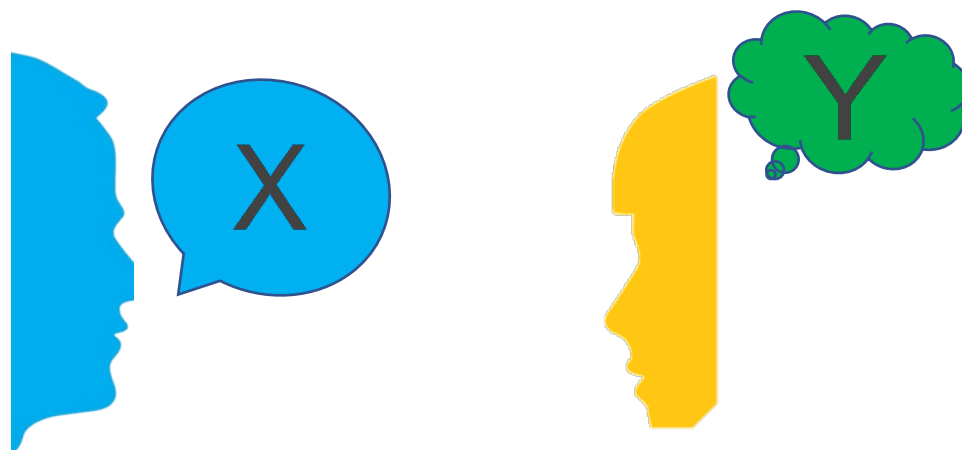


The Cultural World of Jesus

The N.T. Cultural Values¹



- 1) Increasingly, among New Testament scholars, there has been an awareness that the cultural values and scripts of Second Temple Judaism influences the writing and the hearing of the biblical text. It is not simply that we need to imagine a different set of clothing and tools when we read biblical stories, we need to imagine different ways of being in the world. Google might be able to translate a foreign language for us when we travel, but we still must learn a different set of social rules if we are to avoid misunderstandings and miscommunication with our “foreign” hosts.
- 2) “By culture I mean the set of values, ways of relating and ways of looking at the world shared by members of a particular group or region and providing the framework for meaningful communication” (David DeSilva). Cultural values are often communicated through shared stories and learning what is “right” and “wrong.”
- 3) Too many people overlook the cultural gap between us now and here and them then and there. They read their feelings and experiences into the feelings and experiences of the characters in the biblical text. This is the danger of anachronism and ethnocentrism. Bruce Malina comments, “anthropological models are intended primarily and precisely to help you differentiate your cultural experiences and perceptions from those described and assumed in the New Testament.”
- 4) Readers of the New Testament must engage with two distinct cultures: the Jewish and the Greco-Roman. The differences between these should not be exaggerated (see M. Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism* (1974)); but they cannot be ignored. Much of the research conducted by Social-Science Critics focuses upon Mediterranean culture in general rather than Jewish culture in particular.
- 5) Biblical scholars now ask themselves “sociological” questions as a normal part of the analysis of a text. What does the author take for granted that his audience will understand? How would a person at that time hear this word, phrase, or proposition?

High-context cultures: the speaker assumes that the hearer will know exactly what they mean

Low-context culture: the speaker knows they must provide details for the hearer to understand the values and lived experience referenced

¹ This study is drawn from the material in B. J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (3rd ed; Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2001) and D. A. DeSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship and Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000).

Economic

This is “merely a rough guide” to the five unequal economic levels in Greco-Roman society.

3%	Roman elite, regional elites, and municipal elite had great multi-millionaire wealth
17%	Moderate surplus: some merchants, traders, artisans
25%	Stable near subsistence level, with reasonable hope of remaining above subsistence level: many merchants and traders, some landowners
30%	At subsistence level (often falling below): small farm families, most merchants and traders, labourers
25%	Below subsistence level: some farm families, unattached widows, disables, day labourers

The early church probably lacked any from the first level and probably no more than 10% of an urban church would have come from the second level.

Slaves are not a separate class, because they are embedded into the household that they serve. This is why “selling oneself into slavery” might be considered an option for economic advancement among those in the lowest levels. (Although the extent of this is uncertain.)

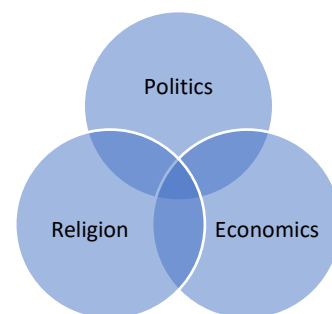
Limited Good

- 1) Wealth in an **agrarian society** is dependent upon the control of land. Because land is a fixed resource, wealth is understood to be a limited good, that is, the increase in an individual’s wealth can only come at the expense of some other individual or group of persons.
- 2) Extensive areas of behaviour are patterned in such a way as to suggest to one and all that in society as well as in nature – the total environment – all the desired things in life, such as land, wealth, prestige, blood, health, friendship and love, honour and respect, and status, power, and influence, security, and safety – literally **all goods in life – exist in finite, limited quantity and are always in short supply**.
- 3) Stability is highly valued in this sort of community. The honourable man, the first-century male ideal, is one who knows how to live up to his inherited obligations. He neither encroaches on others nor allows himself to be exploited or challenged by others. Anytime someone gets richer (acquires more of a limited good) it must come at the cost to someone else who gets poorer (loses some of their limited resources).
- 4) Look out for vocabulary of wealth: rich, greed, poor

The Embeddedness of Religion in Society

The relationship of the three major spheres of public life differed markedly in the first century from what we take for granted. Augustus as the Princeps, the first citizen, was *pontifex maximus*, in charge of Roman religious ritual; *pater patriae*, the father of his country; and, *imperator*, commander of the army. In many ways, he was the ultimate patron. The Romans were particularly good at “politics.” There is no such notion as “separation of church and state” in the first-century.

- Roman occupation of Israel was a political, economic, and religious issue.
- The Temple was a centre of religious, economic, and religious power.
- Jesus’ announcement of the Kingdom of God had religious, economic, and political consequences.



Dyadic Personality (contrasted with Western Individualism)

- 1) We think of personhood as an individual experience; but that is partly because we live after Descartes' "I think, therefore I am." First-century people are more likely to say, **"I belong, therefore I am."** For them, personhood was a relational concept. That is, a person understands who they are by seeing themselves through the eyes of others.
 - a) Bruce J. Malina calls such a psychological orientation **dyadism** [from the Greek for twosome] as opposed to "individualism." Such a group-embedded, collectivistic personality is one who simply needs another continually in order to know who they really are.
 - b) Persons always consider themselves in terms of the group(s) in which they experience themselves as inextricably **embedded**: family, relations, tribes, nation.
- 2) For a dyadic person, their conscience refers to their awareness of how they are being perceived by others. That is why they tend to feel "ashamed" rather than "guilty." A meaningful human existence depends on a person's full awareness of what others think and feel about them, and their living up to that awareness.

Kinship and Marriage

- 1) In Mediterranean culture, currently but especially in the past, the focal institution of the various societies has been and is kinship... When the family is the highlighted institution of concern, then **the organizing principle of life is belongingness**. Success consists in having and making the right interpersonal connections, in being related to the right people. In other words, given belongingness as the organizing principle, success in life means maintaining ties to other persons within sets of significant groups. The central group in this set is one's kinship group.
- 2) A person's family of origin is the primary source for his or her status and location in the world and an essential reference point for the person's identity. People are not just free-floating individuals out in the world. Rather, each person is located within the larger constellations of "family" in a very broad sense (like clan). A person's identity depends on belonging to and being accepted by that family.
 - a) Segmented genealogies can serve to defend a claim to honour (articulating the web of significant family relationships), identify social roles and obligations, establish inheritance rights, identify eligible marriage partners, etc.
 - b) People are known first of all by their father's name in Jewish culture. Thus, the father's reputation becomes the starting place of the reputation of the children.
- 3) Marriage is always the fusion of the honour of two families. Honour as positive shame or ethical goodness comes from the mother; she symbolizes it. Honour as social eminence comes from the father; he symbolizes it.
- 4) Women, for their part, symbol their purity by warding off even the remotest advances to their symbolic space, yet it is the responsible man's duty to protect, defend, and look after the purity of his women (wife, sister, daughter), since their dishonour directly implies his own. This sort of division of honour gets replicated in arrangements of space.
 - a) Private Space was the domain of the female.
 - b) Public Space was the domain of the male.

- 5) **Kin** are those who are “kind” in the sense of “being of the same sort as me.” The level at which ideas of kinship operated depended on the context. The lines of demarcation are important for one behaved towards kin in a much different way (cooperation, trust) than one did to outsiders (competition, suspicion).
 - a) The relationship between siblings is the closest, strongest, and most intimate of relationships in the ancient world.
 - b) The husband-wife relationship does not supersede the intense relationship between brother and sister. (See SS Bartchy, “Undermining Ancient Patriarchy,” *Biblical Theological Bulletin* 29 (1999).)
- 6) The ancient household included master/slave, husband/wife, father/children where master/husband/ father are the same individual, the hub of the family.
- 7) **The church formed itself as a fictive kinship group involving the strongest possible bonds.** The church initially met in private space. Note the use of brother/sister, household of faith, language among the early Christians.
- 8) When you lay claim to a certain status as embodied by your authority and in your gender role, you are claiming honour. For example, a father in a family commands his children to do something, and they obey (authority), as God (the gods) intended: they treat him honourably. Other people seeing this would acknowledge that he is an honourable father. But should this father command and his children disobey, the children would dishonour him, and the father’s peers would ridicule him, thereby acknowledging his lack of honour as a father. (Malina) [Consider the implication on this for the Prodigal’s Father.]

Honour / Shame

“The one firm conviction from which we move to the proof of other points is this: that which is honourable is held dear for no other reason than because it is honourable” Seneca, *De Bin.* 4.16.2.

- 1) **Honour** is, basically, a claim to worth that is socially acknowledged.
 - a) Honour is the value of a person in his or her own eyes plus that person’s value in the eyes of his or her social group.
 - b) To honour a person is to acknowledge publicly that his or her actions conform to social oughts. What the first-century persons were interested in was their honour rating.
- 2) Honour is a relational concept. It counts the value that other people assign to you. The community gives honour to you, but it can also withdraw honour from you. **If you are considered dishonourable you lose your ability to function effectively within society.** A rich person without honour is of no use to anyone, including themselves.
- 3) In our individualistic culture the dynamics of honour and shame seen in the biblical stories are foreign to us. However, by reflecting upon the role of peer pressure in our lives and our desire, especially as uncertain teenagers, to “belong” we can start to make the necessary shift to empathise with an honour/ shame culture.
- 4) **Shame** is being seen as less than valuable because one has behaved in ways that run contrary to the values of the group. However, shame can signify a positive character trait, namely a sensitivity to the opinion of the group such that one avoids those actions that bring disgrace.
 - a) Shame, in this second, positive, sense, is the concern of women. This is because women are seen not as individuals but as persons embedded in the identity and honour of some male.
 - b) A women without a male (either father, husband, son) is highly vulnerable in this kind of society.

- 5) **Ascribed honour** is an “honour rating” that you get based upon your birth or upon the way that others (of higher honour status) have chosen to treat you or your family.
- 6) **Acquired honour**, on the other hand, is the socially recognized claim to worth that a person acquires by excelling over others in the social interaction of challenge-riposte. Because honour is considered to be a limited good it is possible for a person to gain honour only at the expense of another person who loses honour.
 - a) The **challenge-riposte** game can take place only between social equals. It is up to the bystanders to decide who has won the particular exchange.
 - b) **In the first-century Mediterranean world every social interaction that takes place outside one’s family or outside one’s circle of friends is perceived as a challenge to honour, a mutual attempt to acquire honour from one’s social equal.** Thus gift-giving; invitations to dinner; debates over issues of law; buying and selling; arranging marriages; ... and the like – all these sorts of interaction take place according to the patterns of honour called challenge-riposte.
 - c) Anthropologists call it an **agonistic culture**. [The word *agon* is Greek for an athletic contest or a contest between equals of any sort.]
- 7) The honourable person is one who can maintain his or her social boundaries in the intersection of authority, gender, and social respect, including God. The shameless person is one who does not observe social boundaries. The fool is one who takes a shameless person seriously.
- 8) Honour surfaces especially where the three defining features of authority, gender status, and respect come together.
 - a) Authority means the ability to control the behaviour of others.
 - b) Gender status (or roles) refers to those set of obligations and entitlements – what you ought to do and what others ought to do to or for you – that derive from symboling biological gender differentiation.
 - c) Respect means the attitude one must have and the behaviour one is expected to follow relative to those who control one’s existence.
- 9) Look out for
 - a) Honour vocabulary, e.g., honour, praise, glory, name, dishonour, reproach, scorn
 - b) References to heredity, place of origin, etc. = ascribed honour
 - c) Honour challenges among social equals (e.g., test, entrap) = acquired honour

Patron / Client and Reciprocity

- 1) By the time of the New Testament, money and movable assets were an increasingly important measure of wealth and power. However, the basic social fabric of the Greek, Roman, and Hebrew culture was woven of the familiar fabric of personal contacts: of favours done, returns expected, allegiance owed.
- 2) The world of the New Testament was a world in which personal **patronage** was an essential means of acquiring access to goods, protection, or opportunities for employment and advancement. The role of the **patron** was to provide needed assistance to the **client**; the role of the client was to enhance the fame and honour of the patron, remaining loyal to the patron and providing services whenever the opportunity arose.
 - a) This world of personal influence and favouritism is despised in our culture. However, we must overcome our personal prejudices and see this as part of the honour/shame culture of Jesus and the New Testament.
 - b) Significantly, we must consider the way in which God is viewed as the ultimate **Benefactor**/Patron and Jesus as the one who is able to **broker** God's patronage. Jesus is seen to be one who is able to grant God's favours.
- 3) **Reciprocity**, an implicit, nonlegal contractual obligation, unenforceable by any authority apart from one's own sense of honour and shame, involved an honourable person selecting (or being selected by) another for a series of ongoing, unspecified acts of mutual support.
 - a) The acceptance of an invitation to dinners, of a small gift, or of a benefaction like healing signalled the start of an ongoing reciprocal relationship. To accept an invitation, a gift, or a benefaction with no thought to future reciprocity implies acceptance of imbalance in society. Such an action would damage the status quo.
- 4) Where social equals participated in providing benefits for one another the relationship is called "**friendship**,"² although it involves the same principle of reciprocity and mutual fidelity that underlies the patron/client relationship.
- 5) "For the actual writers and readers of the New Testament, *grace* was not primarily a religious (in contrast to a secular) word. Rather, it was used to speak of reciprocity among human beings and between mortals and God. This single word encapsulated the entire ethos of the relationships of [patron/client]. Grace was used to refer to (1) the willingness of a patron to grant some benefit to another person or to a group... (2) the gift itself, that is, the result of the giver's beneficent feelings... (3) the response to a benefactor and his or her gifts, namely, 'gratitude'" (deSilva, 104).
 - a) The Louw-Nida lexicon identifies four semantic domains associated with the Greek word we translate as "grace" (*charis*): (1) kindness, (2) gift, (3) thanks, and (4) good will.
- 6) The fundamental ethos governing relationships of patrons and clients, benefactors and beneficiaries, and friends is that *grace must answer grace*.
 - a) Thanksgiving, bringing honour to God through our lives, loyalty/trust, good works, and using his gifts wisely/appropriately are the expected responses to God's grace to us brokered by Jesus.
- 7) Gifts were not intended to elicit some desired object in return, but gifts were still to be made strategically. A reputation for knowing how to be grateful was, in effect, the ancient equivalent of a credit rating. Giving without advance calculation of a return and selecting one's beneficiaries carefully was potentially shameful.

² L. T. Johnson, "Making Connections: The Material Expression of Friendship in the New Testament," *Interpretation* (April, 2004): 158-71; "friendship is a pervasive theme in the New Testament even when the term itself is not used" (p.159).

- 8) An individual's manipulation of their available world of things, of "its," is simply non-productive and insufficient for adequate rescue from very different situations. Their only source of help would lie in the manipulation of the available world of visible and non-visible persons, of "thous," of higher-status persons who were able to provide relief in unusual situations. Furthermore, if luck and fortune ultimately derive from God or the gods, then the divinity too becomes a "thou" worthy of manipulation.
- 9) Look out for:
 - a) The vocabulary of patronage: e.g., patron, friend, partner, grace, mercy.
 - b) The need of a person leading to petition.
 - c) The response to grants of favour.

Clean / Unclean

- 1) **Purity codes are a way of talking about what is proper for a certain place and a certain time.** Pollution is a label attached to whatever is out of place with regard to the society's view of an orderly and safe world. Purity has to do with drawing the lines that give definition to the world around us. (Consider, for example, a common response to "mixed" marriages as "wrong.")
- 2) Purity rules deal with system and order, with definitions of general boundaries and of exclusivity, with the anomalies that simply defy classification or that are positively abominations. Every culture has such purity rules, for every culture has its classification system.
 - a) "We need to gain a sympathetic understanding concerning why purity would be worthwhile or important to people. When we do we will no longer dismiss Jesus' opponents as incomprehensible, shallow, or legalistic" (DeSilva, *Introduction* 112).
- 3) Cultures like ancient Israel draw extensive lines of purity, of clean and unclean, in an attempt to create a model of God's cosmic order and to help an individual locate his or her place in that order so that the person may know when pollution has been contracted and what needs to be done to dispel it, so that access to the holy God and his benefits will remain open,
 - a) There was no distinction between moral and ritual law. All transgressions against the law were polluting.
 - b) The presence of God dwelling in the Jerusalem Temple meant that there was a special obligation upon Jerusalem and Israelites to be holy (avoid pollution).
 - c) The common perception is that observance of purity rules brings prosperity both to the society and to the individuals in that society, while infringement brings danger.
- 4) Purity Maps included people, food, spaces, and times. "The Gospels contain a multitude of instances where Jesus 'crosses the line' intentionally with regard to the maps of persons, foods, times, and space, for which he is frequently challenged and offers explanations or defence" (deSilva, 280).
 - a) However, the church did not reject the concepts of purity, defilement, and holiness; instead it rewrote the maps of holy and defiling people.
 - b) As Jesus demonstrated, the lines separating believers from unbelievers always remain permeable for mission, for reaching out in love to bring some measure of relief or restoration, as well as for conversion and entrance into the church. However, both the Christian and the church are expected to maintain their purity, "set apartness."
- 5) Look out for
 - a) Vocabulary of purity: holy, sanctified, clean, saints, common, defiled.
 - b) Confusion caused by anomalies (things not in their right place) and abominations (things in the wrong place)

Summary: Cultural Equivalents

1 st Century Values		21 st Century Western Values	21 st Cultural Equivalents to 1 st
Honour/Shame		Self-esteem Guilt	“Mafia” Peer groups
Kinship		Individualism Nuclear family	Tribalism, including clubs and subcultures
Clean/Unclean		Secular Privacy	Out of place people, e.g., homeless and counter-cultural people in church
Patron/Client and Reciprocity		Me first No obligations Nepotism is wrong	Friendship/Mateship
Limited Good		Entrepreneurial expansion	Environmentalism

Like most other sectors of society throughout the empire, Galilean society is marked by two tiers of position: those in secure positions and those in insecure positions. Those enjoying a high degree of security are members of the elite, the ruling class, and their high-ranking retainers. Those in an insecure situation include the peasants, most artisans and merchants, along with the unclean, the degraded, and the expendables. Although those in secure positions of wealth and power are few in number, they control the majority of the wealth of the society. The elite enjoy an extremely extravagant lifestyle, while the majority of the peasants live the most meagre existence.

The elite have the luxury of establishing profitable relationships with other members of the elite, usually facilitated by means of lavish banquets that display their wealth and opulence in contests of consumption. A member of the elite continually seeks ways of increasing his influence through investment opportunities, business partnerships, patron-client relationships, currying favour with imperial officials, or serving a lucrative ambassadorial function on behalf of his city. An increase in his wealth is a means to increase his power by enlisting the friendship of powerful civic leaders and establishing numerous patron-client networks in which the patron is lauded and praised publicly for his benevolence. The elite portray themselves as favoured by the gods and go to great lengths to ensure that the religious institutions of the society promote this claim. Moreover, because the legal system is in their control, they devise laws that will benefit them and work the system of justice in ways that promote their own interests, usually without regard for the effects on the nonelite.

Rural peasants, conversely, expend significant energy simply trying to ensure the survival of themselves and their families. They usually live meagre lives at subsistence level, having just enough food and resources to get by. Many fall below that level. Their poor standard of living is not the result of laziness or ineptitude, since a peasant’s workday is long and hard. Nor is it the result of poor harvesting techniques since peasant farmers reap significant gains from agricultural production. Instead, subsistence living is the result of imposed dues, tributes, and taxations, which peasants usually regard as excessively harsh because these expensive burdens extract everything over and above what is required to sustain the peasants’ existence.

Close ties of kinship provide a small safety net against the hardships of life. The financial setbacks that accompany a poor harvest or other forms of adversity can sometimes be offset through the collective efforts of relatives. Normally, however, if a small landowner experiences a poor harvest caused by drought or some other natural disaster, he finds himself unable to pay his taxes and provide for his family. In cases of this kind, farmers with small tracts of land are forced to borrow money from a member of the elite, usually at high rates of interest. Now the small farmer is in an extremely precarious position and more often than not finds himself unable to repay the loan. Consequently, he is forced to relinquish ownership of the land, as the elite moneylender inevitably forecloses on the loan and instigates a takeover of the peasant farm in repayment of the debt. The elite owner then installs a manager to run the operation, overseeing the harvesting, gathering, and storing of the produce, and exporting it or monetizing it. The manager is expected to extract as much return from the land as possible in order to support the owner’s conspicuously extravagant lifestyle in a city far away. The new owner will already have significant tracts of land from which to generate wealth and power, but the acquisition of new land, no matter how insignificant the size, offers a further boost in his unending attempt to ascend the ladder of civic prominence. In exceptional circumstances, if the elite landowner has connections with senators in Rome or the emperor himself, he may be able to ensure that his lands are excluded from Roman taxation.

The peasant who previously owned the land might be lucky enough to be appointed as a tenant farmer, renting the land he previously owned through a contract regulated by the manager. The tenant farmer is required to meet a high quota of productivity. As long as he is able to do so, he is of use. A failure to meet the quota likely results in a forfeiture of the tenancy agreement. At that point his best hope lies in becoming a slave, in which case he is at the mercy of his owner. Some slave owners treat their slaves reasonably; a slave is property, just as livestock is property, and there are good reasons for ensuring that one’s property operates to full efficiency. Nonetheless, many slaves find themselves in situations that provide for nothing other than the most basic requirements of life. They are forced to live together in cramped and squalid conditions and have little to eat. Many are physically abused.

Another option for a tenant farmer who has lost his tenancy is to become a day labourer, hiring himself out at the marketplace to any manager requiring temporary work. For the day labourer, work is sporadic at best, due in

³ <https://zoboko.com/text/nogdroev/the-lost-letters-of-pergamum-a-story-from-the-new-testament-world/49>

part to seasonal fluctuations in workforce requirements, as well as the competition for work among the high number of day laborers seeking to provide scraps of food for themselves and their families. Eventually, due to ill health, poor nutrition, or simply aging, the day labourer is no longer hired for work of any kind and is unable to eke out even the most basic living. His best hope now lies with whatever kin he might have who might be able to provide him with some form of support.

Failing that, he has few options. Some in this position choose to become bandits, taking their chances against those in transit on the roads. Others wander into groups of charismatic religious figures promising a new utopian age. On occasion, some try to fight back against their perceived oppressors, but never with any real degree of success. Most, however, simply end up as beggars on the urban streets, eager for whatever kindly handout comes their way. Most of these options end in an inevitable death. A person in any of these situations has nothing of value to contribute to the machinery that maintains the processes of society and is therefore expendable (if a beggar) or a nuisance (if a bandit or an extremist). He can hope that his offspring will survive somehow, but his daughters more than likely will give themselves to prostitution, and his sons will become slaves or day laborers like their father, with the cycle set to repeat itself all over again. Suicide is not uncommon among those in these dire circumstances.

With these prospects in view, a tenant farmer on a small landholding is always keenly aware of his vulnerable position on the edge of disaster and ruin. His efforts are directed toward staving off the exploitative processes of the elite. He feels constantly oppressed by a combination of excessive financial obligations. First, he must make a payment (of a prearranged amount) to the elite landowner by means of the installed manager, who himself expects to receive a sizable contribution for his efforts. Second, he must pay taxes to maintain the fabric of the Roman Empire. Such taxes take the form of poll taxes and land taxes, but they are supplemented by toll collections, duties, and tariffs. From a peasant's point of view, taxes of this kind simply line the purses of the elite elsewhere in the empire whose lives of opulence are maintained by means of these excessive tax burdens.

Third, if a Jew, a peasant falls under the burden of an additional tax. Until the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple, this duty came in the form of a temple tax expected from every observant Jewish male in the empire. Temple tribute consisted of a variety of tithings at various times throughout the year. As a result, a sizable amount of agricultural produce was redirected to the temple priests and functionaries. In theory, this tribute was willingly offered as an expression of thanks and devotion to the Jewish god. In practice, these forms of tribute were often given with reluctance because most of the tribute was used to support the extravagant lifestyle of the high priestly clans based in Jerusalem, many of whom purchased their priesthoods in order to reap the significant rewards associated with the position. Their success in amassing wealth from their position is evidenced by the fact that, prior to the destruction of a large sector of the city by Roman forces in the Judean uprising, many of the priestly houses in Jerusalem were comparable in grandeur to the senatorial houses in Rome. Consequently, deep resentment toward the Jerusalem priesthood had taken hold within many sectors of Jewish peasantry prior to Jerusalem's overthrow. Nonetheless, if a peasant farmer is unwilling or unable to pay these temple tributes, he would likely find himself the object of religious ostracism, belittled as a reprobate and one unworthy to remain within the covenant of the Jewish god and the Jewish people. But even if he was viewed with some disdain, his position was nonetheless enviable compared to that of the day laborers and the expendables, whose fate was already decided.

Although the Jerusalem temple has been destroyed, a form of temple taxation has continued for the Jewish people, with taxation revenues now channelled to support the temple of Capitoline Jupiter in Rome. Facing severe financial difficulties and with the Jerusalem temple no longer in existence, the emperor Vespasian [emperor 69–79 CE] decided to redirect into the Roman coffers the tribute money that had formerly been paid to the Jerusalem temple. (Such an act simultaneously punishes the Jewish people for their uprising and insults their pretensions to independence.) A tax of two denarii for each of the five million Jews of the empire is now required to support the Capitoline temple in Rome. A tax that had previously been offered in support of the Jewish god is now conscripted to promote the high god of the Roman Empire.