



**SYNOPTIC GOSPELS 2:
EVENTS AND IDEAS THAT SHAPED
THE NT WORLD**
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Times of Jesus

Living under pagan superpower – public display of the conquered




Living under Pagan Superpower

- Rich and poor
 - Taxation system that burdens the poor and enriches the ruling elites and cronies → fuel the building activities

Living under Pagan Superpower

- Abomination that causes desolation
 - Fresh memory of the evil deeds of Antiochus Epiphanes – who is in power!
 - Fear of Roman reprisal

Head of Augustus: originally part of a statue in Egypt. Romans used statues to remind the people in the Empire of the power of the Emperor



Living under Pagan Superpower

- Abomination that causes desolation
 - Mark 13 – Jesus’ prediction of the destruction of the temple causes the disciples to question, “when?”
 - Memory of the 167BCE incident is too fresh in the minds of the Jews/disciples



Terracotta panel showing a triumphal procession (1st to early 2nd century CE) – two distressed captives being paraded in chains



Arch of Titus in Rome Today:
Destruction of Jerusalem Temple in 70CE

Living under Pagan Superpower

- Maintaining the traditions
 - Observance of the OT Law
 - Examples:
 1. Keeping the Sabbath holy
 2. Circumcision
 3. Purity laws: Ceremonial cleansing and washing
 → All point to the identity of the Jews, the boundary markers!

Living under Pagan Superpower

- Maintaining the traditions
 - Call to be separated from everything unclean, including the Gentiles and unclean Jews (such as the tax collectors)
 - Example:
 1. Do not eat with tax collectors and sinners – Luke 15:1-2
 2. Who is my neighbour – parable of the good Samaritan – Luke 10:25-37

Living under Pagan Superpower

- Maintaining the traditions
 - Temple – presence of money changers (Matthew 21:12-17//Mark 11:12-19)
 - Example:
 1. Coins with face of Nero (54-68CE)



Living under Pagan Superpower

- Maintaining the traditions
 - Temple
 1. A religious centre
 2. A political centre – high priest had political power and influence
 3. An economic centre: offerings, feasts

Living under Pagan Superpower

- Longing for Change
 - Judas and Theudas (Acts 5:36-37)
- Major theological questions:
 - Why does God delay justice?
 - How will God bring justice?
 - When will God vindicate his elect?
 - How can a merciful God allow his chosen people to suffer under foreign oppression?

Living under Pagan Superpower

- Religious Confusion
 - Essenes
 - Pharisees
 - Sadducees
 - The Revolutionaries/Zealots
 - See Josephus

Josephus *Antiquities* 18.1.2-6 - Pharisees

Now, for the Pharisees, they live meanly, and despise delicacies in diet; and they follow the conduct of reason; and what that prescribes to them as good for them they do; and they think they ought earnestly to strive to observe reason's dictates for practice. They also pay a respect to such as are in years; nor are they so bold as to contradict them in any thing which they have introduced; and when they determine that all things are done by fate, they do not take away the freedom from men of acting as they think fit; since their notion is, that it hath pleased God to make a temperament, whereby what he wills is done, but so that the will of man can act virtuously or viciously.

Josephus *Antiquities* 18.1.2-6 - Pharisees

They also believe that souls have an immortal rigor in them, and that under the earth there will be rewards or punishments, according as they have lived virtuously or viciously in this life; and the latter are to be detained in an everlasting prison, but that the former shall have power to revive and live again; on account of which doctrines they are able greatly to persuade the body of the people; and whatsoever they do about Divine worship, prayers, and sacrifices, they perform them according to their direction; insomuch that the cities give great attestations to them on account of their entire virtuous conduct, both in the actions of their lives and their discourses also.

Teachings of the Pharisees

- Mark 7:1-23
- The “traditions of the elders”
- Josephus, *Ant.* 13. 297-98: “...***The Pharisees had passed on to the people certain regulations handed down by former generations and not recorded in the Law of Moses***, for which reason they are rejected by the Sadducean group, who hold that only those regulations should be considered valid which were handed down (in Scripture), and that those which had been handed down by former generations need not be observed.

Teachings of the Pharisees

Mishnah Abot. 1:1 There is a description of the process of the handing down of the oral law from Moses to the men of the Great Assembly.

“Moses received Torah at Sinai and handed it on to Joshua, Joshua to elders, and elders to prophets. And the prophets handed it on to the men of the great assembly. They said three things:

- *be prudent in judgment*
- *raise up many disciples*
- *make a fence for the Torah.”*

Teachings of the Pharisees

- Ceremonial washing of the hands – Mishnah Tohotoy 7:8 “hands are unclean for the hands are busy.”
- Korban – see Mishnah Nedarim 5:6

Josephus Antiquities 18.1.2-6
- Sadducees

But the doctrine of the Sadducees is this: That souls die with the bodies; nor do they regard the observation of any thing besides what the law enjoins them; for they think it an instance of virtue to dispute with those teachers of philosophy whom they frequent: but this doctrine is received but by a few, yet by those still of the greatest dignity. But they are able to do almost nothing of themselves; for when they become magistrates, as they are unwillingly and by force sometimes obliged to be, they addict themselves to the notions of the Pharisees, because the multitude would not otherwise bear them.

Relationship between Pharisees and Sadducees - Josephus, Ant. 13. 297-98

And concerning these matters the two parties came to have controversies and serious differences, the Sadducees having the confidence of the wealthy alone but no following among the populace, while the Pharisees have the support of the masses."

Josephus Antiquities 18.1.2-6
- Essenes

The doctrine of the Essenes is this: That all things are best ascribed to God. They teach the immortality of souls, and esteem that the rewards of righteousness are to be earnestly striven for; and when they send what they have dedicated to God into the temple, they do not offer sacrifices because they have more pure lustrations of their own; on which account they are excluded from the common court of the temple, but offer their sacrifices themselves; yet is their course of life better than that of other men; and they entirely addict themselves to husbandry.

Josephus Antiquities 18.1.2-6
- Essenes

It also deserves our admiration, how much they exceed all other men that addict themselves to virtue, and this in righteousness; and indeed to such a degree, that as it hath never appeared among any other men, neither Greeks nor barbarians, no, not for a little time, so hath it endured a long while among them. This is demonstrated by that institution of theirs, which will not suffer any thing to hinder them from having all things in common; so that a rich man enjoys no more of his own wealth than he who hath nothing at all.

Josephus Antiquities 18.1.2-6
- Essenes

There are about four thousand men that live in this way, and neither marry wives, nor are desirous to keep servants; as thinking the latter tempts men to be unjust, and the former gives the handle to domestic quarrels; but as they live by themselves, they minister one to another. They also appoint certain stewards to receive the incomes of their revenues, and of the fruits of the ground; such as are good men and priests, who are to get their corn and their food ready for them. They none of them differ from others of the Essenes in their way of living, but do the most resemble those Dacae who are called Polistae [dwellers in cities].

Josephus Antiquities 18.1.2-6
- Revolutionaries/Zealots

But of the fourth sect of Jewish philosophy...These men agree in all other things with the Pharisaic notions; but they have an inviolable attachment to liberty, and say that God is to be their only Ruler and Lord. They also do not value dying any kinds of death, nor indeed do they heed the deaths of their relations and friends, nor can any such fear make them call any man lord.

Josephus *Antiquities* 18.1.2-6 - Revolutionaries/Zealots

And since this immovable resolution of theirs is well known to a great many, I shall speak no further about that matter; nor am I afraid that any thing I have said of them should be disbelieved, but rather fear, that what I have said is beneath the resolution they show when they undergo pain. And it was in Gessius Florus's time that the nation began to grow mad with this distemper, who was our procurator, and who occasioned the Jews to go wild with it by the abuse of his authority, and to make them revolt from the Romans.

Think:

- Imagine you are one of the disciples of Jesus – how would a tax collector, a zealot, and a group of ordinary Jews with different ideologies work together as a team (see Mark 3:16-19)?
- How would Simon the Zealot react to Jesus when Jesus accepted the invitation by Matthew to eat with fellow tax collectors and sinners (Luke 5:27-32; 15:1-2)?
- How would this help you to serve and work together as a team in the church?

Living under Pagan Superpower

- Longing and Looking for the Messiah
 - Hope for the restoration of Israel
 - Destruction of the Gentiles
 - A new temple and renewed worship
 - See Psalms of Solomon 17:21-32

Psalms of Solomon 17:21-32

Behold, O Lord, and raise up unto them their king, the son of David, at the time known to you, O God, in order that he may reign over Israel your servant. And gird him with strength, that he may shatter unrighteous rulers, and that he may purge Jerusalem from gentiles who trample (her) down to destruction. Wisely, righteously he shall thrust out sinners from (the) inheritance; he shall destroy the arrogance of the sinner as a potter's jar. With a rod of iron he shall shatter all their substance; he shall destroy the godless nations with the word of his mouth.

Psalms of Solomon 17:21-32

At his rebuke nations shall flee before him, and he shall reprove sinners for the thoughts of their heart. And he shall gather together a holy people, whom he shall lead in righteousness, and he shall judge the tribes of the people who has been made holy by the Lord his God. And he shall not suffer unrighteousness to lodge any more in their midst, nor shall there dwell with them any man who knows wickedness, for he shall know them, that they are all sons of their God. And he shall divide them according to their tribes upon the land, and neither sojourner nor alien shall dwell with them any more.

Psalms of Solomon 17:21-32

He shall judge peoples and nations in the wisdom of his righteousness. And he shall have the gentile nations to serve him under his yoke; and he shall glorify the Lord in a place prominent (above) all the earth. And he shall purge Jerusalem, making it holy as of old. So that nations shall come from the ends of the earth to see his glory, bringing as gifts her sons who had been driven out, and to see the glory of the Lord, wherewith God has glorified her. And he will be a righteous king over them, taught of God. And there shall be no unrighteousness in his days in their midst, for all shall be holy and their king the Lord Messiah.

Living under Pagan Superpower

- Longing and Looking for the Messiah
 - Hope for the restoration of Israel
 - Destruction of the Gentiles
 - A new temple and renewed worship
 - See Psalms of Solomon 17:21-32
 - John 2 – cleansing of the temple, right in the beginning of the Gospel as recorded by St John the Evangelist – why?

Teachings of the Pharisees

- See Mark 7:1-23 – the “traditions of the elders”

Think: What Kind of Messiah?

- Imagine you are a Jew living in the 1st century. After having an understanding of the events and ideas that shaped your world, what would be your expectation of the coming of the Messiah? What kind of Messiah will you be looking for?

The Expectation of the Messiah

- The birth of Jesus
 - Matthew 2:1-12

The Expectation of the Messiah

- The birth of Jesus
 - Luke 1:46-55 – the Magnificat



The Expectation of the Messiah

- The birth of Jesus
 - Luke 1:67-79 – the Benedictus

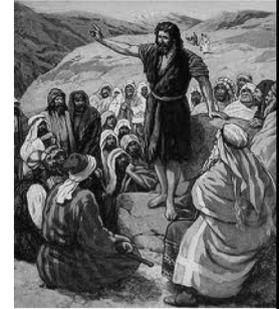
The Expectation of the Messiah

- The birth of Jesus
 - Luke 2:21-35 – the Nunc Dimittis



The Expectation of the Messiah

- John the Baptist
 - Luke 3 – the message of John the Baptist



The Expectation of the Messiah

- John the Baptist and Jesus
 - Luke 4:14-21 – the beginning of the ministry of Jesus by quoting Isaiah 61:1-2
 - what is missing here?



The Expectation of the Messiah

- John the Baptist
 - Luke 7:18-28 – why does John the Baptist doubt the ministry of Jesus?



The Expectation of the Messiah

- The Crowd
 - Jesus and the announcing of the coming of the kingdom of God – Mark 1:14-15
 - John 6:1-14
 - John 12:12-19

The Expectation of the Messiah

- The Disciples – several misunderstandings
 - Mark 8:27-38 – 1st Passion Prediction
 - Mark 9:1-13 – The Transfiguration
 - Mark 9:30-37 – 2nd Passion Prediction
 - Mark 10:32-45 – 3rd Passion Prediction

**Cycle of Passion Predictions, Misunderstandings
and Teachings**

Healing of a Blind Person (8:22-26)

Geographical Reference	8:27	9:30	10:32
Passion Prediction	8:31	9:31	10:33-34
Misunderstanding	8:32	9:32-34	10:35-41
Teaching on Discipleship	8:34-9:1	9:35-37	10:42-45

Healing of a Blind Person (10:46-51)

The Expectation of the Messiah

- The Ascension of Jesus – Acts 1:1-8

Personal Reflections

- Who is Jesus to you?
- Is there any possibility that we may have reconstructed a “Jesus” that is based on our personal expectations/experience?