

Resurrection Life of Jesus Church

BACK TO THE BOOK OF ACTS (BBA)

RLJ-1109

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NOVEMBER 25, 2007

PART 7: THE SPIRITUAL CONDITION IN ISRAEL

BACKGROUND HISTORY

The remnant of the twelve tribes living at the time when Jesus was born in Bethlehem lived a bleak life. The great hopes during the time of the Maccabean period had been dashed. The Jews later had some 80 years of self rule, but this was a turbulent time, since there were two Jewish political parties at war with each other, the Sadducees and Pharisees.

Up until around 63 B.C., there was political instability in the three provinces of Galilee, Samaria and Judea. Bitter infighting, bickering and dirty politics were the norm. The Jewish people suffered and there was no clear religious or political leadership. The Sadducees and Pharisees appealed to the Roman General Pompey, to help them overcome the political stalemate, but he double-crossed them and imposed Roman rule over the land.

While General Pompey was meeting with the Jewish delegations, he secretly ordered his army to enter Judea. When this became known to the different Jewish leaders, one of them managed to escape from the Roman camp and hurry back to Jerusalem to organize armed resistance.

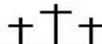
The tragedy was that there were two groups of Jewish armed forces inside Jerusalem, one belonging to the Sadducees and one to the Pharisees. But instead of working with each other against the Romans, they opposed each other.

The Roman army broke through and some 12,000 Jewish men were killed in the battle. As the Roman soldiers came to the temple, priests continued to offer the different daily sacrifices but were cut down by sword wielding Roman soldiers. As each priest was killed, another priest would step up to finish the sacrifice and also be killed. The Romans did not distinguish between Jewish fighters and priests. When all resistance was finally put down, General Pompey walked into the holiest of holy and desecrated it with his presence.

By the time Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the Romans held the land with an iron grip. The Jewish people just existed with no hope or dreams for the future. Some 700 years prior to this, the Prophet Isaiah was given a prophecy concerning this time. **Isaiah 8:11-22, 9:1-7**

CONDITIONS IN THE LAND

The Sadducees did not believe that sin separated them from God, life after death, or in existence of angels and demons. They were pragmatic politicians that worked with the Roman government to make a good living. **Acts 23:6-10**



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The Pharisees tried to pay for their sins through rituals and were waiting for the Messiah to come and throw the Romans out of the land. A number of men had proclaimed to be the Messiah, gathered a following and then tried to fight the Romans. All had been captured by the Romans and were killed by the sword or crucifixion. **Acts 5:34-39**

The Essenes were an organization that most Christians know nothing about. They operated like a secret society and had different degrees with initiations and secret oaths. The men were married and their children were raised in this environment. They opposed violence and the use of weapons. They can be compared with the Amish people, frozen in time, who pretty much live by themselves and do not like to develop technical knowledge. The Dead Sea Scrolls (found in 1947) are from an Essene compound and revealed much of their belief system. They are not mentioned by name in the New Testament.

The Cabalists operated much like Freemasons do today. They had infiltrated both Sadducees and Pharisees and become a secret organization within other organizations. Parasites would be a good word to describe them.

As I discussed in the previous sermon, their agenda was to bring the “holy serpent” out of the bottomless pit. The human leader going to do this would be the “mystical messiah.” Once this messiah had come, he would have supernatural power and be able to drive the Romans out and set up the Jewish kingdom which in time would rule the entire world. It was a group of Cabalists in the beginning of Jesus’ ministry that believed that He was their “messiah.” They tried to take Him by force and proclaim Him to be the king of the Jews.

Matthew 11:12

There have been many pastors preaching on this verse, telling people that we must establish the kingdom of God with force. This is done in total ignorance, since they have no background knowledge of the situation at the time of Christ.

John 6:14-15

SPIRITUAL VACUUM

God set Jesus to be born in a time of depression and despair for the children of Israel. They were disillusioned with the two political parties and hated the Romans. False messiahs had appeared time and time again, made a splash on the political scene, been hunted down like criminals by the Romans and were executed. Executions using a cross were common. Each false messiah made claims but could not deliver. Common men and women were more concerned about making a living and having food to raise their children. Crime, drunkenness, prostitution and sexual immorality were rampant. Political corruption was common and there was no justice for the poor. Once you understand this, we can begin looking at the teachings of Jesus as He spoke to people without a hope and a bleak future.

JESUS' MESSAGE

The same conditions that existed at the time of Jesus are still on the earth some 2,000 years later. As a result, Jesus' message is still relevant today.

- Establish morality – **Matthew 5:1-10**
- Give them an identity – **verses 11-16**
- Jesus did not come to destroy the law of God – **verses 17-19**
- Man cannot save himself – **verse 20**
- How to deal with anger – **verses 21- 26**
- Lust and divorce are unacceptable to God – **verses 27-32**
- No binding oaths – **verses 33-37**
- How to deal with negative forces – **verses 38-48**

DO YOU HAVE AN EAR TO HEAR WITH?