
 2. *Maintained their own ritual purity* (Matt 15:20)
 3. *Expanded the Sabbath definition of “work”* (Luke 6:1)

³ Feldman and Reinhold, *Jewish Life and Thought among Greeks and Romans*, 241.

Jesus and the Pharisees

- There was considerable amount of agreement despite Jesus's rebukes.⁴
 - He accepted authority of Torah (Mark 6:56; 1:40–45; 14:12; 12:36).
 - He had friendly contacts with Pharisees (Luke 7:36ff; 11:37; 13:31–33; 14:1; Mark 12:28–34; Matt 23:1–2).
 - Jesus' "Golden Rule" was reflected in Jewish teaching.
 - Rabbis were concerned with simplifying the Law (Matt 22:36).
- – So Pharisee was not synonymous with "hypocrite" nor was Pharisee equivalent with "Pharisaical."
- Contrast to them, Jesus differed in:
 1. **Associated with sinners** and was not "separate" from the world (Mar 2:15–17; Matt 9:9–13, etc).⁵
 2. **Ritual purity** (Mark 7:1–23; Matt 15:1–20)
 3. **Sabbath** — not as strictly observed as Pharisees (Mark 2:23–3:6; Matt 12:1–13; Luke 6:1–11).
 4. **Divorce** — Jesus disagreed with their permissiveness of divorce (Matt 19:3–12). Hillel allowed divorce for any cause. Shammai limited it to sexual immorality and immodest behavior (Gittin 9.10). Jesus was closer to Shammai, but not identical.

8.4 Sadducees

- They were connected with Zadok, a high priest under David or one of the others named after him.
- They were mostly wealthy priests and had friends in aristocracy (Acts 5:17). Remember: they supported the Hasmoneans while the Pharisees did not.
- The result was that they *combined conservative religious attitudes with power politics*. They were conservative but also cooperated with the ruling authorities.
- Sadducees still had to "play the Pharisee game" because Pharisees were so popular with people (*Ant.* 18.16–17).
- Sadducees deny "fate", immortality of the soul, and reward/punishment after death. They assert that human free will was greater than fate (*BJ.* 2.164–46).⁶
- Sadducees lost all power and influence with the destruction of the Temple in 70.

⁴ Ferguson, 517–18.

⁵ This is an important point for us to remember as we grow in Christian maturity. Although we may grow to avoid struggles of sin, this does not mean that we consider ourselves pure and the rest of the world unclean. They are still made in the image of God even if they do not know their Father. We must still remain in this world and *engaged* with it (John 17:14–15, etc.)

⁶ Feldman and Reinhold, *Jewish Life and Thought among Greeks and Romans*, 243.

Teachings of Sadducees

- Sadducees only accepted the Law of Moses and rejected the oral law / “traditions of the elders” of the Pharisees.
- **They only accepted the Pentateuch.**
 - The Prophets and other historical writings were not authoritative for doctrine. They still were familiar with them, but not focus.
 - Jesus interestingly cites a passage from the Pentateuch when discussing with them about the resurrection (Matt 22:23–33; Exod 3:6).
- **The Sadducees denied the resurrection** (Acts 23:8)
 - There was no “afterlife” in which people were either punished or rewarded.
 - They asserted free overrides choice.⁷

8.5 Essenes

- Josephus speaks more about the Essenes than Pharisees or Sadducees. However, they are not mentioned in the Talmud, New Testament, or Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS).
- They lived monastically and were separated from the world. Strict discipline and community-centered life.
- Read Philo, *Every Good Man is Free* 12.75–82ff [F&R 245].
- Most scholars think that Essenes are probably connected to the production of the Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran (Pliny, *Natural History* 6.73).
- Reality is probably that “Essene” is a broad term and does not have one particular group in mind. Each of these were distinct and were not as unified as “Pharisees.” Qumran may have been only one of these groups.

8.6 Therapeutae

- Their name means “healers.” They were ascetic sect who lived on shores of Lake Mareotis near Alexandria, Egypt.⁸
- Very likely influenced Christian monasticism. They were vegetarians, serve no wine, and demand chastity.⁹

8.7 Dead Sea Sect at Qumran

- This group probably existed from about 2nd c. BCE to 1st c. CE which is roughly the same time period as the other sects.
- Much of their beliefs were developed as a response to events occurring at the seat of power in the Jerusalem Temple: priest-king John Hyrcanus, etc.

⁷ Feldman & Reinhold, 243.

⁸ Feldman and Reinhold, *Jewish Life and Thought among Greeks and Romans*, 253.

⁹ Feldman & Reinhold, 254.

- They were very concerned with priesthood and “sons of Zadok.”¹⁰
- Part of admission required a kind of ritual immersion. Such cleansings occurred frequently in these types of communities.
- These were the people that composed what we have as the DSS.
- Very similar to Essenes, but had important differences.¹¹
 - No death penalty.
 - Did not give up private property.
 - Followed solar calendar instead of lunar-solar.
 - Believed sacrifices were made in Temple.
 - Priests were more prominent in DS sect.
 - Essenes do not mention “Righteous Teacher.”
 - DS sect permitted slavery, Essenes opposed.
 - Probation period lesser with Dead Sea sect.
 - Women and children and marriage permitted at Qumran.
 - Qumran had more militaristic edge to it (Zealot influx?)
- Some think John the Baptist was at Qumran or an Essene. But his view of baptism was different from theirs. People still understood this related concept. Qumran ideals may have not been so unique as they were in the background of Judaism.
- Their community was destroyed once in 31 BCE during Herod’s reign by an earthquake. It was reinhabited during 30s CE until the fall of the Temple in 70. Romans came and destroyed their community, rest fled to fortress of Masada.

8.8 Herodians

- A group not mentioned anywhere outside the Gospels.
- All we know is that they conspired with the Pharisees and tried to coerce Jesus on several occasions (Matt 22:16; Mark 3:6; 12:13).
- This term was mostly political and probably meant they supported the Herodian Dynasty as opposed to the Hasmoneans. If so, this fits with the Pharisees’ political allegiances.

8.9 The Fourth Philosophy /Zealots

- Broader group that was the fourth of the major groups after Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes.
- They strongly opposed submission to Roman or any kind of foreign rule (cf. Matt 22:17).
 - God alone was their Lord and master and not the Emperor.

¹⁰ Ferguson, 524.

¹¹ Feldman & Reinhold, 256–57.

- Jews should not submit but *overthrow* foreign rule and God would help.¹²
- They shared similar views with the Pharisees, but in a more extremist manner. They were willing to die for their convictions and were unafraid of it.
- Term “Zealot” was not explicitly a reference to a group, but a term later assigned by Josephus. So “Simon the Zealot” probably refers to his zealous dedication to Jewish faith/practice and not radicalism.
- The “thief” on the cross and Barabbas, probably better translated “insurrectionist” or “terrorist”, are closer to Zealot in the NT.
- This Fourth Philosophy later materialized more objectively in a group called the Zealots which played a prominent role in the Jewish War of 66–70 A.D.

Sicarii

- Were a subset of the revolutionary Fourth Philosophy. Name mean “knife men.”
- Mingled in crowds on festival occasions with hidden daggers. They would strike down Roman officials and disappeared into the crowd.
- This was the group that made the “last stand at Masada” and committed suicide.

8.10 Common Ground?

- Despite the great difference between the various “Judaisms”, a number of scholars identify a set of characteristics that, nevertheless, defines all these groups as “Jewish”
 1. **Hebrew Bible** — some regarded the Torah only, others the Torah, Prophets, and Writings other books and/or traditions in addition to these.
- **Monotheism** — God was viewed increasingly transcendent, making it necessary for angels to communicate.
- **Historiography** — Father Abraham, Law-giver Moses, and the biblical history of the southern kingdom.
- **Circumcision** — this was considered a *sine qua non*.
- **Observance of Holidays** — Passover was the most sacred, Sabbath the most common.
- **Dietary restrictions** — especially pork.

¹² Ferguson, 532.

The Diaspora: Jews among the Greeks

9.1 What is the Diaspora?

- The word “Diaspora” (διασπορά) means “dispersion.”
- The Diaspora began at the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians.
- The first mention of the word appears in the Septuagint (Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament)
 - Deut 28:25 May the Lord give you slaughter before your enemies; you shall go out against them by one way and flee from them by seven ways. And you shall be in **dispersion** in all the kingdoms of the earth.
 - Deut 28:25 in English Bibles (based on the Hebrew OT) reads differently. This is because the Greek Jews actually *changed* their Bible in light of present circumstances.
- Acts 2:5, 10 is evidence of the widespread Jewish population.
- To this day, Jews that are outside of Palestine *still view themselves as part of the Diaspora*.

Table 9.1: Events in Diaspora Judaism

Date	Event	Result
740–722	Exile of the Northern Kingdom by Assyria	Many N. Kgdms Jews carried off (2 Kgs 25; Jer 52; 2 Chron 36); Other peoples planted in Samaria and became Samaritans
587 BC	Destruction of Jerusalem; Exile of Judah	Jews, Benjaminites, and Levites exiled to Babylon
585 BC	Remnant of Jews led by Johanan → Egypt	Jeremiah and other Jews taken to Egypt against God's wishes (Jer 42–43)
539/38 BC	Persians destroy Babylonians	Begins <i>slow</i> return of Babylonian Jews to Judaea (2 Chron 36; Ezra 1)
516/515 BC	TEMPLE REBUILT (Ezra 6:15)	
444 BC	WALLS REBUILT (Neh 2)	
70 AD	Jerusalem Destroyed by Romans	Many Jews forced to leave Judea permanently. Jews spread out all over Roman Empire. <i>THIS IMPACTS EARLY CHURCH</i>

9.2 Synagogue Life

Backgrounds and Origins

- **Definition** *Synagogue* (συναγωγή) literally means a “gathering” (Jas 2:2). The word is like church (ἐκκλησία) which literally means “the called out” but also “a popular assembly, gathering, or community.”¹ Over time, the word “church” (ἐκκλησία) and “synagogue” (συναγωγή) were exclusively applied to Christian gatherings/buildings and the Jewish houses of prayer, respectively.
- **Origin of the Synagogue** — likely began in the Exile. The Jews were removed from their Temple context and so needed a place to worship and read the Law (e.g. Neh 8:1). It became convenient to meet in houses, probably of a priest, Levite, or scribe, and so these places became dedicated locations. However the Synagogues were not a replacement for the Temple, but a contingency to meet needs.
- **Oldest Synagogues** — Evidence from Egypt shows that there were Jewish synagogues as far back as 200s CE. Some argue the Synagogue began here instead of in Babylon.²
- **Known Synagogues in the Bible** (often multiple in each city).
 - **Judea** (Lk 4:44) — cities of Jerusalem (Acts 24:12)
 - **Galilee** (Matt 4:23; Mk 1:29; Jn 6:59) — cities of Nazareth (Lk 4:16), Capernaum (Mk 1:21).
 - **Syria** — city of Damascus (Acts 9:2),
 - **Cyprus** — city of Salamis (Acts 13:5)
 - **Asia Minor** — cities of Antioch Pisidia (Acts 13:14), Iconium (Acts 14:1), Ephesus (Acts 18:10, 19:8), Tarsus (Paul’s hometown).
 - **Greece/Macedonia** — cities of Thessalonica (Acts 17:1), Berea (Acts 17:10), Corinth (Acts 18:1–4);
- **Synagogues after 70** — After the destruction of the Temple, it appears that synagogues increasingly incorporated Temple worship elements (furniture, terminology, ritual). They would eventually become “The Holy Place.”

Synagogue Function

- Synagogue served as the “center of community, religion, and social life for the Jewish people.”³
- It primarily served four functions
 1. **Schoolhouse** (*beth midrash*) “house of interpretation.”
 2. **House of Prayer** (*beth tefillah*)
 3. **Meeting House** (*beth kenesseth*)
 4. **House of Judgement** (*beth din*) for community discipline.
- But the synagogue also served other minor roles such as providing a guest-house for traveling Jews and other acts of charity.

¹ ἐκκλησία is used in the OT in the sense of a gathering of God’s people (Deut 31:30; Judg 20:2; 1 Sam 17:47; 1 Kgs 8:14, etc). As we know, ἐκκλησία has broader implications in reference to the global church as well and not merely a local assembly (Matt 16:18). For accessible information on συναγωγή see Strong’s #4864 and for ἐκκλησία Strong’s #1577.

² Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 573.

³ Ferguson, 575.

Synagogue Worship

- Two elements (1) prayer and (2) study of Scripture.
- Worship was mostly on the Sabbath but also on days when people came to the markets (Mon, Thurs).
- Services opened with “Blessing the Lord” and the Shema (Deut 6:4ff; *b. Sotah* 30b). It followed with structured prayers like the Eighteen Benedictions (*Shemoneh Esre /Amidah*). The 18 Benedictions was a staple in first-century Judaism.
- Services are varied depending on the festival day.
- Text of the Eighteen Benedictions is provided in separate handout. *Question for Reflection* — how do our contemporary worship and prayers compare to this?
- Scriptures were read in Hebrew and were not always understood by people who spoke other languages like Greek or Aramaic.⁴ *Targums*, or Aramaic paraphrases, were created to accommodate this need even in Palestine.

Synagogue Organization

- Anyone could form a synagogue, read the Scriptures, translate, preach, or lead prayers and Shema. Did not have to be an “ordained Rabbi” to do so.
- “Ruler(s) of the Synagogue” (ἀρχισυνάγωγος) may have served as the administrator(s) or overseer(s) of the synagogue community and arranged worship services. Sometimes they were just the benefactors.⁵
- “Servants of the Synagogue” (Luke 4:20; *b. Sotah* 7.7) — fulfilled various roles such as the attendant of the scrolls, caretaker of the building, schoolteacher, officer of punishment, etc.
- As we discussed regarding Greek social organizations — this became the pattern for Gentile Churches. In the same way, the synagogue and these roles seemed to form the basis for Christian bishops/elders and deacons. However, the Christian roles would develop differently.⁶

9.3 Important Jewish Diaspora Communities

Egypt (esp. Alexandria)

- Large Jewish community here that was heavily influenced by Hellenistic developments. Focused on ethics and philosophy instead of ritual aspects of Judaism⁷
- They still maintained a close connection with Palestinian Jews and there was frequent travel between (e.g. Joseph & Mary in Matt 2:13–19).
- There was a Jewish Temple in Leontopolis (Josephus, *B.J.* 7.423–32; *Ant.* 13.62–67) after some Jews fled Palestine during the Maccabean Revolt.
- Jews in Egypt were notably mystic (cf. document called *Joseph and Aseneth*)

⁴ Ferguson, 580

⁵ Biblical examples, some named, include Jarius in Mark 5:22ff; Luke 13:14; Acts 13:15; Crispus in Ac 18:8; and Sosthenes in Ac 18:17).

⁶ Ferguson, 581.

⁷ Especially Philo, *Spec.* 2.15.62–63.

Septuagint (LXX)

- Translated around the 3rd to 2nd century BCE in Egypt.
- Legendary account of King Ptolemy Philadelphus's commission for the Hebrew Torah (Pentateuch) to be translated into Greek. 72 Elders were sent to separate rooms and produced the same translation.⁸
- More likely that Jews needed a Greek translation because they were losing Hebrew from their Hellenized culture.
- In most cases, **the Septuagint is the basis for quotations of the Old Testament in the New Testament**. This means that Paul and other inspired authors were reading and using the Septuagint.
- The Septuagint was predominately a part of comprehensive Christian Bibles until Jerome provided a Latin translation (Vulgate) of the Hebrew Bible.
- Our English Bibles are influenced by the Septuagint, but our Old Testament is translated from the Hebrew Scriptures.

Antioch (Syria)

- There was a very large Jewish community in Antioch due to their political security and the interest of Greeks in the religion.⁹
- Successors of Antiochus IV were more Jew-friendly and granted them citizenship.
- Lots of god-fearers in Antioch (Josephus, *B.J.* 7.43–45).

Rome

- Estimated that there were about 50,000 Jews in Rome.
- They lived in an area called Trastevere which was across the Tiber.
- It is near where the Vatican presently is — Christians were very involved in the Jewish communities.
- Suffered multiple expulsions during first century including in 19 CE under Tiberius (allegedly due to proselytism) and under Claudius Jews and Christians were expelled (Acts 18:2; Suetonius, *Life of Claudius* 25.4).¹⁰

9.4 Other Features of Diaspora Judaism

God Fearers

- Many Greeks showed an interest in Eastern Religions including Judaism. Some converted.
- Many Greeks would “circumcise the sensual pleasures, desires, and passions of the soul” (Philo, *QE* 2.2).
- Some worshipped God who were not Jews and contributed to the Temple (Josephus, *Ant.* 14.110); some Greeks observed the Sabbath too.
- Evidence in the NT “you who fear God” (Acts 13:16, 26). It's very likely that God-fearers were fertile ground for Christian missionaries because baptism was easier than circumcision.

⁸ *Letter of Aristeas*; Philo, *Mos.* 2.6.31–7.44; *b. Megillah* 9a.

⁹ Feldman and Reinhold, *Jewish Life and Thought among Greeks and Romans*, 64.

¹⁰ Feldman and Reinhold, *Jewish Life and Thought among Greeks and Romans*, 316–18; 331–33.

Conversion to Judaism

- Jewish attitude toward proselytism changed from passive to active approach during Hellenistic period.¹¹
- Under John Hyrcanus and other Hasmonean kings, conquered nations were required to undergo circumcision and keep the Jewish law if they wanted to keep their land.¹²
- Women were often the first to become Jews because they did not have to undergo circumcision.¹³

Tensions between Diaspora and Palestinian Jews

- **John 7:35** The Jews said to one another, “Where does this man intend to go that we will not find him? Does he intend to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks?
 - Alludes to possible tension and negativity towards those “among the Greeks.”
 - Remember from our study of Pharisees, Jews were very opposed to Greek/Hellenistic influences and viewed it negatively.
- **Acts 6:1** Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution.

¹¹ Feldman and Reinhold, *Jewish Life and Thought among Greeks and Romans*, 124.

¹² Josephus, *Ant.* 13.257–58, 318–19.

¹³ One might wonder whether there was a debate over this in Judaism. If women did not have to suffer as much and give something up, did that make them less of a Jew? For a man not to be circumcised, it was considered “incomplete” or only a “semi-conversion” (cf. *Ant.* 20.34ff).

Approaching the New Testament

10.1 Beliefs and Practices of Nominal Jews

1. One God

- The Exile cured Jews of idolatry, but they were still integrating other cultures and beliefs with their own.¹
- Jews began to emphasize the holiness and reverence towards God. Called God *Adonai* instead of *YHWH* in order to avoid “taking the Lord’s name in vain” (Exod 20:7)

2. Israel: the Special, Chosen People

- They tried to be separate from the world.
- They emphasized racial purity, would not marry “daughters of the lands” (Neh 10:28), and used genealogies to prove the purity of their families (1 Tim 1:4; Titus 3:9).
- They were *very mindful* of their rich heritage and ancestry with the patriarchs, the promises, the Law, etc (Rom 9:4). This became a problem in the early church.

3. Torah, Tradition, and Scripture

- Their exile was due to not keeping the Law of Moses so now they would focus on studying it.
- The Law was “Wisdom” and was preexistent with God, it was called “manna” and “living water.”²

4. A Messiah

- There was a wide spectrum of expectations for a Messiah.
- These included “Son of Man” (Dan 7), God acting among human beings, and the anointed prophet, priest, and king.

5. Festivals and Holy Days

- *Weekly Sabbath* (Exod 20:8–11) — no work except circumcision and sacrifices, but restricted even more by Pharisees. Most Jews were probably not very concerned with strict observance.³

¹ Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 538.

² Jesus claims to be and would later be seen as Christians as this “Wisdom.” He is the “preexistent Word” (John 1:1–18) is was the “living water” (John 4).

³ Ferguson, 557.

- *Passover* (Exod 12:1–13:10; Lev 23:4–14) — usually combined Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread.
 - *Pentecost/Weeks* — celebrated the end of the spring grain harvest but later as commemorating the giving of the Law at Mt. Sinai.
 - *Tabernacles/Booths* — celebrated grape harvest and reminded people of living in “tents” in the wilderness. They would live in tents outside the city.
 - *Day of Atonement* (cf. Heb 5:5; 10:4)
 - *Feast of Dedication or Lights* (Hanukkah cf. Jn 10:22).
6. **Daily Devotions** — Reciting the Shema prayer (Deut 6:4–9; 11:3–21; Num 15:36–41). Prayer occurred in the morning and probably in the afternoon. Some prayed three times daily.

10.2 Takeaways from the “Intertestamental Period”

1. **The Old and New Testaments are not separated by a period of silence** — but instead are connected by a number of historical events that impact the context of the New Testament.
 - Silence is only in respect to God not speaking to his people after the end of the prophets.
 - History continued and *is compatible with and complements* the events in the Bible
 2. **First-century Judaism was not a unified monolith** — it was very divided, diverse, and had differing beliefs and practices.
 3. **Study of the Bible should include historical context** — this helps us understand the people and times of the Bible.
 4. **Consider the Jewish *and* Greek/Roman Context of the Church.**
 5. **The coming of Jesus had a spiritual, political, and social impact *especially* for those who encountered Him** — as we face him we face modern spiritual, political, and social challenges when we accept Him as Lord.
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Appendix: Jewish Education System

Jewish Education · Jewish education was slightly different: – Primary school was called the beit-sepher, was connected with the synagogue, and was taught by a scribe or the chazzan in poor areas. It began ca. age 5. – Secondary school was called the beit-midrash/beit-talmud and included the oral rabbinic tradition. It began ca. 13 and was sponsored by the synagogue. – After the beit-midrash, one would attach himself to one or more rabbis and learn from them or, in later times, attend a rabbinic academy (basically a town where there were many rabbis). – An important passage: “At 5 years old one is ready for Scripture, at 10 for Mishna, at 13 for keeping the commandments, at 15 for Talmud, at 18 for marriage, at 20 for pursuing a trade.”

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