

Dr. Dave Mathewson, New Testament Literature, Lecture 3, Religious and Social Values

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This is New Testament History and Literature by Dr. David Mathewson, lecture 3 on Religious and Social Values. Dr. David Mathewson.

All right, let's go ahead and get started.

Let's open with prayer and then what I want to do today is just kind of wrap up our discussion of very broadly the political situation leading up to the time of the New Testament, leading up to and including the time of the New Testament. And then I want to move from the kind of the political environment to talk a little bit about the religious environment. What competing religious ideologies did Christianity compete with as it began to take root in the first-century world? And so, we'll look at a number of the options religiously, although you'll soon see that it's somewhat artificial to distinguish politics and religion in the first century.

To distinguish political power and religious power, the two were very closely intertwined. But let's open with prayer and then we'll continue to look at the environment of and the background, kind of background and foreground of the writing of the New Testament. Father, I pray now that you help us to focus our attention on issues related to the history, the background, and what was going on in the first century during and leading up to the writing of the New Testament.

We do this not just to fulfill an academic exercise, but out of hopes that we'll be better equipped and have the requisite background for reading and understanding your revelation to us in a more profound way. That we'll have a greater appreciation of and understanding of the situation in which you originally revealed yourself so that we may have a greater appreciation and understanding of how that word continues to speak to us as your people today. So, we commit this class to you.

We ask for your presence with us and your enablement to think clearly and understand these things. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

All right. In the last class period, we ended by talking a little bit politically about the significance, particularly of Roman rule. This map is meant to demonstrate the red line is roughly an indication of the extent of Roman rule, the Roman Empire of the first century.

So that nothing escaped its power, its influence. We talked a little bit about the process of Hellenization, which you remember to go back to before the spread of the Roman Empire. Hellenization was the process by which the name we give to the

process of Alexander the Great spreading Greek influence, Greek thinking, Greek culture, and Greek language throughout the world.

But after Alexander's quest and after another period of struggle, then the next superpower looming on the horizon was Rome. And so, Rome soon spread to include an empire that even far outstripped Alexander's. And so, Rome was the superpower of the day.

You could live virtually nowhere to escape its influence and its impact. So even Jerusalem, even the land of Palestine, the land of God's people, could not escape the influence and the power of the Roman Empire and of Roman rule. So one of the things that both Jews and Christians alike wrestled with in this kind of an environment is, living in the context of foreign rule and oppression, what does it mean to be God's people? How do we maintain our identity as God's people in the midst of pagan and Roman rule? What does it mean to be God's people and how do we respond to that? How do we respond to God's promises which seem to go unfulfilled? For example, as we said last class period, one of the significant covenants and promises in the Old Testament was a promise that God would restore his rule over his people and over creation through a king in the line of David.

And now, as God's people look around, instead of a son in David's line sitting on a throne, we have Caesar, a pagan ruler, ruling over the entire inhabited world. What does that do to God's promises? What does that do to us as God's people? Will God fulfill his promises or how do we respond to that? And much of the New Testament, I'm convinced, responds to those kinds of questions as to what it means to live life as God's people who have yet to see God's promises fulfilled, but instead in a sense see those promises contradicted by seeing evil, by seeing evil in the world, by seeing a foreign ruler whose purposes and plans are inimical to God's purposes and plans. What does it mean to live as God's people in light of that? Now, in addition to the political environment, as I said, I want to look a little bit at the religious environment of the first century, but as I've already said, it's somewhat artificial to distinguish the religious and political environments of the day.

Instead, religion and politics were very closely intertwined. You'll see that especially when it comes to looking a little bit more closely at the Roman emperors and how they went about the business of establishing and maintaining Roman rule. But if you lived in the first century, you would soon learn that there were a number of religious-slash-philosophical options that were open for you to follow.

So, Christianity was not the sole religion that emerged. It emerged in competition with and in the context of a number of other religious and philosophical movements. But again, keep in mind, that it's not easy to distinguish these from what was going on politically and historically during the time.

I've listed several of them, several of the basic ones. Again, I'm painting very broad brush strokes. I've listed some of the basic ones in your notes.

The first one is wrapped up with the thinking of Plato. And again, some of you may be far better scholars of Plato and students of his writing than I am. But just to summarize what is important for our purposes is one of the things that Platonic thinking kind of passed down to a lot of people in the first century was the dualism between spirit and matter.

That is, the physical world was seen as only a reflection of, only a shadow of the true spiritual reality, basically. So what was important was the spiritual reality, and there were different ways that the physical reality would be subordinate to that, even sometimes denigrated and despised in light of the true reality, which was spiritual. The upshot of that is that for most persons thinking in those terms, salvation then meant an escape from the physical body or escape from the physical world and attaining the true reality, which in Platonic type of thinking, this dualistic type of thinking, was spiritual.

So, Plato kind of passed on this legacy of this dualism between spirit and matter. And again, what was really important was spiritual, the spiritual world and the physical world were seen as only a reflection, only a shadow of the true reality. I'm going to argue that at times there are sections of the New Testament where the authors seem to be reacting to that kind of thinking.

One way that that might, whether consciously or not, owe its thinking to Platonic dualism, is one way that surfaces in some of our thinking today, although you don't hear it as much, often as Christians we talk about the salvation of souls or you hear about saving someone's soul, the soul referring to the immaterial, the spiritual part of a human being, as if God is not interested in the physical body or the physical part of humanity. But again, Platonic dualism emphasizes the spiritual over the physical. We'll talk more about that.

How does the New Testament respond at times to that type of thinking? A second type of religious movement, oh, by the way, I was going to show this during, this is a bust of Nero, one of the Roman emperors. I was going to show that during our discussion of Roman rule. But Nero was one of the ones that, he was known for being relatively cruel to Christians.

As legend has it, he's the one who blamed Christians for the burning of Rome. And there may be, also as tradition has it, the apostle Paul died under Nero's rule. And there may be a couple of New Testament documents that were written addressing Christians living under Neronic rule or Neronic persecution.

But the next picture I want to show you is a stoa. The Greek word stoa is a word that refers to these columns, basically. That's a stoa.

So, when you see those pictures of Greek architecture, they have the big colonnades, the colonnades supporting the porches and things, those were known as stoa. And that brings me to the second kind of religious slash philosophical option in the first century, and that is what is known as stoicism. Again, stoicism is taken from the Greek word stoa, which refers to one of these columns or pillars.

And as we explain what it is, you'll kind of see why. In fact, I don't hear this a whole lot anymore, but have you ever referred to someone or heard someone referred to as stoic? Anyone? Okay, a few of you have. The last time I taught this class, I didn't think anyone had heard of that, so you're doing well.

Anyway, when we call someone stoic, we usually, what do we mean by that? If you say that someone is stoic, or you refer to someone as their characteristic as being stoic, what do we mean by that? Are they brave? Yeah, they're kind of brave and unmoved in the face, especially in adverse circumstances. So, in the first century, the movement known as stoicism basically said this, everything that exists, all that exists in the world is matter, and nothing exists outside of the material world. However, matter and the physical material world are infused with a kind of divine order that is known as logos, which is the exact word that John uses in John chapter 1 to refer to Jesus Christ.

But that same word logos is the word used to refer to this kind of divine soul or world soul that permeated all physical matter, according to stoicism. And so what that meant is, the key to contentment, stoicism emphasized being content no matter what the circumstances and the key to contentment was simply realizing that you can't control everything and there's nothing you can do, and simply to accept the way things are, and not to respond in extreme emotions, and not to respond in extreme ways. So, you can kind of start to see where we get, you can kind of start to see why it's called stoicism, a pillar that just stands there, it's unmoved.

A stoic in the first century then was one that just accepted the way things were, realized that they could not control, that all there was matter, it was infused with this divine or world soul, and they simply accepted things the way they were, realized they could not control everything, and the key to contentment was just accepting that, and not responding with extremes in emotion. So, live in harmony with the physical world, simply live in harmony with and accept your circumstances, is what stoicism taught. If you didn't like that one, another religious option, or another religious slash philosophical option is what was known as cynicism, which is the third religion listed in your notes.

Cynicism is very generally, kind of very basically, maybe too simple, cynicism calls for the person, would call you to simply live a rather simple and unconventional life. So cynicism was a call to cultivate an unconventional life. It kind of upset or overturned the status quo, the way things are, the way things were.

Cynicism was very critical of the status quo, especially of wealth. It basically taught that you were to deny wealth, you were to deny physical comfort and just live a very simple life. There are actually some who think that Jesus had cynical tendencies.

By cynical I mean being a cynic, and that is critiquing society, pursuing the unconventional, the simple life, despising wealth, and the comforts of the world. So that was basically cynicism. Again, very critical of popular culture.

Sometimes it could run the gamut from more mild to more radical expressions of cynicism. But that's kind of what cynicism was. Pursue the simple life, the unconventional life.

Reject comforts, reject wealth. Critical of the popular culture. Another religious slash philosophical option is what is known as magic.

And by magic, I don't mean sawing someone in half in a box or causing a chair to float or doing card tricks or something like that. By magic, I primarily mean this. In the first century, magic, although in many contexts in the Roman world it was illegal, it seemed to be fairly widespread.

And what I want to focus on in terms of magic is this. Magic in the first century was a way of sometimes manipulating or calling upon and availing yourself of the power of the gods by using the correct formulas. Or it could take the form, for example, of warding off demonic beings, of exercising or casting out demonic beings by utilizing the correct formula, the correct spells and incantations, and things like that.

So magic was fairly prominent in the first century in the Greco-Roman world. And I've given you, this as an example of, this is just an abbreviation for what is known as a magical text. We've actually uncovered a number of early manuscripts that are known as the magical text or magical papyri.

A papyri was simply a sheet of, to give you a little bit of background, some of you may have talked about this in Old Testament, I'm not sure, but a papyri basically was a piece of writing material, and it came from a plant, a reed that grew in swampy areas, and you'd basically unroll these things and glue them together to produce a writing paper. And a lot of our New Testament manuscripts, as well as some other early manuscript writings, including these magical texts, occur on these papyri sheets that have been discovered and preserved, obviously, for centuries. But this is an example, obviously an English translation from one of these magical texts.

And what I want you to notice is these words here that look kind of funky to you, these are actually Greek words that are meant to be unutterable or unpronounceable, but they're meant to be the names of different gods. And as you can see, by repeating the name over and over, by repeating it in the correct order, and again, I'm not sure how they would even pronounce them, because they're supposed to be unpronounceable. But you can see, the God of gods, benefactor, Greek word, Greek name, Greek name, you who direct day and night, followed by two more Greek names to express the name of this god.

Again, the thought was, that by uttering the right formula, one could call on the god and evoke the god, or at least, perhaps, to avail oneself of the power of the god for certain purposes. Or again, there are other texts similar to this where there are incantations or spells to follow to ward off the demonic or to cast out demons, etc. A couple of examples of where this might be significant in the New Testament, it's entirely possible, in my opinion, at the very beginning of the Lord's Prayer, in Matthew chapter 6, we all know the section, Our Father in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom comes, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven, etc., etc. What we don't often read is what comes right before that, where Jesus teaches his disciples to pray, but he teaches them to pray not as the pagans do, who babble, and therefore think about how they can invoke their god. I wonder to what extent Jesus may have this kind of thing in mind, the repetition of the divine name over and over again in magical texts to evoke the gods to act.

And so, Jesus tells his disciples, but that's not how you get the god of your father to act on your behalf, like in magical texts, by simply evoking his name over and over in some pattern, as if you can somehow manipulate him into acting on your behalf. The other thing is, given the prevalence, perhaps, of magic in the first century, you might begin to see how people may have responded to Jesus when he arrived on the scene and began casting out demons. It may have been easy for them to look at that and see that in light of these magical texts and in light of the phenomenon of magic.

Here's simply another magician, in a sense. I don't think they called him a magician, but here's another person practicing magic, that is, simply casting out magical spells, evoking the powers of the gods. Here's simply someone who's come to cast out the demonic.

So, you can perhaps see how this might provide the backdrop for how some may have understood Jesus or misunderstood him when he came casting out demons and performing miracles. An interesting example of this is that this kind of gets into religion or kind of religious practices more generally, but along with that, another interesting phenomenon in the first century was what were known as oracles. An

oracle originally referred to a certain location, such as a cave or something, that you could go to, and usually at these oracles, there would often be a priestess, a female priest, and you would go to that priestess and ask a question.

Maybe you wanted to know, for example, whether, maybe you're a general and you want to know if you're going to win the war that you're about to embark upon, or maybe you want to know who you're going to marry, or whether you should quit your job, or whether you should move somewhere, or whether you should plant this crop or that crop. So, you would go to one of these oracles, and there would be a priestess on duty. One of the most famous oracles was called the Oracle of Delphi.

In fact, if you Google that, you can see a picture of the location of that, and I think the ruins. But the Oracle of Delphi was a well-known oracle, and I think on the seventh day of each month, you could go to this oracle, kind of like a shrine, and there would be a priestess on duty. You would ask her the question, and she then would ask the god and get a response and respond back to you.

Sometimes the responses could be very ambiguous, such as a mighty general is going to win the war, and you think, oh, great, so I'm going to win, but maybe it wasn't referring to you. So, the responses sometimes could be very ambiguous, but the point is, you could, again, by the right formula, you could evoke the gods to speak and to reveal themselves and answer your questions. So, oracles were fairly prominent, and you could avail yourself of them to get responses from the divine.

You could get responses to your questions. Another religious option that, again, is very, very broad. I've listed it in a very, very broad way in your syllabus, is pagan religions.

The religious environment of the first-century Greco-Roman Empire tended to be very polytheistic. That is, it tolerated numerous gods. That's why, as I said earlier, as long as Christianity was just viewed as another type of Judaism, it was generally tolerated in the first century.

As I said, we need to get ourselves out of this framework where we see that for Christians, throughout history, Christians always lived in danger. They always had to hide, and there were Roman armies going through all the cities, dragging them out into the streets. That was very rare.

A lot of the pressure, as I said, came more from a local level. At times, under Nero, in certain locations, the pressure would be more acute. But a lot of the stories of Christians being dragged out in the streets or thrown to lions in the arena, a lot of that came a little later on.

But where was I going with that? Oh, yes, Christianity, is interesting. As long as it could be seen as just another religion like Judaism, Rome really didn't care a whole lot about it. But the difficulty is when it came to be seen as something separate and when it came to be seen as actually challenging an exclusive religion that challenged the lordship of Caesar.

But the first-century Greco-Roman world was characterized by a toleration of a variety of pagan gods and religions so that virtually any city that you would have lived in in the first century would have presented you with a variety of options for religious beliefs. In fact, there were different kinds of gods. There were gods of fertility, not only for childbirth but for your crops.

There were patron deities associated with your work. That is, your success even in work or farming was owed to the gods. So, there were opportunities to worship and show gratitude towards the gods who had provided for your well-being.

Most Greco-Roman cities would have had a variety of temples that you could go to and worship for a variety of reasons. So, this is one of the more famous temples. This is the Temple of Artemis.

That was one of the most significant temples in Asia Minor or modern-day Turkey starting a little bit before the first century AD and during that time. There may be a couple of New Testament documents that have situations surrounding this temple in mind. For example, in the Book of Acts, the apostle Paul finds himself confronting a situation surrounding the Temple of Artemis and the religion that took place there.

A couple of other examples. This is the Temple of Apollo in the city of Corinth. Again, there are the stoa, but those are the remains of one of the temples in Corinth to the god Apollo.

This is the goddess Artemis in Ephesus. We'll talk more about the Book of Ephesians, although I'll have something a little bit different to say about that book. But Ephesus, the city of Ephesus, was very well known for the goddess Artemis, who was the god of fertility, which you can tell by the way she is built.

That was Artemis. This is a picture of an altar that probably would have been found in an individual's home. So not only were there opportunities to worship in the temple, in the various temples at the center of a Greco-Roman city but also you often had your smaller private altars in your own home.

And this is one that I think was actually found, excavated from someone's home. So, my point is, that in the first century, you had a variety of religious options when it came to worship. Frequently, different cities were very pluralistic and tolerant of different gods.

And again, there were different gods responsible for your success at work or in your crops or whatever. And it was expected that you would honor them and worship them and show gratitude for what they had done. Another religious option, I think that's the last one.

Oh, this is Zeus, a picture of the god Zeus. Another religious option in the first century is what is known or what has been described as Gnosticism. Gnosticism comes from the Greek word gnosis, which means knowledge.

And you'll see why that's the case. But actually, Gnosticism, full-blown Gnosticism as kind of a religious movement, so to speak, did not really actually emerge until the second century after the New Testament documents had been produced. Yet most scholars agree that Gnostic ideas, ideas that later on emerge into full-blown Gnosticism, were already present in the first century.

Basically, Gnosticism said something like this, that it in some respects resembled Platonic dualism. We talked about the dualism between spirit and matter. Gnosticism said that basically the material world is evil.

At its worst, it's evil. And in fact, the god of the Bible did not create the physical world. That was kind of a lesser god that kind of rebelled in full-blown Gnostic thinking.

But Gnosticism says, again, the spiritual world is the real world, the true world, and is good. The physical world is evil. And so, salvation then, salvation then consists of escaping from the imprisonment of the physical world and attaining a spiritual existence.

And where it gets its name Gnosticism is salvation. Salvation comes about by the possession of a secret knowledge that belongs to an elite few. Hence the title Gnosticism.

Now that's where this comes in. This is a document, or this is a fragment, I think on a papyri sheet that we just talked about. This is a fragment of what is known as the Gnostic Gospel of Thomas, which is a well-known writing in the 1st century, which technically wasn't a gospel, but a well-known writing produced in the 2nd century that testifies to Gnostic belief and Gnostic thinking.

This idea is that salvation comes about by a secret knowledge that belongs to an elite few, and salvation consists of escaping the physical world. And what this Gnostic Gospel of Thomas does is it's basically a record of Jesus teaching, and it portrays Jesus teaching Gnostic ideas and Gnostic beliefs. But again, while this full-blown

Gnosticism did not emerge until the 2nd century, a lot of the thinking may have already been prevalent in the 1st century.

And so, again, is it possible that some of the New Testament documents may respond to Gnostic type of thinking? There are some who are convinced that they do. A final religious belief and you'll notice in your notes I've divided the religious beliefs. Again, it may be a little bit artificial, but I've divided religious beliefs into religious beliefs in the Greek and Roman world, but then religious beliefs or kind of religious slash political movements in the Jewish world.

The last one I want to talk about is emperor worship. And here's where it becomes clear that politics and religion were blurred in the 1st century, and cannot easily be separated. There was no separation of church and state.

But instead, religion and politics were closely intertwined. That was certainly true of the Greco-Roman Empire. As the Greco-Roman Empire spread, also began to spread this idea that the Roman emperors, soon began to be viewed as deities or as gods, at first only after their death.

It was only upon the death, posthumously, that an emperor would be deified or considered a god. However, there's some evidence that towards the end of the 1st century living emperors began to, even if they did not demand it, at least accept acclamations of deity and actually titles of worship. There's evidence that one of the emperors, that is probably the emperor ruling when the book of Revelation was written, that the emperor actually accepted, whether he demanded it or not, certainly accepted the title of Lord and God and even Savior.

And so, what was often going on then is that in the 1st century, perhaps this grew up along with worshipping other gods. It was natural that in connection with that, the emperor would be worshiped as well. So, along with some of the temples of the pagan deities were actually temples established in honor of some of the emperors.

I think this next one is such a picture. This is the ruins of the temple of Domitian. Domitian is the emperor who lived and ruled at the end of the 1st century.

He's probably the emperor ruling when the book of Revelation was written. Again, this is the ruins of the temple to the emperor Domitian. And so, not only other pagan gods but also you would be expected to render allegiance to the emperor as well.

There were different kinds of temples. Some temples were actually sanctioned and established by the emperor himself. But most temples were actually built in honor of the emperor.

That is, the emperor did not sanction it. Perhaps the emperor may have helped fund it or at least approved of it. But often, it was some wealthy individual in a community who would build the temple as a way of showing honor to the emperor who was responsible for their peace, their safety, their well-being, for being the savior of the world, for being the true Lord and God.

So, emperor worship was endemic in the 1st century. What is now modern-day Turkey, Asia Minor, most of those cities, those major cities like Ephesus and some of those other cities, Thyatira, some of the cities you read about in Revelation, a lot of them had one, a couple of them even had two temples built in honor of the emperor. And so, you can begin to see as a Christian living in one of these 1st-century cities, especially sometimes in connection with your vocation, you may be expected to participate in events such as a meal or banquet in honor of the emperor that would border on showing the emperor worship and allegiance that only Jesus Christ deserved.

So, emperor worship was, again, probably for the most part not enforced at the top. In other words, for the most part, the emperor was not going around and forcing people to worship him. It usually was at the local level.

The persons who built and maintained the shrine in honor of the emperor, it's unthinkable that you would rebel by refusing to join in. Again, you and your town do not want to be perceived as failing to show gratitude towards the emperor. So, expect as a Christian that you would join in demonstrating allegiance, even, again, bordering on worshipping the emperor. So, you can start to see the difficulty that this might cause some Christians.

To what extent can we engage in emperor worship or honor the emperor yet still maintain our allegiance to Jesus Christ? Or is that not possible at all? It seems to me a number of books in the New Testament may address that issue. For example, in light of what I've said, have you ever thought, then, about what about this vocabulary of Jesus? Why is Jesus frequently called Lord in the New Testament? Why is he often called Savior? You say, well, because that's what we're taught in church, and that's the right language to use to describe Jesus Christ. Or what about the word gospel? The fact that this message that Jesus Christ has come to provide salvation for humanity and fulfillment of the Old Testament, the New Testament writers frequently call that the good news of the gospel.

Why do they do that? Well, one reason may be because all those words, God, Savior, Lord, and good news or gospel, were common words used by the emperor in the first century. The emperor was often perceived as the savior of the world or as Lord and God. I have a picture in one of my books of a coin with a picture of Domitian on it, and it calls him Lord and God.

So, Savior, Lord, and God were frequent titles applied to the emperor. The word good news we translate as gospel, in English, the word was often used for significant events in the life of an emperor, such as the emperor's birth. So, it may not be insignificant that the New Testament authors use that terminology.

I think they primarily got it out of the Old Testament. But they may also be aware that they are using language that is subversive to the Roman Empire, that it's not the emperor who is the Lord of all, it's not the emperor who is the savior of the world, it's not the emperor's birth, or it's not the events surrounding the life of the emperor that are good news, but now that language gets applied to Jesus Christ, who is the true Lord and God, the true Savior, and the salvation he brings is the true good news. So, I think quite often the New Testament documents tend to be subversive of Roman rule and Roman ideology.

And again, Christianity rose up and was given birth to in the context of Roman rule. And so often the authors will present it as a kind of the parody of or the answer to what Rome claimed. All right, I think that's all I want to show with.

Yeah. All right, any questions regarding Greco-Rome? Before I move on to talk a little bit about the Jewish side of things, Jewish kind of religious slash philosophical slash political options. Any questions related to any of these Greco-Roman ones? Yeah.

Depends on who you talk to. Was Gnosticism considered derived from Christianity? Generally, in my opinion, yes. I think it was largely a second-century movement.

And again, a lot of the Gnostic documents are meant to try to demonstrate that Jesus and the apostles actually taught Gnostic beliefs and Gnostic teaching. Now, when we consider Jewish options, again, I want to paint fairly broad strokes and broad brush strokes. And I want to look at them in terms of, well, first of all, when you look at your notes, I've listed a number of slogans here that you'll see.

Let's study the Torah. Let's separate. Let's accommodate, et cetera.

What those are is those slogans, they're mine. I'm not claiming that any of the people that I place under these categories would have actually subscribed to that or said that. But I think they're summaries of what these groups may have thought.

But most of these groups that I want to talk about, most of these movements within Judaism, could be defined and seen as responses to the situation of foreign rule and oppression. How did the various groups answer the question, what does it mean to be God's people? What does it mean to maintain my identity as God's people, as Israel, in the context of foreign influence? Again, remember, the temple's been destroyed. There's no son of David sitting on the throne in fulfillment of Old Testament promises.

Instead, now Caesar's on the throne in Rome and he's ruling over everything, besides all the pagan religions and influence. The question is, what does it mean to be God's people? How do I maintain my identity? How do we maintain our identity as the people of God in that kind of situation? These different groups or movements within Judaism could be seen partly as responses to that question and various responses. Now, the thing I want to say, though, is that it would be incorrect to take all of Judaism, all the Jews in the first century, and divide them up into these parties.

There seemed to be simply a common Judaism that everyone belonged to, that most people belonged to, but within that, one can identify different parties, different movements, and again, different responses to what's going on in the world in the context of Roman rule and foreign oppression and the fact that God's promises seem to be contradicted. How do they respond to that? Well, the first one, let's study Torah. That's not so much, perhaps, a response to foreign oppression, but it certainly characterizes one expression of Judaism in the first century, and by that, I have in mind the label that you find in certain places in the Gospels of the scribes, those that were kind of professional students or scholars of the Old Testament, whose job it was to copy, to interpret the Old Testament for the people in general.

Once again, I don't want to suggest these categories are all mutually exclusive. A couple of them are, but there's probably some overlap between some of them. But the scribes, as their slogan could have said, our slogan is, let's study the Torah.

They were preoccupied with studying the Old Testament and interpreting the Old Testament for the people of God. Probably the scribes are the ones that, after 70 AD, when the temple was destroyed again, became what are known as the rabbis. But the second group, a second slogan is, let's separate.

Within Judaism, there would have been a group that could have claimed as its slogan, let's separate. This group was interested in personal and moral purity. They were interested in strict observance of the Mosaic law.

They were fairly well and highly respected in society and highly influential as well. And again, they responded to the situation in the first century under Roman rule by pursuing purity, by keen observance of the law, by teaching others to do so, and by moral purity through obedience to the law of Moses. And again, they were very influential and, for the most part, highly respected.

Does anyone know what group I have in mind? The biblical name, the Pharisees, would be the group that could have said, let's separate. That is, by pursuing moral purity through obedience to the law. Again, there are other things that we could say about the Pharisees.

We'll talk more about them perhaps when we get to the Gospels. But again, they thought that transformation and renewal of society in the midst of Roman rule would come through observance of the law and personal purity. That is the Pharisees.

They were anti-Roman. Again, they did not like the fact, obviously, that Rome was ruling. But they weren't quite ready to do what another group did we'll look at it in a minute.

Although some of them did, and there's a little bit of overlap. Some of them did, but not all of them went as far as another group that we'll look at in a moment. Another group could have had as its slogan, let's accommodate.

That is, this group tended to be a little bit more pro-Roman. They were more keen to maintain the status quo in the Greco-Roman world and not upset the Romans particularly. They were generally at odds with the Pharisees.

Again, they basically consisted of the more well-to-do and elite members of society. And again, were largely at odds with the Pharisees until they found a common enemy. And then they seemed to be quite willing to cooperate with the Pharisees.

And that enemy was the person of Jesus Christ. And that the Pharisees in this group were willing to work together to try to get rid of this guy. What group do I have in mind? The Sadducees.

And there are other things. The most common and popular one is that they denied the resurrection. Again, that may have gone along with their desire not to upset the status quo by thinking in terms of complete restoration, transformation of the world, et cetera.

But again, the Sadducees, kind of the elite, the well-to-do members of society, were content to kind of maintain the status quo, and not upset the Roman government. Another group that's similar to the second one, Let's Separate, another group could have had as their slogan, Let's Withdraw. That is, I'm thinking of a group that actually in responded not only to Roman rule but in response to what they saw and thought was the corruption of the worship that was going on in Jerusalem.

They weren't only upset with Rome. They were upset with other Jewish movements. They thought that Jerusalem itself and the temple were corrupt.

So, this group decided that in response to that, they would actually withdraw and kind of set up their own sect, their own community, and pursue purity, pursue obedience to the law. And by doing that, they would then usher in God's visitation to

the world where God would reestablish his temple, the true, pure temple. Again, the one in Jerusalem is corrupt.

They're dissatisfied with it. So, by separating physically, setting up their own community, strict observance and purity, then God would one day return, set up his kingdom, and reestablish the temple. This group, anyone know what group I have in mind? The Essenes or the Qumran community.

There's some debate about whether those two are exactly the same. But for the Qumran community, we'll talk a little bit more about them. Basically, the Qumran community, which is my next slide, is some ruins of the community by the Dead Sea.

You know them more popularly from the mention of the Dead Sea Scrolls. The Qumran community was a sect that, again, separated and established a community. You can see the Dead Sea in the background.

They had very strict regulations as to who could get in. And there were various steps that you had to go through to be admitted to the community. Again, they were insistent on their observance of the Sabbath, of the Old Testament law.

But again, they tended to think of themselves. They did not have their own temple. They tended to think of themselves as a temple until the day when God himself would build a temple, a renewed and physical temple in their midst.

So, this was, yes, this was the Qumran community that isolated themselves and separated themselves to maintain purity and escape, basically to escape the corruption of the world and society and their dissatisfaction with what was going on in Jerusalem. This is one of the pictures of the cave. Maybe Ted recognizes which one.

I think that's cave four. All right. There are a number of caves above that.

I show you a picture of the remains of the community. On the bluffs kind of above it, the Dead Sea Scrolls, what we call the Dead Sea Scrolls, were found in a number of caves. This is cave number four.

If you ever read the Dead Sea Scroll, you'll see the scrolls are named like 4Q or 11Q, 1Q. Those numbers, 4, and 11, are simply the numbers of the caves. The Qumran community, I don't think, numbered them.

It's just the numbers we've given. So, this is one of the caves that a number of documents. This was a particularly fruitful cave that revealed a number of documents, many of them testifying to the establishment of this community.

Again, they saw themselves as the true Israel, the true people of God, and they maintained that status and purity by separating themselves, and observing the law. I think I have one more. This is actually a picture of maybe—I'm not sure what that is as well.

I can't remember what document. This is some of the fragments of one of the scrolls. A lot of the scrolls look like this.

This is obviously their age. A lot of them are in fragmentary form and, again, making it difficult to decipher. But that's an example of one of the scrolls that was uncovered from one of the caves.

Again, I can't remember precisely which one it was. And if you're interested, don't everybody go run out and check it out. There are English translations of the Dead Sea Scrolls, a number of them.

You can read them for yourself. So those were the main—four of main options as far as Jewish religion, politics, and philosophical movements. It might seem strange I'd call them philosophical, but the historian Josephus calls all of these philosophies.

But, again, you can kind of see even the different Jewish religious movements were often tied with their political views, how they looked at Rome as well. One final option and that is another group could have— again, this is the group that's probably— it's difficult to draw distinct lines around as a separate group from all the others. But another option, another expression of one's religious devotion and belief to God and the law and how that makes a difference in your response to Rome was exemplified in a group whose slogan could have been, Let's fight.

And so, basically, their view was— again, you have to remember God has given Israel the law that they are to keep and God has also promised that he would set a king on the throne, a king in the line of David on the throne. Now, that's contradicted by a foreign ruler, in this case Caesar of the Roman Empire, sitting on the throne. So their response is that if God has made this promise of a king ruling over us and out of a desire to keep the law and to maintain our purity, their response was, Let's fight.

That is, let's take up arms against Rome. These were the first-century terrorists, basically. Let's take up arms against Rome.

And in doing so, they thought that basically God would join in and give them the victory over Rome and they would set up his kingdom. What group do I have in mind? The zealots. Paul obviously had zealot tendencies, it appears.

Paul himself tells us that he far surpassed his comrades when it came to devotion to the Mosaic law. He tells us that he violently persecuted the Church of Jesus Christ. Paul was a good example of a first-century terrorist.

So devout was he in his observance of the law, that he would even try to destroy what he thought was a threat to his ancestral religion, Judaism. So, again, these are some of the options. They're not airtight categories.

There are other options we could talk about. Again, I don't want you to think that every Jew could be put in one of these categories. There seems to have simply been a general Judaism in the first century and then several belonging to these different groups as well.

But one thing you can see, it's important to understand, is while there's an element of all of these expressions of Judaism being bound together into what we could call a Judaism, that is, that demonstrated a loyalty to God, a desire to obey his law, to keep the law of Moses, to maintain the distinct identity as God's people, at the same time there was a diversity of expressions, to the extent that some people prefer the word Judaism's plural over just Judaism. But, again, what I want you to see is that Christianity emerged in the context of, in cooperation with, and sometimes in conflict with, a variety of religious movements.

This is New Testament History and Literature by Dr. David Mathewson, lecture 3 on Religious and Social Values.