

The Life and Times of Jesus of Nazareth

Part I (B) Jewish History and Culture

An Brief Overview of Jewish History

Patriarchal Age (c. 1950-1610 BC).

- The Hebrews.
- Abraham (c. 1950-1775 BC).
 - Canaan.
 - The Abrahamic Covenant and a “chosen people.”
 - The promise of a Messiah: “Through your offspring all nations of the earth will be blessed.” [Gen.15; 17:8; 22:16-18.]
- Sarah.
- Isaac (c. 1850-1665 BC).
 - Rebekah.
- Jacob (Israel, c. 1810-1663 BC).
- Twelve Tribes of Israel.
- Joseph (c. 1720-1610 BC).

Egyptian Enslavement.

The Exodus (c. 1445-1405 BC).

- Moses (c. 1525-1405).
 - The “Promised Land.”
- The central event in Hebrew history and in the Hebrew understanding of God.
- The desert wandering.
- The Mosaic Law and the Ten Commandments.
 - A national constitution.

Conquest of Canaan and the Era of the Judges (c. 1405-1030 BC).

- Joshua.
- A struggle for survival.
- The Judges.
 - EX: Gideon, Deborah, Samson, and Samuel.

United Kingdom of Israel (c. 1030 - 1010 BC).

- Saul (c. 1030-1010 BC).
- David (c. 1010-970 BC).
- Solomon (r. 970-930 BC).
 - Solomon’s Temple.

Kingdom of Israel (c. 930 -721 BC).

- Northern 10 tribes of Israel.
- A turbulent history.
- Conquest by Sennacherib and the Assyrians in 721 BC.
- The “Lost Ten Tribes.”
- The Samaritans.

Kingdom of Judah (c. 930-586 BC).

- Southern kingdom of Judah and Benjamin.
- Jerusalem.
- A turbulent history.
- Conquest by Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians in 586 BC.
- The Babylonian Captivity.
 - ▶ Three significant developments.
 - (1)The Torah, the holy scriptures, was systematically collected and preserved;
 - (2)Development of the synagogue; and
 - (3)The end of idolatry.

Repatriation and Resettlement in Israel (538 BC).

- The Medo- Persian sack of Babylon in 612 BC.
- Cyrus the Great’s repatriation edict (538 BC).
- Nehemiah and the rebuilding of Jerusalem.
- Ezra and the Second Temple.
- A Persian *satrapy*.

Hellenistic Province (332-167 BC).

- Alexander the Great’s annexation of Israel (332 BC).
- A vassal state of Ptolemaic Egypt.
 - ▶ The Jewish deportation to Egypt.

Seleucid Tyranny (198-167 BC).

- Antiochus III of Syria and the annexation of Israel (198 BC).
- Forced “hellenization.”
- Antiochus IV (Antiochus “Epiphanes,” r. 175-165 BC) and the persecution of Jews.

Maccabean Revolt (167-142 BC).

- The Hasidim.
- Mattathias and the Jewish insurrection.
- Judas the Maccabean (“the Hammerer”).
- The cleansing of the Temple and Hanukkah.
- A prolonged war.
- Simon Maccabaeus.

Hasmonean Dynasty (142-63 BC).

- An independent Jewish state.
- A Jewish theocracy.
- John Hyrcanus (r. 134-104 BC).
 - ▶ Establishment of the Hasmonean Dynasty.
 - ▶ Expansion and subjugation.
- Dynastic degeneration.
- Aristobulus (r. 104-103 BC).
 - ▶ A priest-king.
 - ▶ Conquests and subjugation.
- Sadducees and Pharisees.

Israel Under Roman Rule

Roman Conquest of Israel (63 BC).

- A Hasmonean power struggle.
- Gnaeus Pompey and the siege of Jerusalem.
- Desecration of the Temple complex.
- A Roman province.
- Hasmonean puppet-kings.
- Julius Caesar and Jewish exceptionalism.

Herodian Dynasty.

- Antipater (r. 47-37 BC).
- Herod the Great (r. 37-1 BC?).
 - ▶ “King of the Jews.”
 - ▶ An “Idumean usurper” and a nominal Jew.
 - ▶ A cruel and hated despot.
 - ▶ Politicizing the high priesthood.
 - ▶ A prolific builder.
 - Caesarea Maritima.
 - Tiberius and Sepphoris.
 - Herod’s Temple.
 - Masada.

All In the Family.

- Archelaus (Herod the Ethnarch, r. 4 BC? - 6 AD).
 - ▶ A tyrant.
 - ▶ Deposition and exile.
- Judea under a Roman prefect.
- Philip the Tetrarch (r. 4 BC? - 33 AD).
- Antipas (Herod the Tetrarch, r. 4BC? - 39 AD).
 - ▶ Martyrdom of John the Baptist.
 - ▶ Interrogation of Jesus.
 - ▶ Deposition and exile.

The Roman Occupation.

- Jewish exemptions.
- A tense relationship.
- Tiberius’ Jewish policy.
- Strict taskmasters.
- Three hundred years of strife and violence.

Culture Clash.

- Roman polytheism and Jewish monotheism.
- Roman values and Jewish ethics.
- Roman and Jewish morality.

Jewish Sectarianism

A Divided Nation.

- The issue of Hellenization.
- Theological disputes.
- Herodians.
- The Hasidim.
- Pharisees.
 - ▶ The “separated ones.”
 - ▶ Philo of Alexandria: Pharisees were “full of zeal for the law, strict guardians of the ancestral traditions,” and “merciless toward those who subvert the laws.”
 - ▶ Two major rabbinical schools:
 - Shammai Ha-zaken (fl. 15 BC - 15 AD) and the Shammaites.
 - Hillel (fl. 15 BC - 15 AD).
 - ▶ Justo Gonzalez: “We must pause to do justice to the Pharisees, so badly misunderstood in later times. The fact is that the New Testament attacks them, not because they were worse than other Jews, but because they were the best.... Seeing them attacked in the New Testament, we tend to consider them simply a group of the worst kind of hypocrites, but here we err in our interpretation....
“Contrary to what we often imagine, the Pharisees emphasized the importance of personal religion.... At a time when the vitality of Temple worship was on the wane, the Pharisees strove to interpret the Law in such a way that it might serve as a daily guide for the religion of the people. Naturally, this led them into the legalism that has made them objects of so much criticism...”
 - ▶ Theological distinctives.
 - The authority of the Torah and the “Traditions of the Elders.”
 - “Foreordination.”
 - The immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body.
 - Divine judgment.
 - The spirit world.
 - Practical application of divine laws.
 - Pharisaical legalism.
 - ▶ The issue of Roman rule.
 - ▶ A decentralized sect.
 - Synagogues and rabbis.
 - ▶ Orthodox Judaism.
 - ▶ Jesus and the Pharisees.
- Sadducees.
 - ▶ A worldly, wealthy, aristocratic elite.
 - ▶ Domination of the priesthood and the Sanhedrin.
 - ▶ Accommodation to Hellenization.
 - ▶ Theological distinctives:
 - Pentateuch-only
 - Jewish Deists.
 - Jewish Pelagians.
 - Skepticism regarding the spirit world.
 - Skepticism regard the resurrection of the dead and the afterlife.
 - Temple-centered religion.
 - Extermination.

Scribes.

- The Jewish intelligentsia.
- The foremost systematizers, interpreters, and rabbis of the Law.
- The “Traditions of the Elders.”

Zealots.

- A coalition of anti-Roman sects.
- Judas the Galilean.
- Religious views.
- Terrorism and the *sicarii*.

Essenes.

- An exclusive community.
- Anti-establishment purists.
- Essene apocalypticism.
 - ▶ The “Elect.”
 - ▶ The “Sons of Light.”
- Strict asceticism.
 - ▶ The “Manual of Discipline.”
- Essene eschatology.

Diaspora Judaism

Diverse Communities.

- A scattered people.
- A diverse people.
- Socio/economic status.
- Relations between Jews and mainstream Gentiles.
- Cultural distinctives of Jews.
- Jewish proselytes and “God-fearers.”

The Septuagint.

- The legend of the Septuagint.
 - ▶ King Ptolemy II Philadelphus and the 70 (or 72) Jewish scholars.
- The reality.

Major Jewish Institutions

The Sanhedrin.

- Composition of the Sanhedrin.
 - ▶ High Priest.
 - ▶ Chief Priests.
 - ▶ Scribes.
 - ▶ Elders.
- Qualifications.
- A political position.
- In the 1st century AD, the high priesthood was dominated by a single family.
 - ▶ Annas ben Sethi.
 - ▶ Caiaphas.

