

HERITAGE

Civilization and the Jews

§ The Power of the Word §

Session 4

Episode 2 § Lesson 2

Judea Captiva

While the Eastern Mediterranean area – including Judea – was wrestling with the challenges of Hellenism, a power in the west had been incubating a great Empire: Rome. The Hasmonians in Judea had manipulated the power of the Romans to their advantage, but eventually the Roman Empire absorbed the Judean state.

Placing a Roman-aculturated Jew, Herod, on the throne, the Romans rapidly turned Judea into an imperial outpost. Herod, a brilliant but psychotic ruler, instituted awesome building projects, making his backwater kingdom the principal eastern Mediterranean commercial maritime center.

In the aftermath of Herod, a variety of religious and political sects and parties developed in Judea. The political ones fought among themselves – for popular support and for secular and religious power – as much as they fought against the Romans. The religious sects included numerous messianic ones, including the Jesus movement, known as the Nazarenes.

In 66 CE, Judean zealots fomented a rebellion against the Empire that threatened the entire eastern Roman imperial frontier with its rival, the Parthian empire.

Rome sent in its crack legions, under the leadership of the brilliant general Vespasian. He carried out a successful series of campaigns against the Judean revolt.

LESSON OUTLINE

Download the HERITAGE DVD-ROM bookmarks for this lesson:

For Windows users

For Macintosh users

Subjugation to Rome

V Video: Show 2: The Maccabees, Qumran (Bookmarked as “The Coming of the Romans”)

A Atlas: Mediterranean: 63 BCE

The Glories of Herodian Judea

V Video: Show 2: Rome, Herod the Great

V Video: Show 2: Rome, Judea Resplendent

M Multimedia: Judea Resplendent

A Atlas: Israel-Palestine: 4 BCE

T Timeline: 30 CE

Sectarianism and the Nazarenes

V Video: Show 2: Rome, Misrule and Unrest (part 1)

A Atlas: Mediterranean: 4 BCE

V Video: Show 2: Rome, Misrule and Unrest (part 2) (Bookmarked as “Jesus”)

A Atlas: Israel-Palestine: 30

The Great Revolt and its Aftermath

V Video: Show 2: Rome, Judean Uprising, Judea in Arms

A Atlas: Mediterranean: 72

V Video: Show 2: Judean Uprising, Rabbinic Tradition

So successful was he that, upon the death of the Emperor Nero, Vespasian was recalled to Rome as the new Emperor, leaving his son Titus as commander of the final assault on Jerusalem.

Crushed by the might of the Roman Empire, Judea and its religious heritage should have perished from the world's stage. But surviving Judeans and a widespread Jewish Diaspora found a new basis for continuing in their Jewish identity through a small band of rabbis who re-invented Judaism as a transformed version of the religion and culture of Temples, altars, and rootedness in a Holy Land.

Session 4 *Judea Captiva*

PART 1

Subjugation to Rome

The Hellenistic Empires gradually decayed and were destroyed by the onslaught of the Romans. The Roman Empire eventually encompassed not just the Mediterranean basin (including Judea) but much of Europe and North Africa.

Hasmonean princes vied for favor from this expanding power, and the Roman general, Pompey, eventually allied Rome to the weakest of the contenders...thus ensuring Roman control of the kingdom. The Roman takeover of Judea was probably unavoidable, but was ensured by the petty dynastic squabbles that undermined Judean independence.

V The Maccabees, Qumran

Bookmark: "The Coming of the Romans"

Video > The Power of the Word > Rome > Roman Rule in Judea

Video: Show 2: The Maccabees, Qumran

The Roman Empire had been progressively expanding for centuries, and by the first century BCE Rome was clearly the unassailable power in the eastern Mediterranean. The Romans saw Judea as a strategically located asset for controlling the land-bridge between its Asian and African imperial possessions.

- ◆ Play this video segment until "...Romans brought peace with a vengeance."

Review and Discussion Question

- The Romans capitalized on an intra-Hasmonean Jewish succession dispute for the Judean monarchy. Would the Romans, intent on controlling the eastern Mediterranean, side with the stronger or weaker contender for the throne, and why?

A Mediterranean, 63 BCE

Atlas > 586 BCE – 72 CE > 63 BCE > Mediterranean

Atlas: Mediterranean, 63 BCE

Judea was a special place in a special location...especially for Roman imperial designs.

- ◆ Point out Judah and Rome on the map.
- ◆ Click the **Map Legend** tab at the bottom to show the distances involved on the mileage scale. Click again to make the map legend go away.
- ◆ Grab the slider on the thumbnail map and move the map easterly, pointing out the Parthian Empire as the principal threat to Roman expansion eastward. Emphasize the strategic position of Judah/Judea.

Review and Discussion Questions

- In addition to its position between continents, what value might Judah/Judea lend to Rome in its “global” aspirations?

PART 2

The Glories of Herodian Judea

After putting up for decades with the petty dynastic squabbles among the Hasmonean descendents, Rome decided to place its own chieftain on the throne, a Roman-educated half-Jew named Herod. King Herod was an extraordinarily capable man who used his Roman connections to inaugurate massive building projects.

Unfortunately, Herod was also, by all accounts, insane. His forceful policies and crushing taxes alienated the people, already dubious about his unsuitable background for claiming the throne of Israel. As his paranoid reign progressed, he would kill even own his Hasmonean-princess wife and children to assure the security of his monarchy.

V Rome, Herod the Great

Video > The Power of the Word >
Rome > Herod the Great

Video: Show 2: Rome, Herod the Great

Herod was a master builder, whose projects included Caesarea, the largest seaport in the eastern Mediterranean, and various fortresses (including Masada, his winter residence), and, most notably, the vastly enlarged Temple Mount complex in Jerusalem. The western wall of his supporting structure (the Kotel) for the Temple remains the only vestige of his grand temple-building project.

- ◆ Play this video segment until “....the people’s resentment against their king.”
- Why would the Judeans have had such resentment against imperial building projects within their borders?
- In what ways were Solomon and Herod similar?

V Rome, Judea Resplendent

Video > The Power of the Word >
Rome > Judea Resplendent

Video: Show 2: Rome, Judea Resplendent

Herod’s construction on the Temple mount aroused particular ire among the religious leadership. Essentially, Herod replaced the earlier Second Temple with a far larger and more grandiose structure; in doing so, he virtually obliterated the original sixth-century BCE structure and the later improvements added by the Hasmoneans in the second century BCE. The priesthood was particularly irked by the king’s plans for their Jerusalem headquarters precinct.

- ◆ Play this video segment until “....or chose not to,” pausing where desired to point out highlights of the Temple compound’s architecture.

M Judea Resplendent

Video > The Power of the Word >
Rome > Judea Resplendent >
Explore Topic > Play

Review and Discussion Questions

- Why were metal tools impermissible on the Temple mount during the construction project?
- How did the replacement of the old Temple with the new one mirror the general evolution of the Jewish people in the Second Temple period?

Multimedia: Judea Resplendent

Herod built upon the kingdom which the Maccabees had constructed in the century before his accession. His model of an ideal kingdom was one that fully reflected the achievements of the Roman Empire in monumental construction.

- ◆ Play the Autoplay. At its completion, there will be a panel displayed with five selection boxes.
- ◆ Select the **New Cities** box. An artist's depiction of Herodian Scythopolis (modern Bet She'an) will be displayed. Using the thumbnail slider, show the grandiose and characteristically Roman city plan, including the amphitheatre (lower left) and the long straight street of the *Cardo*.
- ◆ Point out also, in the upper right, the hill with a small settlement atop it, which was used as a watchtower for Scythopolis. This compound was built on the ruins of Biblical Bet She'an, famous as the site of King Saul's post-mortem impalement in II Samuel.
- ◆ Sliding back to the amphitheatre in the lower-left, click the **Show Modern** words at the bottom of the panel. This will display the archeological ruins as they appear today at Bet She'an. Show the highlights of the excavated remains versus the artistic reconstruction by moving the thumbnail slider and toggling between the two views of key areas.
- ◆ Return to the five-box selection panel, by clicking **Back**.
- ◆ Select the **Judea's Port** button to display an artistic reconstruction of Caesarea. Point out the manmade jetties, and, using the thumbnail slider, the Roman temple (near the center), the great amphitheatre (at the bottom), and the hippodrome (in the upper-right corner). Mention that some members of the class may have attended a performance at the restored Caesarea Theater.
- ◆ Return to the five-box selection panel, by clicking **Back**.
- ◆ Select **The Jerusalem Temple** button to display the Rittmeyer rendering of the Herodian temple complex. Using the thumbnail slider as needed, point out the following key features:

- The area of the Kotel.
- Warren’s and Robinson’s arches, mentioning their original functions and current status and use (in the case of Warren’s arch to the left of the Kotel area).
- The area north of Warren’s arch along which the Western Wall tunnel was opened by Netanyahu to great conflict in 1997.
- The Antonia Fortress at the northwest corner of the mount, named for Herod’s original patron, Marc Antony.
- The Temple itself at the center (with smoke from the altar ascending just east of the building itself), on the spot where the golden Dome of the Rock now dominates the Jerusalem skyline.
- The great colonnade (mentioned earlier in the video) at the southern end of the mount, where the Sanhedrin met, and which is now the site of the Al Aqsa mosque.
- The southwest corner of the mount (under the staircase that is now the stub called Robinson’s arch), with an archeological garden where non-Orthodox Jews can now hold services at the Western Wall, south of the Kotel area.
- The Huldah gates on the south wall of the mount, approached by monumental steps (re-dedicated for public access in 1999).
- The southern courts south of the mount, now the Davidson Archeological Garden and visitors’ center.
- Attendees familiar with Jerusalem might also appreciate that the viewing angle in the graphic is similar to that from the Haas Promenade, and that the hill beyond the mount in the upper left is Mt. Scopus, home of the old Hadassah hospital and of Hebrew University; the hill behind the southern end of the mount (in the upper right) is the Mount of Olives; and the foreground of the Temple mount (the bottom third of the picture) is today’s Jewish Quarter in the Old City.

Review and Discussion Questions

- How is the contemporary idea of some to rebuild the Temple a politically “challenging” idea?
- The Roman procurators, including Pontius Pilate, used Caesarea as their seat of government. Why not Jerusalem?

Atlas: Israel-Palestine: 4 BCE

Herod’s spectacular projects dotted his kingdom. When he died in 4 BCE, Judea’s borders had been re-extended to Biblical and early-Hasmonean proportions. His heirs did not have his capabilities or connections in Rome, and his kingdom was divided into four parts by the Romans and given to his family members as their realms.

A Israel-Palestine: 4 BCE

Atlas > 586 BCE – 72 CE > 4 BCE > Mediterranean

T 30 CE

Timeline > 586 BCE – 72 CE > 4 BCE > Mediterranean

- ◆ Show the extent of Herod's Empire and point out its key components, including Judea, Samaria, Galilee, Idumea (in the south), Perea (east of the Dead Sea and Jordan River), the region known as Gilead (not thus labeled on the map, but including much of southern Syria on the east side of the Jordan River and Sea of Galilee), using the thumbnail map slider where needed.
- ◆ Also point out the locations of Jerusalem, Caesarea, Herodion, and Masada, sites of major Herodian building projects.

Timeline: 30 CE

A few years after Herod's death, Judea had become so unruly that the Romans placed it under procuratorial rule. The first several decades of the Common Era saw a succession of generally corrupt and ruthless procurators (foreign governors) who plundered the country and sowed the seeds of both hopeful messianism and apocalyptic dreams of rebellion among the Judeans.

- ◆ Point out periods of "Roman governors" (procurators), at year 30, near the top.
- ◆ Indicate the brief time between the death of Jesus and the end of the Second-Temple period.

Review and Discussion Question

- At year 66 on the Timeline, it is noted that the Zealots proliferated in the 40s through 60s. Why?

PART 3

Sectarianism and the Nazarenes

There was no single “Judaism” in this era, but rather a diversity of Jewish practices and philosophies, some very pietistic, and some very political, even revolutionary. Among the numerous movements that arose, several were messianic in nature, identifying some individual as the one chosen by God to liberate Judea from the crushing conditions that marked the post-Herodian period. One of these, the Nazarene sect centered around Jesus of Nazareth, gave birth to Christianity after Jesus’ crucifixion by the Romans for sedition.

V Rome, Misrule and Unrest

Video > The Power of the Word >
Rome > Misrule and Unrest

Video: Show 2: Rome, Misrule and Unrest

As political and social chaos spread in the years after Herod, the apocalyptic notion of a coming end to the current order swept large segments of the Jewish population in Judea, Galilee, and elsewhere.

- ◆ Play this video segment until “...take up arms against Rome.”

Review and Discussion Questions

- With so many revolutionary movements springing up, did the Romans have an alternative to the repressive approach in controlling the distant province of Judea?
- Some of the Jewish movements expected a divine and miraculous deliverance from their condition, while others were explicit in their call to arms against the Romans. Are there modern examples of these divergent approaches in the Middle East?

A Mediterranean: 4 BCE

Atlas > 586 BCE – 72 CE > 4 BCE >
Mediterranean

Atlas: Mediterranean: 4 BCE

As has been true throughout history, the location of Judea was pivotal in the story of its people. The commerce of the Roman Empire had a nexus in Judea, which provided the land-connection between the African and Asian parts of the Empire. The seaport at Caesarea, second only to Ostia (near Rome) in magnificence, anchored the eastern Mediterranean economy. And, together with Syria, Judea was the Roman key to resisting the persistent Parthian empire to the east.

- ◆ Point out Judea (Jerusalem and Caesarea) and its critical location for keeping the Roman Empire contiguous.
- ◆ Note the “boot” of Italy on the left, and the Parthian

empire on the right, using the thumbnail map slider as needed.

Review and Discussion Questions

- Substantial Jewish Diaspora populations existed in Rome, Athens, Cyrene, and Alexandria (North African coast), Ephesus and Sardis (modern Turkey), and Antioch (Syria). A large Diaspora also thrived in Seleucia and Ctesiphon (in the Parthian empire). How might these Diasporas have figured in the Roman calculations concerning the governance of Judea?

V Rome, Misrule and Unrest

Bookmark: "Jesus"

Video > The Power of the Word >
Rome > Political Turmoil

Video: Show 2: Rome, Misrule and Unrest

Many messianic movements arose in this era, but the most significant one by far was the one that developed around a Galilean preacher named Jesus. Since the messianic impulse in Judaism included the idea that the Messiah would assert political sovereignty over Judea (and, eventually the whole world), the Romans were understandably concerned about the power of these movements. It was in this charged environment that Jesus brought his message in the late 20s of the Common Era.

- ◆ Play this video segment until "...was the teacher from Galilee, Jesus."

Review and Discussion Questions

- Why would practical problems like oppressive government, economic dislocation, and widespread lawlessness provoke so ethereal a mass response as messianism?
- What expectations would most Jews have had for their messiah? To what extent did Jesus fulfill these expectations?
- As noted in the video, Jesus's teachings were substantially consistent with Pharisaic/rabbinic interpretations and conclusions. Why then is he portrayed in the New Testament as being in heavy and frequent conflict with the Pharisees?

A Israel-Palestine: 30

Atlas > 586 BCE – 72 CE > 30 >
Mediterranean

Atlas: Israel-Palestine: 30

Jesus's ministry was largely confined to the Galilee and Judea, meaning that all of his audiences (and his disciples) were Jews. His career seems to have spanned just the last two years of his life, but the sites he visited (mostly briefly) later became major Christian shrines.

- ◆ Point out the following on the map near the Sea of Galilee: Nazareth, Capernaum, Bethsaida, Gadara (in Gilead); and these places near the bottom of the frame: Bethlehem and Jerusalem.

PART 4

The Great Revolt and Its Aftermath

Following Herod's death, the succession of cruel and kleptocratic Roman rulers would mismanage Judea to an extent that rebellion against the hated Roman Empire would become a shared value among Jews, with a resultant revolution spurred by zealots. This rebellion would culminate in destruction and exile...and the preservation of the religion of Judea only through the brilliant efforts of the earliest rabbis.

V Judean Uprising, Judea in Arms

Video > The Power of the Word >
Judean Uprising > Judea in Arms

Video: Show 2: Judean Uprising, Judea in Arms

The Jewish militants eventually had their way, plunging the country into a suicidal war against the Roman Empire. Internal dissension among the sects made the conflict (like the Maccabean War) a civil war as well as an imperial revolt. Divided, the Jews were doomed from the start, and the massive counter-attack by the Romans doomed all of Judea - and Jerusalem - to ruin.

- ◆ Play this video segment until "...among the smoking stones."

Review and Discussion Questions

- Were there alternative strategies for the Judeans?
- Since Judea was a vital strategic asset for the Romans, was Titus's scorched-earth policy there a wise choice?

A Mediterranean: 72 CE

Atlas > 586 BCE - 72 CE > 72 >
Mediterranean

Atlas: Mediterranean: 72 CE

The Parthian Empire remained an eastern challenge to Roman hegemony. With the imperial stakes so high, Rome had no choice but to suppress the Judean threat. The fact that the Roman hero of the war, Vespasian, was elevated to Emperor midway-through, and his son Titus was appointed to finish his father's job, meant that imperial family honor was involved as well. The hope that the world - and Parthia - would appreciate what Rome could do militarily was instrumental in the Pax Romana that would endure for two centuries after the sacking of Jerusalem.

- ◆ Emphasizing the Parthian empire, show again the strategic issues at stake for the Roman Empire in rapidly quashing the revolt in Judea.

V Judean Uprising, Rabbinic Tradition

Video > The Power of the Word >
Judean Uprising > The Rabbinic
Tradition

Video: Show 2: Judean Uprising, Rabbinic Tradition

Judea was devastated, but the leader of the Pharasaic/Rabbinic movement, Yohanan ben Zakkai, negotiated his way out of doomed Jerusalem, and moved with his surviving students to the town of Yavneh, near modern Tel Aviv. Confident that Judaism could continue its mission through learning, morality, and holiness without the sacred Temple, Yohanan and his followers established at Yavneh the core for the next generations of Jewish leadership.

- ◆ Play this video segment until “...we now call Judaism.”

Review and Discussion Question

- When Judea was destroyed in 70, three-fourths or more of the Jews lived in the Diaspora. Were the innovations of the Judean rabbis crucial to Jewish continuity, or were the institutions crucial for an ongoing Judaism already present throughout the Diaspora?

Pointers to the Next Session:

The Roman destruction of Judea was clearly a transformative experience in Jewish civilization. One branch of first-century Judaism would break free and establish itself as the new religion of Christianity, antagonistic to the rabbinic mainstream of Judaism and destined to become the Roman imperial religion.

The rabbis would move on from their Yavneh academy, and, in concert with their brethren in Babylonia, would define the dimensions, textures, and contours of a permanent Diaspora religion of Judaism.

And, in Arabia, a seventh-century prophet called Muhammed would formulate a new message, based on Jewish writings and messages, and a new Islamic empire that would militarily explode out of Arabia and spread its own imperial reach across vast areas of what had been the increasingly decrepit Roman/Byzantine and Parthian/Sassanian empires.