

New Testament Survey

Lectures 3-4: Jewish Religion Between the Testaments

Sources:

Craig Blomberg, *Jesus and the Gospels*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1997.

Allen Ross, "The Religious World of Jesus," available online: www.christianleadershipcenter.org

Jewish Writings

Books of the Old Testament:

Torah: Books of Moses

Prophets: Books of history and prophets

Writings: all other canonical books of the Old Testament

Talmud

Mishnah: oral laws based on the Torah (in Hebrew)

Tosefta: supplements to the Mishnah

Gemara (in Aramaic)

Halakah: legal material

heart of Halakah: 613 *mitzvot*, additions to the Law

Haggadah: parables and anecdotes from the lives of famous rabbis

Targum: Aramaic paraphrase of the Bible

Midrash: commentaries on biblical books

Intertestamental Characteristics

- interest in angelology and demonology
- large quantity of poetry and wisdom literature
- positive view of human nature; less emphasis on original sin
- prayer and good works replaced animal sacrifices
- great interest in apocalyptic themes and literature
- development and standardization of synagogue worship
- increasing role of scribes
- Sanhedrin's role in Judean life
- Judaism became a religious option for Gentiles (debate on the amount of proselytizing that occurred)
- 3 practices of a good Jewish man:
 - observe kosher laws
 - observe the Sabbath
 - circumcision

3 symbols of Jewish national identity:

1. Temple: political, religious, and economic center of Israel
2. Land: the land had been promised to the Jews
3. Torah: obedience to the Law would insure the land became Jewish

Jewish Sects

Pharisees
Sadducees
Essenes
Zealots

Pharisees

- I. Group most frequently mentioned in the New Testament
- II. Mentioned frequently in Josephus' works (Josephus was a Pharisee)
- III. Most famous Pharisee: Saul of Tarsus (later known as Paul)
- IV. 7 groups of Pharisees listed in the Talmud:
 - A. the shouldering Pharisee, who parades good deeds
 - B. the delaying Pharisee, who lets business wait in order to do a good deed
 - C. the bruised Pharisee, who walks into a wall to keep from looking at a woman
 - D. the pestle Pharisee, who with false humility walks with his head down like a pestle on a mortar
 - E. the ever-reckoning Pharisee, who asks what good deeds he might do that would be reckoned as canceling out his neglects
 - F. the fearful Pharisee, who is in terror of God
 - G. there is the loving Pharisee, who like Abraham loves God--he is admirable
- V. Origin of the name: *paras*, "to divide, separate"
- VI. separate from the people of the land who were illiterate and could not study the Law
- VII. originated from the *Hasadim*, Jews who opposed Hellenization
- VIII. attempted to influence government to enforce the Law
- IX. Pharisees were committed to the Scriptures and oral Torah, but also open to changes in interpretation
- X. believed in a general resurrection of the dead
- XI. 2 factions:
 - A. Shammai: strict interpretation
 - B. Hillel: lenient interpretation
- XII. Major characteristics:
 - A. meticulous observance of the Law in purity, tithing, and Sabbath observance
 - B. value placed on oral traditions
 - C. requirements for oral interpretation:
 - a. had to be in accordance with Scripture
 - b. had to have been customary for some time
 - c. they had to be associated with some recognized authority
 - d. had to be accepted by the majority of the sages

Sadducees

- I. Origin of name: Hebrew *tsadak*, "to be righteous"
- II. party of the priests and wealthy aristocrats
- III. held most leadership positions, but had to submit to the Pharisees' demands more than they liked
- IV. accepted only the Torah as binding; rejected oral interpretations and other traditions
- V. accepted Scriptural authority of the Prophets and Writings
- VI. didn't believe in the resurrection
- VII. usually dominated the Sanhedrin
- VIII. Famous Sadducees: Annas and Caiaphas

Essenes

- I. Origin of name: Hebrew Hasadim, “to be pious”
- II. originated in Jonathan’s reign (161-143 B.C.)
- III. difficult admission process:
 - A. Admission required a postulant to live outside the camp for a year with minimal provisions and follow the rules of discipline.
 - B. If he remained faithful he could draw near to the purification water.
 - C. After two more years as a novitiate, he could take the oath and join the meal
- IV. ascetics
- V. believed in communal property
- VI. differed in marriage:
 - A. Philo: Essenes banned marriage because women were “selfish, jealous, deceitful, seducing, and leading the sovereign mind into bondage to her and the care of children.”
 - B. Josephus: marriage was important for the continuation of the race; therefore, there were Essenes that married and had sexual intercourse only for the purpose of procreation
- VII. believed in the immortality of the soul and the resurrection
- VIII. did virtuous deeds to demonstrate their piety
- IX. daily instruction except on Sabbath
- X. rigorous discipline
- XI. wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls
- XII. very apocalyptic; loved the book of Daniel
- XIII. survived the Roman war of A.D. 70, but were wiped out in Hadrian’s War of A.D. 132-135

Zealots

- I. armed insurrectionists against Rome
- II. according to Josephus, founded by Judas of Galilee; revolted in conjunction with the census of Luke 2 (Quirinius’ census)
- III. beliefs:
 - A. YHWH was the Jews’ only king
 - B. Zealots would establish His reign by rooting out paganism and breaking the yoke of tyranny
 - C. the Torah made separation from Gentiles necessary, exalted Israel as the chosen of God
 - D. promised triumph. The zealots would seek to enforce these beliefs by violence of any kind.
- IV. famous Zealot: Simon the Zealot, a disciple (later apostle)

Important Notes:

- These groups did not form the majority of the inhabitants of Judea and Galilee
- Romans (and their designated rulers) still held the final power