

LECTURE 8

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF 70CE IN JERUSALEM

DR JESSICA SANFORD

EMAIL: J.KEADY@UWTSD.AC.UK



Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- The first temple was built by Solomon in Jerusalem during the 10th century BCE (see [I Kings 6-8](#)).
- The temple was the main building for the worship of God in ancient Israel until it was destroyed by the Babylonians in 587 BCE.
- In 538 BCE, the exiled Jews were permitted to return to Israel by Cyrus, King of Persia (cf. Ezra 6:3-7).

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- The second temple was completed in 515 BCE.
- Important steps were taken by individuals such as Nehemiah and Ezra to reform the Jewish community and to reorganize its civil and religious affairs.
- As a result of Ezra's reforms, there was a resurgence of the Jewish faith, and Jerusalem came to be regarded once more as the spiritual home of the Jewish people.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TEMPLE

- The temple was the focal point of the faith. Ever since the return from Babylon, the temple had been at the centre of Jewish identity.
- The distinctiveness of the Jewish people was reflected in the temple and its services. It represented a link between heaven and earth, testifying to the covenant between God and his people.



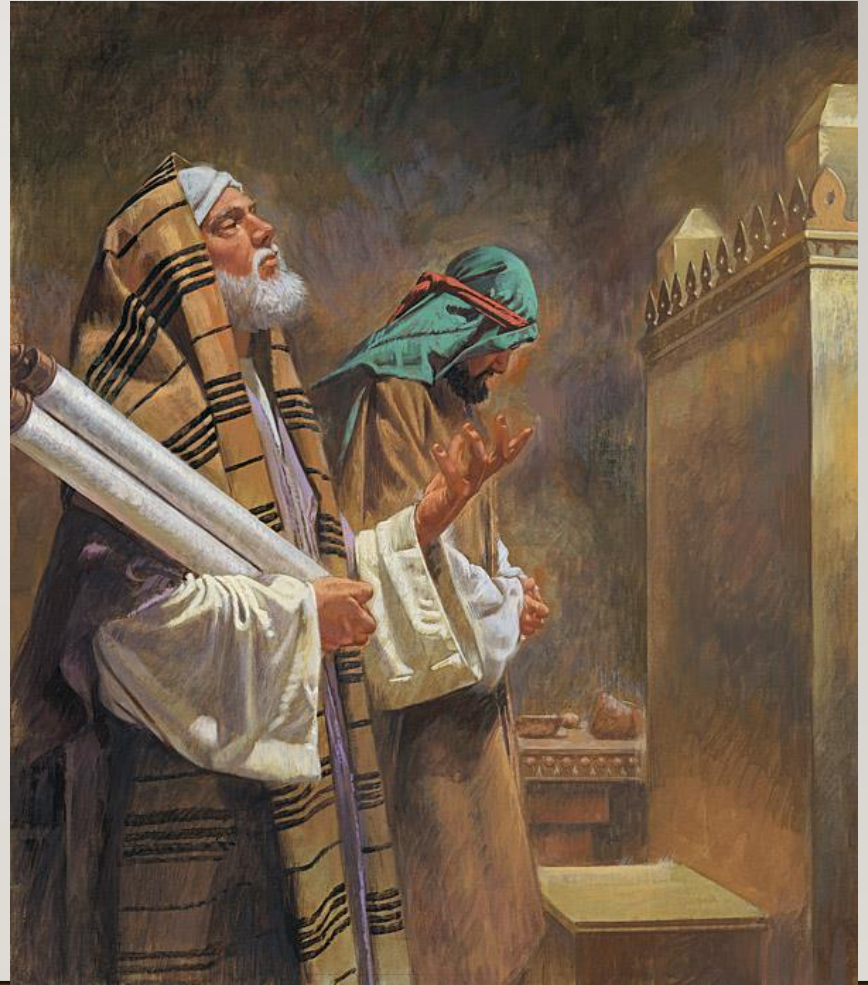
THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TEMPLE: THE SADDUCEES



- The Sadducees were a small elite group responsible for temple rites and worship.
- For the Sadducees, only the Written Torah was to be considered authoritative.
- Upheld the primacy of the hereditary priestly caste.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TEMPLE: THE PHARISEES

- ☐ The Pharisees were a class of religious teachers dedicated to studying and debating the law.
- ☐ Chief exponents of the idea of the Oral Torah, the belief in an unwritten law that existed alongside the authority of the scriptures.
- ☐ Taught that religious authority was dependent on the scholarly credentials of the individual.
- ☐ Centred their activities on the synagogue rather than on the temple.



THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TEMPLE: THE ESSENES



The Essenes had disassociated themselves from the temple (completely?), believing the priesthood to have been profaned.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TEMPLE: EARLY CHRISTIANITY

- As Christianity expanded and evolved over the course of the first century, it came to view the law and the temple as obsolete/out dated.
- Christianity continues to maintain that Jesus is the mediator of a new covenant who, through his death, has made the ultimate atonement for Jew and Gentile alike (e.g. Hebrews 8-10).

ISRAEL UNDER ROMAN RULE

- King Herod (74/73 BCE - 4 CE)
- After the death of Herod, Israel became a small-scale Roman province administered by governors with the title *procurator*.
- By 50 CE, the situation in the land had deteriorated: tensions between Jewish and Hellenistic communities, and between rich and poor.





THE JEWISH-ROMAN WAR (66-73CE)

- Gessius Florus, Roman procurator of Judea from 64-66CE, adopted an anti-Jewish stance, allowing his troops to riot in Jerusalem and execute a number of the leading members of the Jewish community.
- Jewish rebels took up arms in retaliation. In order to quell the revolt, the governor of Syria laid siege to Jerusalem but his army was forced to retreat to the coast where it was roundly defeated.

THE JEWISH-ROMAN WARS



- The general Vespasian was appointed by Emperor Nero to crush the Jewish rebellion.
- By 68 CE, Jewish resistance in the North had been annihilated, and they were unable to stand against the might of the Roman legions.

THE JEWISH-ROMAN WARS

- With Jerusalem cut off by the Roman legions, the city descended into anarchy.
- Upon Emperor Nero's suicide in 68 CE, the Roman military campaign in Palestine came to an abrupt end.

THE JEWISH-ROMAN WARS

- Shortly after being appointed emperor, Vespasian gave his son Titus responsibility for the military campaign in Judea.
- Just before Passover in April 70 CE, Titus and his armies encamped outside the walls of Jerusalem.
- By the end of May, the Romans had captured a large portion of Jerusalem to the north of the temple.
- On 6 August, all temple sacrifices were suspended.



THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE

- On the 28 August, the temple went up in flames during the fighting.



THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE AND THE ARCH OF TITUS



CONSEQUENCES OF THE TEMPLE'S DESTRUCTION

- The destruction of the temple presented tremendous theological difficulties for Judaism. The Jews were forced to question why God had allowed this disaster to happen.
- Many came to accept that the destruction was divine punishment for sin, but there was substantial disagreement as to the nature of that sin.

JOSEPHUS: *THE JEWISH WAR*

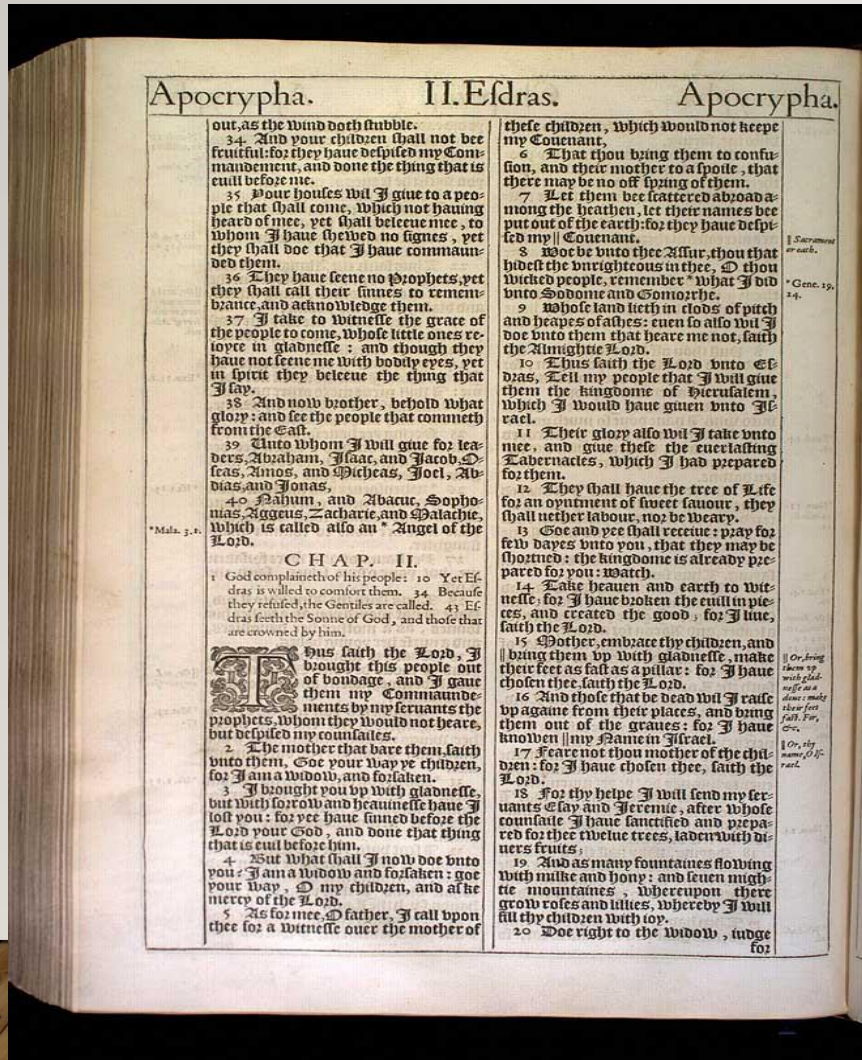
- *‘Invariably arms have been refused to our nation, and warfare has been the sure signal of defeat. For it is, I suppose, the duty of the occupants of holy ground to leave everything to the rule of God, and to scorn the aid of human hands, can they but conciliate to the Arbiter above’ (5:399-40).*



JOSEPHUS: *THE JEWISH WAR*

-
- *'You without bestowing a thought on our strength or your own weakness have through inconsiderate fury and madness lost your people, your city, and your temple. You were incited against the Romans by Roman humanity...We allowed you to occupy this land, and set over you kings of your own blood; then we maintained the laws of your forefathers, and permitted you...to live as you willed' (6:328-334).*

RESPONSES TO DISASTER FROM THE APOCALYPTICISTS



- Jewish apocalyptic writers blamed Israel's sin for the disaster whilst trying to comfort the people with the promise that redemption was close at hand (see 4 Ezra; 2 Baruch).

THE RESPONSE OF THE APOCALYPTICISTS (4 EZRA)

- ‘Then I said in my heart, Are the deeds of those who inhabit Babylon any better? Is that why she has gained dominion over Zion?’ (3:28)
- ‘For I did not wish to inquire about the ways above, but about those things which we daily experience: why Israel has been given over to the gentiles as a reproach; why the people whom you loved has been given to godless tribes, and the Law of our father has been made of no effect and the written covenants no longer exist’ (4:23).

THE RESPONSE OF THE APOCALYPTICISTS (2 BARUCH)

- 'For behold, I see many of your people who separated themselves from your statutes and who have cast away from them the yoke of your Law' (41:3).
- 'For when you endure and persevere in his fear and not forget his Law, the time again will take a turn for the better for you' (44:7).
- 'And now, Moses spoke to you before it befell you and, behold, it has befallen you for you have forsaken the Law. Also I, behold, I say to you after you suffered that if you obey the things which I have said to you, you shall receive from the Mighty One everything which has been prepared and has been preserved for you' (84:5-6).

THE RESPONSE OF THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

-
- The Christian community was of the opinion that judgement had come upon the people who had rejected Jesus Christ, and that the destruction was a vindication of the Christian faith.

‘Those who believed in Christ migrated from Jerusalem, so when holy men had altogether deserted the royal capital of the Jews...the judgement of God might at last overtake them for all their crimes against Christ and his apostles, and all that generation of the wicked by utterly blotted out from among men...Such was the reward of the iniquity of the Jews and of their impiety against the Christ of God’ (Eusebius, Historia Ecclesiastica, Book 3).

JERUSALEM AFTER THE TEMPLE

- The focal point of the Jewish religion had been destroyed (and with it the authority of the priesthood), and so there was urgent need to redefine holiness.
- How could the life of the nation be sanctified without a physical temple and active priesthood?!

JERUSALEM AFTER THE TEMPLE

- The destruction of the temple led to a more Torah-focused form of worship.
- The evidence suggests that it was the Pharisees who helped to bring about this shift in emphasis.



MOURNING THE LOSS OF THE TEMPLE

- The destruction of the temple was a catastrophe of huge proportions for mainstream Judaism, and Jews have mourned this loss ever since.
- *Tisha B'Av* (9th of Av) is a day of mourning which commemorates the destruction of the temple and other tragic events in the history of the Jewish temple.



MOURNING THE LOSS OF THE TEMPLE



TISHA B'AV

- The rabbis of the Talmudic period taught that the Messiah would be born on *Tisha B'Av*, and that he would fulfil God's promise of final redemption.
- Many Orthodox and Conservative Jews believe that the temple in Jerusalem will be restored as an integral part of this final redemption.

