

Exploring the Historical, Religious, and Social Contexts of Jesus

The Teaching Series

(Feb 21) The Self-Understanding of Israelites was shaped by their story of God choosing his covenant people.

(Feb 28) The Religion of Second Temple Israel depends upon the grace of God.

(March 7) The Distinctive Groups and Characters in Jesus' World – with a focus on Pharisees and Sinners.

(March 14) Social-Cultural Assumptions and Worldviews shared by the Gospel writers and their readers/hearers.

Week Two:

Part A (15 mins): Second-Temple Judaism

Part B (60 mins): Common Judaism: Temple, Purity, Torah, Prayer, Synagogue

Part C (15 mins): Jesus and Common Judaism

Summary Week Two

The most distinctive feature of Second Temple Judaism is the Temple, not the Torah. The pattern of religion is shaped by the conviction that even although Yahweh is Lord of the whole earth, he meets his people in his chosen Temple. This gives primary religious power in Judaism to the hereditary priests who manage access to God and primary political/economic power to the High Priests and the Sanhedrin.

The Second Temple period is not unambiguously a time of blessing for Israel for they are under the control of foreign powers and under the cultural influence of Hellenism. Various sections of Judaism had different responses to the questions raised by this – where is God? what is God doing? when will God act? how should we respond? We will explore this in week 3.

It is clear that while Jewish was a contested identity, there was no official body who exercised definitive control over who could call themselves Jewish. However, for males it was common to assume that all Jews would be circumcised as required by God's eternal covenant with Abraham. There is little evidence of what we now call "legalism" in Second Temple Judaism. God's election of a people for himself was an act of unmerited grace, not a reward for good behaviour. However, it is expected that God's people would observe Torah (although what Torah observation specifically required was not agreed).

The prayers of Judaism show a similar piety to the prayers of Christians, which is not historically surprising – Christianity begins as a Jewish sect – although many Christians seem to assume that Jesus rejected Judaism. This was not the case. While Jesus and his disciples formed one of the sections of Judaism with its own answers to questions such as where is God?, etc., they did not reject the fundamental practices of Judaism. Jesus was crucified because of the type of Jew he was, not because he had ceased to be Jewish.

Why do we call them Second-Temple Jews?

Settlement	First Temple	Second Temple	Rabbinic Judaism
Confederated Tribes	Kingdoms of Judah and Israel	(Mostly) Foreign dominated	Diaspora Communities

- 1) First built by King Solomon c.950 BCE, the Temple was a wonder of the ancient world. It centralised the worship of Yahweh in Jerusalem, where royal power was based. It was destroyed in 587 BCE by the Babylonians. It was rebuilt and dedicated anew in 515 BCE and destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE. This period (515 BCE – 70 CE) is known as “the Second Temple” period because of the central importance of the Temple to understanding Judaism in this period. (It has not been rebuilt, although there are some contemporary Jews who are preparing for a Third Temple.)
- 2) There is a marked change in Judaism’s “pattern of religion” following the paradigm shift caused by the destruction of the Second Temple. Rabbinic Judaism is continuous with, but not equivalent to, Second Temple Judaism.
- 3) During the period of the Second-Temple, Israel is almost always (except for 140-63 BCE) subject to a foreign power – Persia, Egypt, Syria, or Rome. This marks it as a “lesser” period than the time of Solomon’s Temple. The Second Temple was, until the extensions initiated by King Herod the Great, physically and aesthetically inferior to the First Temple.

Translating *Ioudaios* as Jews or Judeans?

- 1) Generally speaking, when we hear the word “Jews” we think of a religion and when we hear the word “Judeans” we think of a nationality – a people belonging to a region. [In NT Greek, *ethnos* is usually translated as nation.] So, what did the Greek speaking people of the Hebrew Bible and Greek New Testament think of when they heard *Ioudias*?

Academic publications in the last ten to fifteen years increasingly use the term Judeans rather than Jews. Most of these writers cite Steve Mason’s 2007 article, ‘Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism: Problems of Categorization in Ancient History’. Mason and others argue that ‘Judean’ is a more precise and a more ethical translation of *ioudaios* than is ‘Jew’. Much of the debate stems from the use of the term in the New Testament where *Ioudaios* is often used in a negative context. Translating *Ioudaios* as ‘Judeans’ implies simply people living in a geographic area, whereas translating the term as ‘Jews’ implies a legalistic religious and ethnic component which in later Christian works was characterized as a religion devoid of ‘grace’, ‘faith’, and ‘freedom’. It is this later understanding which some scholars have argued was not applicable in the ancient world. They argue that the New Testament texts need to be critically examined without the baggage that Christianity has associated with the term ‘Jew’.

[*\(Ioudaios - Wikipedia\)*](#)

- 2) The ancient world did not have separate terms for “observant” and “non-observant” (or even apostate) Judeans because religion was essentially an ethnic/geographic phenomenon. There were, e.g., Roman gods, Greek gods, and Persian gods who all offered the same type of service and it was taken for granted that Romans, Greeks, and Persians worshipped the gods of their nations and did not exercise personal preferences towards the gods of another nation. [Christianity was the first trans-national religion in which ethnic origins were considered irrelevant.] Since there were many Gentiles living (and having families) in Judea (“aliens and strangers”) who were not a part of Second-Temple Judaism, it is probably better to translate *Ioudaios* as Jew and then do the additional work of reminding ourselves that is “continuous but not equivalent to contemporary” Jews.
- 3) Christianity has a horrific history of anti-Semitism and the New Testament, written while Christianity was largely a Jewish sect, should not be manipulated to give any support to this indefensible horror.

Common Judaism

- 1) Around the Roman world the Jews were generally identified by their distinctive social/religious customs such as circumcision, Sabbath observance, their refusal to participate in the common religious life of the community, and their unusual eating habits (particularly, their refusal to eat pork). When Jewish groups gathered together in neighbourhoods, the burning of Sabbath lamps gave the neighbourhood a distinctive smell. These practices contributed to the Jews being perceived as anti-social and as “atheists” (even although it was known that they worship their god in a magnificent Temple in Jerusalem).
- 2) Professor Amy-Jill Levine, a contemporary Jewish scholar of the New Testament and author of the *Misunderstood Jew* (2006), argued that all Jews, whether Judean, Galilean (like Jesus), or from the Diaspora shared a common way of being one of God’s people. This included circumcision, wearing *tzitzit* (specially knotted ritual tassels), keeping *kosher*, calling God “father,” attending synagogue gatherings, reading Torah and Prophets, knowing that they are neither Gentiles nor Samaritans, honouring the Sabbath, and celebrating the Passover. She notes that all these, and much more, are markers also of traditional Jews today.
- 3) British NT scholar N.T. Wright writes, “The great majority of Jews cared sufficiently about their god, their scriptures, and their Jewish heritage to take a fair amount of trouble over the observance of at least biblical law. **They prayed, they fasted, they went to synagogue, they travelled to Jerusalem for the regular feasts. They did not eat pork, they kept the Sabbath, they circumcised their male children.** Equally, they paid sufficient attention to the Pharisees as respected, but unofficial, teachers to ensure that some of these basic duties were carried out in a more or less Pharisaic fashion” (*NTPG*, 213-4, emphasis added).
- 4) It is also likely that most of the Jews most of the time felt that fidelity to Torah implied non-association with Gentiles as far as they could manage it (though recognising a scale in which this was achieved).
- 5) These are markers of Jewishness; they are not what makes a person Jewish.
- 6) Sons are born children of Abraham and are circumcised to signify their belonging to God’s covenant people. Conversion of adult males, it was generally agreed, required circumcision. Hence, there were more God-fearers than converts at the time of Jesus. (A conversion path for females was not proscribed, see [Joseph and Asenath](#) which uses purification, repentance and symbols (eating honeycomb) within its story of how Joseph came to be married to the daughter of an Egyptian priest.) Apostasy seems to require active participation in sacrifices to pagan gods, more so than merely drifting into non-observance practices.
- 7) To outsiders, the Jews were considered one homogeneous group. This was because what Jews held in common was much greater than the differences that existed among various Jewish groups.

Should we speak of Judaism or Judaisms?

- 1) Jews shared a common story but had different readings of it.
- 2) Jews shared allegiance to the Temple but had different assessment of the faithfulness of the Temple leaders (and, hence, its current effectiveness).
- 3) Jews observed ritual purity but had different expectations about when purity was required.
- 4) Jews honoured the Law of Moses as God’s Torah but had different interpretations on the relevance of laws given in another time and place.
- 5) While controversies in Christianity would primarily swirl around matters of doctrine and belief, those of the Jewish community would both be based upon and express themselves in issues of *halakhah*¹... *Halakhah* and its theoretical underpinnings separated the various sectarian groups from one another (LJ Schiffman, *Qumran and Jerusalem*, 5).

¹ “...no English term can possibly describe this system of law and practice as well as the term ‘halakhah’” (Schiffman, 4).

The Temple is the Emotional Heart of Second-Temple Judaism

- 1) The Jews were VERY proud of their Temple, even if they disrespected Herod and the Temple authorities.



- 2) Herod the Great had embarked upon a magnificent task of “growing the Temple” in 20BCE which was only completely finished 80 years later. According to reports, the entire white marble façade of the Temple was covered with gold plates. When the sun rose, the reflection was nearly blinding. The upper parts of the Temple were pure white with gold spikes lining the roof. On a clear day the brilliance of the Temple could be seen from a long way outside of Jerusalem. The Roman historian, Pliny the Elder, described Herod’s Jerusalem as the most famous city in the East. A third century C.E. authoritative Jewish text (the *Babylonian Talmud*) recalls, “He who has not seen Jerusalem in its beauty, has not seen a beautiful great city in his whole life; and who has not seen the building of the Second Temple, has not seen a handsome building in his life. What is meant by this? Said Abayi, according to others Rabbi Hisda: It means the building of Herod” (*Sukkah* 5).

And as Jesus came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, “Look, Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings.” Mark 13:1)

- 3) Herod the Great was not religiously Jewish (and, as his detractors pointed out, not particularly ethnically Jewish). His many extravagant building projects reveal him to be culturally a Hellenist (i.e., Greek). He turned Jerusalem into a Hellenistic city, including all the constituent elements and institutions of a Polis. This involved building a large theatre, and instituting wrestling tournaments in honour of the Emperor, staging spectacles where men fought wild animals, and encouraging Gentile immigration to Jerusalem. Herod adorned his Hellenistic architecture with decorations depicting pagan gods and his currency carried pagan motifs. However, even religious Jews admired the magnificence of Herod’s expansion of the Temple.
- 4) Jerusalem was physically dominated by the Temple. “Herod's Temple - Model in Israel Museum, Jerusalem.” (<https://youtu.be/vQb8knwCRls?t=62>) A must see on your visit to Israel!
- 5) The Temple was the central institution in the political and economic life of Jerusalem as well as the religious life of Israel.
- 6) The Temple was the centre of the Jewish conceptual world. It was a result of Israel’s election (God’s choice of Israel to be his special people) from among all the peoples of the earth. A Temple is more than a Cathedral. It is a meeting point between heaven and earth. It is the house of God rather than the house of God’s people. The dedication of the Temple is retold in 2 Chronicles 7:1-3:

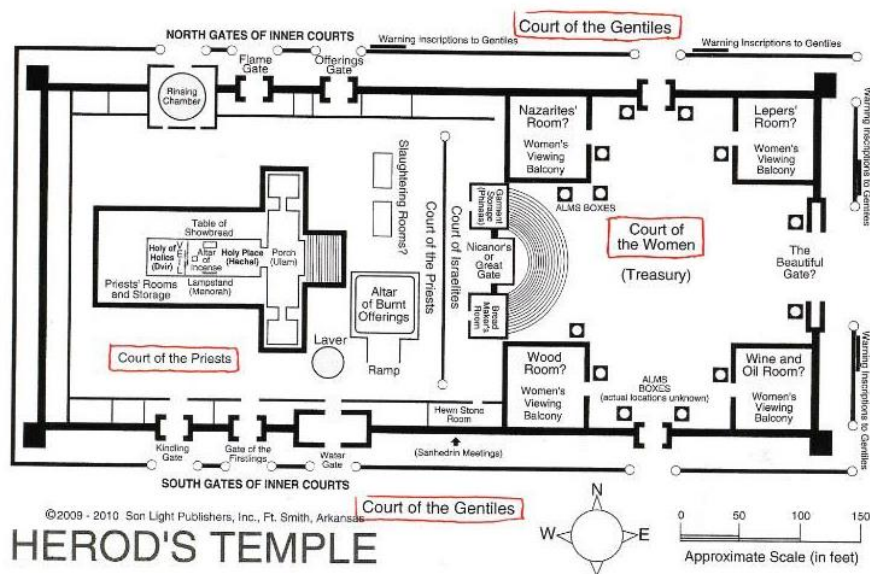
When Solomon finished praying, fire flashed down from heaven and burned up the burnt offerings and sacrifices, and the glorious presence of the LORD filled the Temple. The priests could not enter the Temple of the LORD because the glorious presence of the LORD filled it. When all the people of Israel saw the fire coming down and the glorious presence of the LORD filling the Temple, they fell face down on the ground and worshiped and praised the LORD, saying, “He is good! His faithful love endures forever!”

Lord of the Whole Earth

Jerusalem Temple

The Temple is the dwelling place of God upon the earth.

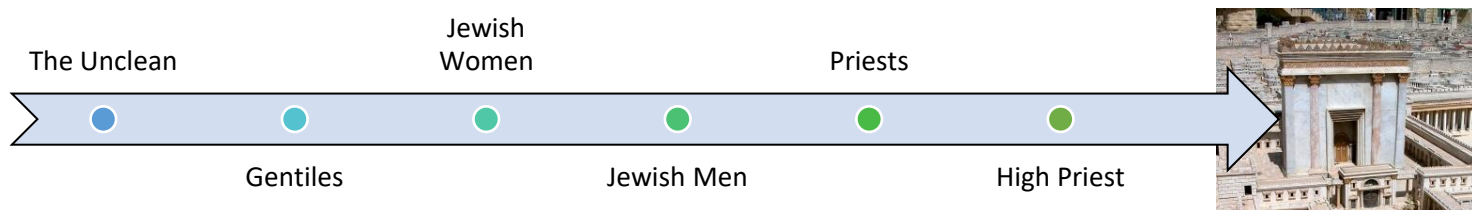
- 7) All sacrifices were performed in the Jerusalem Temple.
 - a) Morning and evening sacrifices, and daily sacrifice in honour of Caesar
 - b) Private sacrifices
 - c) The Temple was the focus of the **Day of Atonement** (a day of fasting and sacrifices which purified the people of their sins).
- 8) The Temple was the focus of the three annual pilgrimage festivals.
 - a) Passover (in Spring, commemorating the Exodus), Pentecost (an offering of first fruits marking the beginning of harvest), Tabernacles (in Autumn, commemorating Wilderness Wanderings)
 - b) Payment of the Temple Tax, a requirement of all adult Jewish males was allowed by the Roman authorities.
- 9) The Temple Courts – limit access to God



- a) The court of the Gentiles was the outer court –where buying and selling took place – and it was separated from the inner court by a warning posted in Greek and Latin: No foreigner may enter the enclosure and the walls around the temple. Anyone who is found here unlawfully is responsible for his own punishment by death which will follow.
- b) Eastern precincts – the court of the women
- c) Western precincts – the court of the Israelites (the men who entered must be ritually pure)
- d) The court of the priests
- e) The Holy of Holies – only the High Priest and only on the Day of Atonement
- f) This “physical map” expressed the “purity map” of Judaism. NB. It is not related to morality.

The Religious Practices of Second Temple Judaism: Ritual Purity

- 1) Ritual purity is not just an issue of obedience to the Torah. It involves an understanding of a person's place within God's people and the type of relationship that God expects from his people. Ritual purity is important to the defining of Israel.
- 2) Ritual purity is not equivalent to moral purity. Classical religion had no interest in moral purity (consider, e.g., the immoral behaviour of the Olympian gods.) Ethical behaviour and "life well lived" was explored by classical philosophers.
- 3) Ritual purity focused on access to the presence of God in the Temple; this provides the purity map for Israel.



- 4) Special requirements for priests – eating, bodily discharges, contact with unclean things, ritual baths.
 - a) Despite being “a kingdom of priests” (Ex 19:6) the understanding of most Jews was to distinguish between the expected behaviour of priests and that of non-priests.
 - b) A person's learning or moral excellence did not make up for being a non-priest; only ritually pure priests could approach God in his Temple.
- 5) Ritual Purity – who needed to be pure and when?
 - a) Ritual purity does not exclude moral purity but neither does it guarantee it.
 - b) Jews could only enter the Temple when they were in a state of ritual purity. For example, Gentiles, menstruating women, or those men who had not been cleansed through immersion in a *Mikveh* following contact with some impurities were excluded from the forecourt of the women. Those men who had not yet offered the prescribed sacrifice for some offence were excluded from the forecourt of the Israelites. It is safe to assume that Jesus would have participated in the cleansing of the ritual immersion before entering the Temple.
 - c) Biblical law does not prescribe any ritual purity requirements for the eating of ordinary meals. It does require purity on the part of priests eating dedicated foods (i.e., food from sacrifices offered at the Temple).
 - d) Clean Food is food that is both lawful and tithed.
- 6) **Impurity (not purity) was contagious** so one needed to practice defensive purity – unclean things can make clean things unclean, some can then in turn make other things unclean (contagious to the 2nd and 3rd degree).

The Religious Practices of Second Temple Judaism: Torah

- 1) A Temple-based religion differs greatly from a book-based, personal-faith, or a communal-based religion that we are familiar with. It is more a religion of orthopraxy than orthodoxy (*halakhab*). The prohibition on idols and images (and unauthorised shrines) distinguishes Judaism from other temple-based religions.
- 2) Torah (also called the Law of Moses) could refer to the commandments of God, the Pentateuch, or the whole of the Scriptures (Pentateuch, Writings, and Prophets). These were seen by most Jews as a good thing and not as a burden; although certain practices of the Torah were harder to keep than others.

- 3) It was agreed by all that “the Jew must obey God, and that the complete guide for that obedience is to be found in the Torah” (Moo, *DJG* 451).
 - a) Yet the commands of the Torah (much of which was given to Israel while it was wandering in the wilderness and establishing itself as in rural villages) related to a form of life that had changed. Did they need to be re-applied in light of those changes?
 - b) The development of the oral law (called, “the traditions of the elders”) provided a means by which Torah could be applied to daily life. Often this oral law involved the use of “hedging” – the setting of boundaries which would ensure that the Torah was not accidentally transgressed.
- 4) **Judaism was not a legalistic religion with everyone trying to earn the favour of God.**
 - a) There is no concept of “legalism” in Second Temple Judaism. In many ways, what we call legalism is the product of the Middle Ages Christian Church that led to the Protestant Reformation. The Jewish concept of Torah does not equate to the Greco-Roman concept of law. Torah is a relational term that expresses the type of living God desires from his people. Gentiles could not win God’s favour by keeping Torah, this was the privilege of those who already were God’s people.
 - b) Israel already had God’s favour because he had chosen them to be his people. (election) “Obedience to the Law was not the means by which the people of Israel attained their covenant relationship with God. It was their response to the gracious initiative of God, a response both appropriate as a means of thanking and glorifying the God who had chosen them and necessary as the means by which the promises attached to the covenant would be actualized” (Moo, *DJG* 451). Expressed historically, Exodus *precedes* Sinai. Expressed theologically, Grace *precedes* Law.
 - c) In NT scholarship, this view of Judaism (which reached the tipping point in the late 1970s and resulted in what came to be known as the New Perspective) is called **covenantal nomism**. While there has been strong debate (and accusations of heresy), which has led to nuances, adaptations, and exponentially expanding New Perspectives, there is common agreement that common Second Temple Judaism was not legalistic.

The Religious Practices of a First-Century Jew (including Jesus): Prayer

- 1) According to scholarship, **the Shema** (Deut 6:4-9, 11:3-21, and Numbers 15:36-41) “was a prayer-like confession of faith that was to be uttered twice a day, morning and evening, by all male Israelites.” There is persuasive evidence of its first-century use.

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD; and you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, ...” (Deuteronomy 6:4-9).

“...You shall therefore keep all the commandment which I command you this day, that you may be strong, and go in and take possession of the land which you are going over to possess, and that you may live long in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers to give to them and to their descendants, a land flowing with milk and honey...” (Deuteronomy 11:3-21).

“...So you shall remember and do all my commandments, and be holy to your God. I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am the LORD your God” (Numbers 15:36-41).
- 2) **The Eighteen Benedictions** (see E. Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 543-44) maintained a focus upon God and his promises to Israel and give an indication of the sorts of prayers that Jesus and his followers would have prayed regularly. The text we know today was written towards the end of the first century C.E., but it is believed that it reflects fairly accurately the oral practice of Jews at the time of Jesus. (see appendix)
 1. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, Our God and God of our fathers... Blessed art Thou, O Lord, the shield of Abraham!

6. Forgive us, our Father, for we have sinned against Thee; blot out and cause our transgressions to pass from before Thine eyes, for great is Thy mercy. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who dost abundantly forgive!

7. Look upon our affliction and plead our cause and redeem us for the sake of Thy Name. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, the Redeemer of Israel!

10. Blow the great horn for our liberation and lift a banner to gather our exiles. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who gathers the dispersed of Thy people Israel!

The Religious Practices of a First-Century Jew (including Jesus): Piety

- 1) “Meals were set in a religious context of purification and blessing of the Creator. Hands were washed, bread was blessed and broken, and the meal was eaten, followed by a thanksgiving at the close. If wine were served, it received a separate blessing” (Ferguson, 527).
- 2) The daily life and customs of the people kept the story of Israel alive.
 - a) God is identified as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
 - b) Yahweh – the personal name of God revealed to Moses
 - c) The biblical names of Jerusalem – city of David, the city of the Great King, Zion, the holy mountain of God, the dwelling place of God – are part of keeping the story alive.
 - d) The practice of circumcision established the Jews as sons of Abraham and sons of the covenant.
 - e) The great feasts, fasts, and pilgrimages (memory as participation)
 - i) **Passover (Exodus)** – “Eschatological expectations of future deliverance also ran high at Passover time.” Population of Jerusalem would double. The Roman governor would come from Caesarea to oversee the potentially volatile situation.
 - ii) **The Day of Atonement**, e.g., Hebrews 5:5
 - iii) Feast of Booths/Tabernacles, e.g., John 7:2. Eight days of feasting, individual booths established remembering the Wilderness wanderings.
 - iv) The Feast of Dedication, John 10:22 (Hanukkah)
 - f) **The Torah** – regulates everyday life.
 - i) Sabbath – the Creator God (monotheism)
 - ii) Food Purity (sets them apart: election)
- 3) Most of the population were more concerned with daily survival issues than with the religious issues that distinguished the Jewish “sects.”

The Role of the Synagogue

- 1) The Synagogue is not a mini-Temple, nor does it easily map to what we think of as a church.
- 2) ([First Century Synagogues - Bible Odyssey](#)) Although the origin of the synagogue as a Jewish institution is unclear, by the first century C.E. they were found in both Palestine and the Diaspora, where they were used for a variety of communal needs:
 - as schools (Josephus, Antiquities 16.43),
 - for communal meals (Josephus, Antiquities 14.214-216),
 - as hostels,
 - as courts (Acts 22:19),
 - as a place to collect and distribute charity (Matt 6:2), and
 - for political meetings (Josephus, *Life* 276-289).

- 3) Worship also took place in first-century synagogues, although this would not develop into something like modern Jewish synagogue worship until much later. Nonetheless, reading and interpreting the Torah and Prophets is well attested in first-century synagogues (Acts 15:21), and although scholars disagree about the extent of communal prayers, literary sources suggest that Jews prayed in at least some synagogues at this time (Matt 6:5, Josephus, Life 280-295).
- 4) Synagogues were managed by community leaders, not Pharisees, Rabbis, or Priests. Women and Gentiles are sometimes identified as Mother or Father of the Synagogue (perhaps as patrons of the community).
- 5) First-century synagogues didn't have "Jewish" features and were simply public buildings with benches along the walls. In other words, the buildings reflected the primary role of synagogues as Jewish community centres, with worship as a secondary use of the space. The synagogue functions as a community centre at the heart of a community defined by a shared religious identity.
- 6) The archaeological remains of first-century synagogues are clearly not big enough to accommodate the attendance of all Jews living within walking distance. Not all Jews went to Synagogue on the Sabbath. The requirement of a *minyan* for Jewish assembly prayers of ten males suggests that only a small proportion of Jews participated regularly in daily prayers.

Jesus' Response to Common Judaism

- 1) Temple
 - a) Positive
 - i) "My Father's house," (Luke 2:49), "House of Prayer," (Matthew 13, John 2:16-17)
 - ii) A place for prayer and worship (e.g., Luke 24) and a place of Teaching
 - b) Negative
 - i) "Cleansing" (a judgement?) of the Temple
 - ii) The charge against Jesus (also against Stephen), Mark 14:57-58
 - iii) Apocalyptic discourse, Mark 13:1-2, 14
 - c) Jesus identified himself with the Temple!
- 2) Torah
 - a) Positive
 - i) Matthew 5:18, "For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished."
 - ii) Temptation stories; Jesus as a boy in the Temple
 - b) Negative
 - i) Certainly, towards the oral law of Pharisees
 - ii) "But I say unto you..." introduces an implicit criticism of the Law.
- 3) Ritual Purity
 - a) The Gospels are not particularly sensitive to issues of purity: woman with haemorrhage, contact with dead bodies, and those with leprosy. This may be because it was not relevant to the readers, or because it went without saying or because purity was not a big concern of Jesus and the common people.
 - b) We can reasonably assume that Jesus observed basic purity rules (e.g., washing in a *mikveh* (immersion pool) before entering the Temple) but not the "traditions of the elders." This is addressed directly in Mark 7:1-23 (esp. v.15). For Jesus, internal, moral, issues are the key to true purity.
 - c) Jesus' Offensive Holiness v. Pharisees' Defensive Purity
- 4) Sabbath
 - a) Positive
 - i) Jesus' custom was to attend synagogue on the Sabbath.
 - ii) Jesus honoured the Sabbath, but disputed with Pharisees over where the boundaries are
 - b) Negative
 - i) Ignored the carefully hedging of the Sabbath
 - ii) Declared himself to be Lord of the Sabbath (Matthew 12:8).
- 5) Jesus' attitude involved a radical redefinition of the People of God and how the relationship with God was to be practiced.
 - a) The Sermon on the Mount reveals a God who turns inverts blessings and woes.
 - b) The prayer of Mary is truly revolutionary.
- 6) Jesus' message was political
 - a) Jesus' attitude towards the key issues of his time and the way that he redefined the boundaries of Israel had political impact. We must get away from the fiction that religion is a matter of ideas /doctrines/beliefs. It is not true now; it was certainly not true in the first century. It was a way of life. It was the integrating framework for the community's worldview.

- b) Jesus was certainly not political in the sense of seeking to change the government by a violent political rebellion against Rome. However, it is true that “Jesus both challenged the existing social order and advocated an alternative. That challenge involved social criticism, an alternative social vision, and the embodiment of that vision in the life of a community. This is ‘political’ in the broad sense of the word” (Borg, *Jesus in Contemporary Scholarship*, 98).
- c) Jesus did not reject the need to walk righteously. Evidence of a credal orthodoxy is missing from the teaching of Jesus!
 - i) What must I do to be saved?
 - ii) By their fruits will you know them.

Appendix. The Eighteen Benedictions

1. Blessed are you, Lord, God of our fathers, God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob, great, mighty and fearful God, most high God who created heaven and earth, our shield and the shield of our fathers, our trust in every generation. *Blessed are you, Lord, shield of Abraham.*
2. You are mighty, humbling the proud; strong, and judging the violent; you live for ever and raise the dead; you blow the wind and bring down the dew; you provide for the living and make the dead alive; in an instant you causes our salvation to spring forth. *Blessed are you, Lord, who make the dead alive.*
3. You are holy and your Name is awesome, and beside you there is no God. *Blessed are you Lord, the holy God.*
4. Grant us, our Father, the knowledge and discernment that comes from thy Torah. *Blessed are you Lord, who grant knowledge.*
5. Lead us back, Lord, to you and we shall repent. Renew our days as of old. *Blessed are you who delights in repentance.*
6. Forgive us, our Father, for we have sinned against you. Wipe out and remove our evil deeds from before your eyes. For your mercies are many. *Blessed are you, Lord, rich in forgiveness.*
7. Look on our affliction and plead our cause and redeem us for thy Name's sake. *Blessed are you, Lord, redeemer of Israel.*
8. Heal us, Lord our God, of the pain of our heart; remove from us sorrow and grief and raise up healing for our wounds. *Blessed are you who heal the sick of your people Israel.*
9. Bless this year for us, Lord our God, and cause all its produce to prosper. Bring quickly the year of our final redemption; and give dew and rain to the land; and satisfy the world from the treasures of your goodness; and bless the work of our hands. *Blessed are you, Lord, who bless the years.*
10. Proclaim our liberation with the great trumpet and raise a banner to gather together our dispersed. *Blessed are you, Lord, who gathers the banished of thy people Israel.*
11. Restore our judges as in former times and our counsellors as in the beginning, and reign over us, you alone. *Blessed are you, Lord, who loves judgment.*
12. And for apostates let there be no hope; and may the insolent kingdom be quickly up-rooted, in our days. *Blessed are you, Lord, who humbles the insolent.*
13. May your mercies be showered over righteous proselytes; and give us a rich reward, together with those who do your pleasure. *Blessed are you, Lord, trust of the righteous.*
14. Be merciful, Lord our God, with your great mercies, to Israel your people and to Jerusalem your city; and to Zion, the dwelling place of the glory; and to thy Temple and your habitation; and to the kingship of the house of David, your righteous Messiah. *Blessed are you, Lord, God of David, who builds Jerusalem.*
15. Hear, Lord our God, the voice of our prayer, and be merciful to us; for you are a gracious and merciful God. *Blessed are you, Lord, who hears prayer.*
16. Be pleased, Lord our God, and dwell in Zion; and may your servants serve you in Jerusalem. *Blessed are you, Lord, whom we worship in awe.*
17. We praise you, Lord, our God, and the God of our fathers, on account of all the goodness and grace and mercies which you have granted to us, and have done to us and to our fathers before us. And if we say our feet are slipping, thy grace, O Lord, succours us. *Blessed are you, Lord, the All-Good, you are to be praised.*
18. Bring thy peace over Israel, thy people, and over thy city and over thine inheritance; and bless all of us together. *Blessed are you, Lord who makes peace.*