

Rediscovering Jesus in the Jewish Gospels

Study 4

Kingdom Contextual Factors

- After his opening ministry of healing on the Galilee, “Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom.” Matthew 9:35.
- **The Gospel of the Kingdom was preached by Jesus for about two years up until Matthew 12:23-32.**
- Is the Kingdom of Heaven/God that Jesus offered spiritual or physical? In some places Jesus says you will see it in power and glory and at other times Jesus says you will not see it “with observation,” “it is within you.” Both are true but describe different facets of the Kingdom. He offered Israel a literal physical Messianic Kingdom.
- God’s Theocratic rule has three phases: **Mediatorial** through Moses, Joshua, and the Judges; **Monarchial** from King David to Zedekiah’s removal by Babylon. The third phase of God’s Theocratic Kingdom is referred to as the **Messianic Kingdom** and is the period of Messiah’s global rule from the throne of David in Jerusalem.
- **Israel’s leaders rejected Jesus’ Messiahship and His Gospel of the Kingdom** in Matthew 12.
- **The result was that the offer was rescinded from that generation.** Jesus stopped preaching “The Kingdom of heaven is at hand.” He began speaking in parables saying, “The Kingdom of Heaven is like.” Matt. 21:43 “The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.”
- **The Messianic Kingdom of Israel will be reoffered to another Jewish generation, “another nation” that is, a reconstituted national entity of Israel in the last days.**
- The Messianic Kingdom offer was never given to the gentile church nor to an unholy Roman Empire.
- The Gospel of the Kingdom according to Jesus was; Time’s up! Ready or not, the Messiah is here. Repent and believe now that I am He, the Messiah. I will restore Israel’s Kingdom.
- **The proclamation of the Kingdom Gospel was put on hold until the Tribulation period.** “This Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.”(Matthew 24:14,15)
- Just before He ascended, the disciples asked Jesus if He was going to restore the Kingdom to Israel at that time. He said, “It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.”
- **Jesus commissioned them, in the meantime, to spread the Gospel of His death, burial and resurrection** “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” Acts 1:8

The Political Contextual Factors Through Jesus’ lifetime

- **Roman**
 - **Caesar Augustus** from 27 BC – 14 AD
 - **Caesar Tiberius** 14 AD – 37 AD
- **Judean**
 - **Herod the Great** 37 BC – 4 BC
 - 30 BC Judah’s independent rule ends under Roman control when Herod ends Hasmonean dynasty by killing Hyrcanus II, the last living Hasmonean Judean ruler.
 - **Herod sought to kill Jesus & slaughtered the children of Bethlehem 2 years and under.** Matt. 2:16

* Jesus had to have been born 1-2 years prior to 4 BC. He would have been under two when the decree of infanticide was made since it required killing those children two and under.

- **Herod Agrippa I AD 41 to 44** was the king of Judea ruling in Jerusalem. Keeping the peace and appeasing Rome was Agrippa's reason for **persecuting the church apostles**. Acts 12:1-3 He had James killed and threw Peter into prison.

Acts 12:21,22 And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. And the people gave a shout, *saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man.* And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost. **Josephus records** that He said "I, whom you call a god, am commanded presently to depart this life; while Providence thus reproves the lying words you just now said to me; and I, who was by you called immortal, am immediately to be hurried away by death ... And when he had been quite worn out by the pain in his belly for five days, he departed this life, being in the fifty-fourth year of his age."

Joseph moves to Egypt until Herod the Great dies Matt. 2:15

- **Judean Governor Archelaus 1 BC- 6AD**

Joseph moves from Egypt to Nazareth Matt. 2:19-22

- **Archelaus** Ethnarch (Ethnic Tetrarch) of Judea, Samaria, and Idumea, 4 BC – 6 AD

"But when he (Joseph) heard that **Archelaus did reign in Judaea in the room of his father Herod**, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee"

Augustus judged Archelaus incompetent to rule, and removed him from power,

This enlarged province was ruled by a "Prefect" from 6 AD - 41 AD.

- **Judean Prefect Pontius Pilate 26-36 AD**
- **Galilean Governors**
- **Herod Antipas Tetrarch of Galilee 4BC – 39 AD**

Luke 13:31,32 "The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, Get thee out, and depart hence: for **Herod will kill thee**. And he said unto them, **Go ye, and tell that fox**, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to day and to morrow, and the third *day* I shall be perfected."

John the Baptist, one of his subjects, reproached Herod Antipas for this marriage to his brother's wife, and the wife pressured Herod to imprison him. Mark 6, Matthew 14 and Luke 3,.

Luke 3:19,20 "Herod the tetrarch, being reproved by him for Herodias his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, Added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison."

He Beheaded John in 32 AD Matt. 14:3

When Jesus was arrested in Jerusalem, according to Luke 23:6-12, **Pilate, the Roman procurator of Judaea, sent Jesus to Antipas**, who was spending Passover in the capital, because Jesus came

from Antipas's realm. The tetrarch was eager to see Jesus, expecting more miracles, but soon returned him to Pilate, unwilling to pass judgment. Jesus literally fulfilled Isaiah 53:7 and "opened not His mouth." Herod was bored and sent Him back. Jesus was used as a pawn for Pilate.

- **At the time of Jesus' death, Tiberius** was Caesar, **Herod Antipas** was Tetrarch, (Governor of Galilee), **Pilate** was Prefect (Governor of Judea), and **Joseph Caiaphas** was High Priest. Herod Antipas was soon deposed and exiled to Gaul by Emperor Caligula in 39 AD

The Religious Contextual Factors of Jesus' Lifetime

○ High Priest

Joseph Caiaphas 18 to 37 AD was the 4th High Priest appointed by the Roman procurator Valerius Gratus who preceded Pilate.

A Sadducee, Caiaphas did not believe in the resurrection. It must have been a shock to him when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. **Caiphas proposed killing Lazarus, who was a challenge to his beliefs instead of supporting it. John 12:9-11** "Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead. But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death. Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus."

*** In 1990, a rock-hewn burial cave containing a dozen ossuaries (limestone bone boxes) was accidentally uncovered. Two of the boxes were inscribed with the name Caiaphas. The most beautifully decorated had "Joseph son of Caiaphas" etched on it. Inside were the bones of a man who had died around the age of 60. These are believed to be the remains of Caiaphas, the very high priest who sent Jesus to his death.**

○ Sanhedrin – Ruling Body of Judaism

- **Sanhedrin** (in Greek means 'a sitting together' or 'council') **was the supreme council of the Jews who met within Jerusalem's temple in a place known as the chamber of hewn stones** (although they sometimes met in the house of the High Priest). The Sanhedrin was **like the U.S. Supreme court** in that they were the final authority on decisions that affected the religious and political life of all Jews.

In New Testament times, the Sanhedrin was composed of **seventy-one members (the High Priest, a vice chief justice and sixty-nine general members)**. **Only chief priests, elders, and scribes were eligible to sit on the council.** They are variously referred to as "the chief priests, the elders, and all the council" (Matthew 26:3,59) and the "chief priests, the scribes, and the elders of the people"

Jesus gave his sharpest sermon to them; "Woe unto you, Scribes, Pharisees, Lawyers" (Luke 11).

This group was the driving force that insured Jesus was betrayed, falsely arrested, falsely accused, unjustly judged, and condemned to a death on the cross. It was members of the council who bribed Judas Iscariot with thirty pieces of silver to betray Jesus (Matthew 26:14 - 16). It was they who, contrary to Jewish law, had Jesus arrested without a formal accusation of wrongdoing. (Deuteronomy 19:15).

During Jesus' first trial, the charge of blasphemy against God was used by the Sanhedrin council to justify giving him a death sentence (Mark 14:61 - 64, Matthew 26:62 - 66). Yet, when Jesus was brought to the Romans for punishment, **they changed the charge against him to treason** (Luke 23:1 - 3, John 19:12). It was members of this council who, when Pontius Pilate asked a crowd whether Jesus or Barabbas should be set free, got them to select Barabbas (Matthew 27:15 - 23).

- **Pharisees were the Rabbis in local Synagogues**

Prushim Separated ones. They are accused even by Jews today as “building a fence around a fence”, ie: making rules to keep you from even getting close to breaking the law.

The Pharisees were mostly middle-class businessmen and leaders of the synagogues. They accepted the written Tanak (O.T.) as inspired by God. Unfortunately, the Pharisees gave equal authority to oral tradition, claiming the traditions went all the way back to Moses oral telling Israel God's Law before it was in writing. Jesus condemned their oral traditions of men having final authority over the Law of Moses. Modern Judaism is a direct outgrowth of this sect. **They are known for their rules to guide every area of life, called Halachot literally “ways of walking.”** Among the Pharisees were two schools of thought, based on the teachings of two rabbis, Shammai and Hillel. Shammai called for a strict, unbending interpretation of the Law on almost every issue, but Hillel taught a looser, more liberal application. It is likely the Shammai sect of Pharisees was dominant in Jesus day, due to his condemnation of their hypocritical snooty attitudes. They condemned him for eating with publicans, eating with unwashed hands etc... In Exodus 24:3, 4 The concept of an “Oral Torah” is eliminated. “All the words which the LORD hath said will we do. **Moses wrote all the words of the LORD.”**

- **Sadducees - Priests, Levites**

They derived from Zadok the High priest of David and Solomons era. **They were the sect to which the priests and Chief Priests belonged in Jesus' day.** They accepted only the Law of Moses as inspired. They denied the supernatural, angels, spirits, miracles, resurrection of the dead. **They were theological liberals.** They would have followed Hillel's more loose interpretation and practices. **They were more Hellenized and assimilated into Grecko Roman culture than the Shammai Sect of Pharisees.**

- **Scribes**

Deemed expert lawyers of the Torah, closely aligned with the Pharisees.

- **Essenes**

An ascetic sect living at the Wadi Qumran near the north end of the Dead Sea. 150 BC – 68 AD. Famous for preserving the Dead Sea Scrolls. They referred to itself as *bēnê Sāḏōq*, "the sons of Zadok," revealing its connection with the old line of ousted but legitimate Zadokite priestly families. According to its strict interpretation of Levitical rules, it considered the Jerusalem priests to be unclean, for they had been Hellenized as well as financially and ethically corrupted by their Roman appointers. Was John the Baptist among them temporarily? He could have visited while he was in the neighborhood. No body knows.