

Viewing Jesus as the “Source”

Cultural Factors of the Time and Location of Jesus

Jesus

1. Jesus lived at the first 30 years of his life in Nazareth in Galilee.
2. He worked as a carpenter or craftsman.
3. His culture was the Late Second Temple Period Judaism.
4. Jesus formed his movement around 27 CE and led it for between one and three years.
5. Jesus described himself as a teacher and interpreter of the Torah and the Prophets.
6. Jesus taught in Hebrew and appears to have understood Aramaic and Latin.
7. Jesus was tried and executed by the Romans for a political crime.

The Torah & Prophets

1. The **Torah** was the Law of the Land in Judea and Galilee, subject to the Laws of the Roman Empire. It is the books of the Bible that we call *Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy*.
2. The **Prophets** in our Bible contains the books *Joshua, Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*.
3. There was also a group of books called the **Writings** – *Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah and 1 & 2 Chronicles*.

Political Sects

1. There were three powerful political sects in Judea and Galilee at the time of Jesus – Sadducees, Pharisees, and Essenes. We view them as religious sects, but what we call “religion” did not exist at that time. Viewing them as political parties is more accurate.
2. The Temple in Jerusalem was the capital of the nation. The best way to for Americans to visualize it is an institution that is a combination of the Supreme Court, Congress, Federal Reserve Bank, Pentagon -- and the place where one can be in the presence of Yahweh the God of Israel.

Gathering to Explore Guide

3. According to the Torah, only priests are authorized to perform specific duties in the Temple. Higher level priests, wealthy merchants, and upper-class members of the society were **Sadducees**. The Torah was their Source of Law.
4. **Pharisees** are “the party of the masses” and they controlled a majority of the votes of the Sanhedrin. The Torah, Prophets, Writings, and Oral Traditions were their Source of Law.
5. The **Sanhedrin** was a combination of the Supreme Court and Congress. It controlled the operation of the Temple. The Torah does not provide information about how specific duties are to be performed. If there were conflicts about how they should be done, the parties involved would go to the Sanhedrin for a ruling.
6. The **Essenes** viewed the Temple as being defiled because of the impurity of the priests operating the Temple. They viewed members of their group as the true Israel and the other groups as outsiders. The Torah, Prophets, Writings, and other documents they created were their Source of Law.

Roman Laws

1. In 6 CE Augustus made Judea, Samaria, and Idumea an official province of Rome.
2. The emperor appointed one man to represent Rome, invested him administrative and military authority and be the governor of the province.
3. Each Roman governor was given command of the military forces stationed in the province and was charged with maintaining peace and collecting taxes throughout his assigned territory.
4. Governors typically did not impose a new administrative system upon their subjects; rather they tended to act as supervisors over the indigenous governing systems operating in their respective territories.
5. Governors were also granted jurisdiction over criminal proceedings of Roman citizens in their territories and the right to assume jurisdiction over local criminal proceedings as needed.¹

¹ <https://rsc.byu.edu/new-testament-history-culture-society/judea-roman-province-ad-6-66>