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Bi 103 Synoptic Gospels

Assignment 9b

October 23, 2017

1. Who were the Maccabean leaders? Explain.

A: Mattathias a Jewish priest in the village of Modein had five sons that fled with him after he killed a Syrian officer and a Jew, to the remote hills. Soon Mattathias's sons became leaders of this guerrilla resistance movement, which in 167 B.C.E. rapidly developed into open revolt. The first son to follow him as leader was Judas (nicknamed Maccabeus, from which the Maccabean movement derived its name). When Judas was killed in battle in 160 B.C.E., his brother Jonathan assumed leadership. Jonathan was captured by the Syrians and executed in 143 B.C.E., another brother Simon, became leader and high priest. When he was murdered in 135 B.C.E. his son, John Hyrcanus, succeeded him, was named ruler and high priest, and successfully ruled for thirty years, inaugurating the Hasmonean dynasty of Jewish rulers.

2. Who was Judas Maccabeus? Explain his role.

A: Judas (nicknamed Maccabeus, from which the Maccabean movement derived its name). Judas led a brilliant series of engagements against superior Syrian forces (the capital of the Seleucid empire was in Syrian Antioch). He was able to recapture Jerusalem in 162 B.C.E., and

after removing all vestiges of pagan worship from the Temple, he rebuilt the altar and resumed the offering of Jewish sacrifices offered to God.

3. What did this group have to do with the establishment of the Pharisee sect of Judaism?

Explain.

A: The origin of the Pharisees within Judaism is unclear, although it appears likely that, similar to the Sadducees, they too emerged out of the reinvigoration of Judaism stimulated by the Maccabean revolt.

4. Who was the first Roman Emperor?

A: After the assassination of Julius Caesar in 44 B.C.E. emerged the Second Triumvirate in 43 B.C.E., composed of Caesar's nephew, Octavian, Marc Antony, and Lepidus. As the rivalry between Octavian and Marc Antony intensified, Lepidus became insignificant. Octavian's forces defeated Marc Antony in Egypt in 31 B.C.E. (after which Marc Antony killed himself), and Octavian began to assume more authority, moving toward acquiring absolute control over the republic. Receiving the title of "Augustus" (with its overtones of divinity) in 27 B.C.E., his rule extended to 14 B.C.E. and was dedicated to extending and maintaining the peace and prosperity of the Empire. Though he never claimed the title for himself, Augustus became the first Roman Emperor.

5. Who was the second Roman Emperor?

A: The adopted son of Augustus, "Tiberius Claudius Nero" from (14 – 37 CE). His imperial institutions and imperial boundaries he sought to preserve. In his last years he became a tyrannical recluse, inflicting a reign of terror against the major personages of Rome.

6. Who was emperor during the time of Jesus? When He was born? When He ministered?

A: Nero was the emperor during the time of Jesus, and at the time of His birth Octavian, called Caesar Augustus was emperor. Nero succeeded Augustus and was emperor during the ministry of Jesus as well.

7. What Roman Prefect was instrumental in the death of Jesus?

A: Pontius Pilate, Roman prefect (governor) of Judaea from (26 – 36 CE) under the emperor Tiberius, who presided at the trial of Jesus and gave the order for his crucifixion. Pilate was exposed to sharper criticism from the Jews, who may have capitalized on his vulnerability by obtaining a legal death sentence on Jesus.

8. How did the Hellenistic culture infiltrate Judaism?

A: Greek culture slowly infiltrated Jewish culture, threatening to destroy the Jewish people in ways tyrants could not do through brute force. After the death of Alexander the Great, the Greek empire in the Mediterranean basin divided into two main sections. The northern empire – which included Syria, Turkey (which was then Asia Minor) and Greece itself – was under the domination of a general called Seleucus, and therefore called the Seleucid Empire. The southern empire, which was basically Egypt and Africa, was under the domination of a general called Ptolemy. The kingdoms would rule Mediterranean world until Rome.

9. List the seven different groups of Judaism. Explain what each group represented and its effect on Jesus' ministry.

L/E: Sadducees – The Sadducees were a priestly aristocracy that emerged into prominence following the Maccabean uprising, as the Hasmonean rulers labored to establish a Jewish state. You might think of them as being religious realists and opportunists. They were willing to accommodate and compromise with whatever authority was in charge if it was to their political

advantage. In Matthew 16 Jesus calls them “hypocrites” and “a wicked and adulterous generation.”

Pharisees – The Pharisees were not priests. They were primarily a well-organized lay religious reform movement that adamantly opposed any accommodating pollution by Hellenism of the Jewish law including, in addition to its written form in the Pentateuch, the expansions and shut the gates of heaven so that neither they nor the people could enter. He constantly attacked them for hypocrisy, calling them fools (Matt. 23).

Essenes – One branch of the Essene movement that had withdrawn to the wilderness established a community at Qumran, by the Dead Sea. They accumulated and produced a trove of religious documents, and then sealed them in great jars and hid them in caves in the hills around their community’s site to protect the sacred scrolls from desecration or destruction during the Jewish revolt against Rome. The community was overrun and destroyed in 68 C.E. These documents, many of which have been discovered beginning in 1947, are widely known as the Dead Sea Scrolls. They observed complex and detailed rules advocating physical and religious purity, piety, and spiritual enrichment. They practiced elaborate rites of purification, and held all property in common. They held common community meals and worshiped together, especially on the Sabbath.

Zealots – Zealots were radical political activists who opposed not only subservience to but even association with any Gentile (non-Jewish) power or authority. The Zealot movement as an organized political initiative had not yet developed during the interval of Jesus’ public ministry.

Priest – The priesthood played an important role in the religious and the daily life Judaism. The Jewish priesthood was divided into subgroups, or priestly classes: the chief priests, the regular

priests, and the Levites. The priesthood were distinguished by their function and not by their religious or political program.

Scribes – The Scribes were distinguished by their function, as with the Jewish priests. They could belong to any of the other sect groups, but most of them were lay experts on Jewish scripture and on Jewish religious practice. By the time of the public ministry of Jesus, people looked to scribes to clarify the requirements of Torah, to interpret sacred Jewish traditions, to provide informed authoritative guidance for the formulation of judicial decisions, and even, on occasion, to render judgments in the legal process.

Jewish People – The majority of the Jews in first-century C.E. Palestine, while being affected by one or more of the above groups, did not belong to any of them. They were mostly of the peasant class, farmers and tenant farmers, herdsmen, merchants, craftsmen, fishermen, laborers, women, and slaves. More or less observant of the Jewish religion, they prayed to God and acknowledged God's right to their obedient allegiance.

10. What religion was dominant in the Greco-Roman world? What factors supported the acceptance of Christianity as a religion?

A: Hellenism/Polytheism was the dominant religion in the Greco-Roman world. Its form of civilization composed of and distinguished by the ways of living developed in Greece and transmitted from one generation of the Hellenes (the Greeks) to the next. Its roots reach back into earlier times, but expanded its influence vastly during the extraordinary conquests of Alexander the Great and subsequently under his successors. In the fourth century the Empire was divided into the western zone centered in Rome itself and the eastern empire with its capital at Constantinople (= Byzantium, now Istanbul) named originally for the Roman Emperor,

Constantine, who moved his capital there after approving Christianity as an acceptable religion within the Empire.