

FIRST CENTURY JUDAISM

I. JUDAISM IN THE NT PERIOD

A. Developments of Judaism During the Post-Exilic (Persian) Period

1. The Exile Led to Strict Monotheism; Cured of Idolatry Forever
2. Increased Emphasis on Keeping the Law
3. The Office/Role of Scribe Developed
4. Offices of Monarch and Prophet Disappeared
5. Emphasis on Leadership of High Priesthood
6. The Sanhedrin, Jewish Religious Council, Developed
7. Synagogue Developed
8. The Development of Exclusivism
9. Rift with the Samaritans
10. Theological Developments
 - a. Resurrection and afterlife
 - b. Angels and demons; Duality (God vs. Satan)
 - c. Messianic expectations

B. Jewish Institutions

1. The **Temple** in Jerusalem
 - a. Priests Offered Sacrifices, Cared for Utensils, Taught People
 - b. Levites Served as Gate Keepers, Singers, etc.
 - c. Common Israelites Brought Sacrifices, Prayed at the Temple
 - d. Center for Observance of the Major Festivals
2. The **Synagogue**
 - a. Synagogue = Worship, Education, and Civic Center for Local Jewish life
 - b. The Service:
 - Recitation of the Shema (Deut 6:4-9, etc.)
 - Recitation of (later, 18) benedictions
 - Leader takes Torah from the Ark
 - Reading of Torah (on a 1 or 3 year cycle)
 - Reading from Prophets or Writings
 - Optional: Sermon (a homily); Often by Special Guest
 - Congregation Dismissed
3. Jewish Religious Holidays
 - a. Pilgrim Festivals/Feasts: Observance Centered in Jerusalem, All Able Made Pilgrimage
 - 1) **Passover** (Unleavened Bread): remembered Exodus
 - 2) **Pentecost** (Weeks): end of grain harvest, first fruits
 - 3) **Tabernacles** (Booths): wandering in the wilderness
 - b. Other Important Jewish Festivals
 - 1) Feast of **Dedication** (Hanukkah, Lights): Temple rededication
 - 2) **Day of Atonement** (Yom Kippur): the only required fast
 - 3) **Purim**: deliverance of Jews by Esther and Mordecai

II. JEWISH SECTS DURING THE NEW TESTAMENT PERIOD

A. Herodians

1. Influential Jews who supported Herodian/Roman rule
2. Herodians desired to get rid of Jesus (Mark 3:6).

B. Zealots

1. Violently opposed Roman rule in Judea
2. Zealous defenders of the Law and national life of the Jews
3. Active from reign of Herod the Great until AD 66 rebellion
4. Extreme members were known as the Sicarii, or “Assassins”

C. Pharisees

1. Origin: Emerged after Maccabean Revolt from Hasidim, or “pious ones”
2. Two Major Emphases: Torah and Tradition
 - a. **Torah**: Adherence to the Law of Moses
 - 1) Associated with Scribes (Professional Group)
 - 2) Became Interpreters of Scripture
 - 3) Synagogue Leaders: Favored by the Common People
 - b. **Tradition**: Adherence to the **Oral Law** (= “Traditions of the Elders”)
 - 1) The Written Law Does Not Cover Every Situation
 - 2) Oral Law Bridged Gap by Applying Law to New Situations
 - 3) Development:
 - a) tradition: Moses Received Oral Interpretation of the Law
 - b) Interpretation of Law Debated by “Pairs” of Rabbi-Scholars
 - c) Only Written after NT Period:
 - i) **Mishnah** = codification of Oral Law; debates of the pairs; written ca. AD 200
 - ii) Gemara = commentary on the Mishnah
 - iii) **Talmud** = Mishnah + Gemara; 2 versions: Babylonian and Jerusalem
3. Progressive; Receptive to New Ideas, Doctrines which Separated them from the Sadducees:
 - a. God’s Control over History
 - b. Oral Law Equal to Torah
 - c. Accepted Resurrection and Afterlife; Final Judgement
 - d. Emphasis on a Davidic Messiah
4. The only group to survive the first century

D. Sadducees

1. A Party of High Priests & Aristocratic Families
2. Controlled Temple/High Priesthood favored by Wealthy Aristocracy
3. Desired the Status Quo (since they held the power)
4. Jesus Upset them more Politically than Theologically
5. Theologically Rigid
 - a. Accepted Torah only (rejected Oral Law totally)
 - b. Rejected Theological “innovations” of the Pharisees (see above)
 - c. Literal Interpretation; Less Forgiving than Pharisees
6. Disappeared with Destruction of the Temple in AD 70

E. Essenes

1. “Teacher of Righteousness” was alienated from mainline priests
2. Ritual Precision in keeping the Law; Ritual Washing
3. Believed Selves to be the True Remnant of Israel
4. Anticipated Multiple Messiahs
5. Dead Sea Scrolls originated with the Essene community at Qumran