

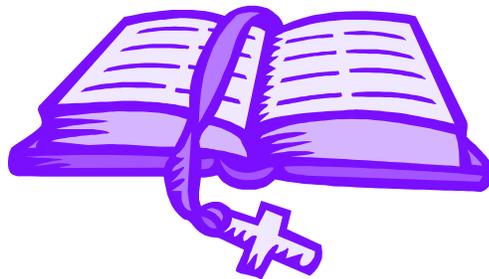
New Testament History

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The New Testament Life of Christ

The New Testament is the "last will and testament of Jesus Christ" (Hebrews 9:15-17). It replaces the Old Testament in its entirety. There are 27 books in the New Testament.

The Gospels

There are four Gospel accounts of the life of Christ. While the theme of the Old Testament is "someone is coming," the theme of the Gospels is "someone is here." Matthew, Mark, and Luke are called the synoptic Gospels, meaning that they are "able to be seen together." The synoptic Gospels cover much of the same material in the life of Christ. For that reason, many have "harmonized" the Gospel accounts and study Matthew, Mark, and Luke as one volume. This is a tragic mistake. The three Gospels are written to different audiences and portray Jesus in a different light to each. Harmonizing the Gospels loses the identity and intent which the author is attempting to reveal. If God had intended us to study the Gospels as one harmonized unit, then He most certainly would have inspired only one. But He gave us four Gospel accounts, each with its own character, audience, and message. Each Gospel account should be studied for its own uniqueness and portrayal of Christ.

Matthew

Theme: The Gospel for the Jew. Jesus is the Messiah, the fulfillment of the prophets, and ruler of the kingdom of God.

Matthew was a tax collector who became an apostle (Matthew 9:9-13). Matthew slants his material to a Jewish readership as he cites numerous OT prophecies that were fulfilled in Jesus' life and ministry.

Mark

Theme: Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God. The Gospel of Power for the Roman.

Mark is the son of Mary, a Christian Jewess (Acts 12:12). Because of the many Jewish questions it leaves untouched, the Jew would not have been greatly impressed by Mark's presentation of Jesus' claims. This Gospel was not designed for the Jewish reader.

The Romans to whom it is written, would care little about the fulfillment of prophecy, and did not have the philosophical appreciation of Greek. Christ is therefore presented with the idea of divine power over the spirit world, action, law, and universal dominion. To the Roman mind, Jesus must appear as the man of power, the worker, the conqueror.

Mark is the Gospel of power, of action, of conquest over nature, the spirits, disease, and death. In the presence of these expressions of power, the people exclaim, "What kind of man is this?"

Jesus' birth and young life is ignored in Mark. He gets right to the ministry of Jesus. Chapters 1-10 cover three years of ministry, while Jesus' final week is covered in chapters 11-16.

Luke

Theme: Jesus, the Savior of the whole world.

Luke was a Gentile physician and co-worker of Paul (Acts 16:10-17; Colossians 4:14; 2 Timothy 4:11). The Gospel of Luke is the longest record in the New Testament and the most chronological. It is written to a wealthy Roman aristocrat named Theophilus (1:3) and is intended for a Gentile audience.

Luke wrote the book of Acts and addressed it also to Theophilus. The two can be thought of as Volumes I and II. The Gospel of Luke is Volume I (The Story of Jesus) and The Acts of the Apostles, Volume II (The Story of the church).

The Gospel of Luke is marked by joy (1:46-47; 15:8-32), praise (1:46-55; 68-79) and an interest in the relationship of Jesus with people considered outcasts by his fellow countrymen (women, children, the poor, tax collectors and Samaritans). Gentile orientation is seen in the fact that Jesus' genealogy is traced back to Adam, the founder of the human race, rather than back to Abraham, the founder of the Hebrew race (as Matthew does).

Luke seldom quotes the OT, and he translates Hebrew words into their Greek equivalents.

In the Roman Empire of the first century, there were three classes of people to whom our Lord was presented according to their needs and characteristics: The Jew, The Roman, and The Greek. The Greeks were the intellectuals and attempted to create the perfect man by mental process. The Greek was a universal man and could come into sympathetic relations with man as man.

The Jew and Roman were by nature exclusive. The Jew could meet only with him who came from Abraham and received the prophets. The Roman could respect only him who wielded power in the empire or was born to a place in the empire.

The full-grown Jew was a Pharisee; the full-grown Roman a Caesar, but the full-grown Greek could meet all the world on a common platform of humanity.

The two characteristics of universality and perfection must be considered when presenting Jesus to the Greek. In Luke's Gospel Jesus is not presented as the Jewish Messiah. He is not presented as the world conqueror, the almighty power. He is presented as the perfect, universal man.

In Luke Jesus is commonly known as the Son of Man, perfect humanity, the savior of all "ethnics" (nations, Gentiles). I refer to Luke as the "Gospel for Joe Lunchbox". It truly is the Good News of Jesus for the common man on the street.

John

Theme: The Gospel of faith (20:30-31).

John states the purpose for writing the Gospel in 20:30-31. The Gospel of John is a discourse of signs intended to produce faith, resulting in life.

John's Gospel is intended for the Greek philosopher and Hellenistic Jew. Jesus' teaching is not outlined as in the other Gospel accounts. It cannot be included in a harmonizing context as can the synoptics. John highlights Jesus himself and portrays him philosophically on an intellectual and conceptual level.

New Testament People

Brothers in the Scripture

James son of Zebedee and brother John
Peter and Brother Andrew
John brother of James

Twelve Apostles

Matt 10:2-4

Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; ³ Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; ⁴ Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

Luke 6:13-16

Then morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles: ¹⁴ Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, ¹⁵ Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, ¹⁶ Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

Jesus Brothers and Sisters

Mark 6:3

Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, ^a Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?"

His brothers and sisters (cf. [Mark 3:31-35](#)) were most likely children of Joseph and Mary born after Jesus' birth rather than Joseph's children by a previous marriage or Jesus' cousins. **James** became a leader in the early church at Jerusalem (cf. [Acts 15:13-21](#)), and authored the Epistle of James ([James 1:1](#)). **Judas** was probably Jude, author of the Epistle of Jude ([Jude 1](#)). Nothing more is known of James and Simon or His sisters. Perhaps Joseph was not mentioned because he was already dead.

Gal 1:18-19

Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Peter ^b and stayed with him fifteen days. ¹⁹ I saw none of the other apostles – only James, the Lord's brother.

Mary and Martha

Luke 10:38-42

³⁸ As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. ³⁹ She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. ⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

⁴¹ "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, ⁴² but only one thing is needed. ^f Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

John the Baptist

The [Gospel of Luke](#) includes an account of John's infancy, introducing him as the son of Zachary/[Zacharias](#) and [Elisabeth](#), who previously "had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well advanced in years" [Luke 1:7](#) His birth, name, and office were foretold by the angel [Gabriel](#) to Zacharias, while Zacharias was performing his functions as a priest in the temple of Jerusalem. According to Luke, Zacharias was a priest of the course of Abijah, and his wife, Elisabeth, was of the [daughters of Aaron](#) ([Luke 1:5](#)); consequently John automatically held the priesthood of Aaron.

Luke states that John was born about six months before Jesus, and that Zacharias' disbelief over the birth of his son led to him losing his power of speech, which was only restored on the occasion of John's circumcision ([Luke 1:64](#)). On the basis of Luke's account, the Catholic calendar placed the feast of John the Baptist on June 24, six months before Christmas.

According to Luke, Jesus Christ and John the Baptist were related; their mothers, Mary and Elizabeth, were cousins [Luke 1:36](#). [Geza Vermes](#) has called the relation as 'artificial and undoubtedly Luke's creation

Zechariah

According to the [Gospel of Luke](#), Zechariah was a priest of the line of [Abijah](#), during the reign of King [Herod the Great](#), and husband of [Elisabeth](#), a woman from the priestly family of [Aaron](#). The parentage of [John the Baptist](#) is not recorded in the other [Gospels](#). The [evangelist](#) states that both the parents were righteous before God, since they were blameless in observing the commandments and ordinances of [the Lord](#). When the events related in Luke commenced, their marriage was still childless, because Elizabeth was barren and, like her husband, was advanced in years ([Luke 1:5-7](#)).

The duties at the [temple in Jerusalem](#) alternated between each of the families that had descended from those appointed by King [David](#) ([1 Chronicles 23:1-19](#)). The offering of incense was one of the most solemn parts of the daily worship, and owing to the large number of eligible priests, no priest could hope to perform the task more than once during his lifetime. Luke states that during the week when it was the duty of his family to serve at the [temple in Jerusalem](#), the [lot](#) for performing the incense offering had fallen to Zechariah.

The evangelist states that while Zechariah ministered at the golden altar of incense, an angel of God announced to him that his wife would give birth to a son, whom he was to name John, and that this son would be the forerunner of the long-expected [Messiah](#) ([Luke 1:12-17](#)). Citing their advanced age, Zechariah asked for a sign whereby he would know the truth of this prophecy. In reply, the angel identified himself as the Archangel [Gabriel](#), especially sent by God to make this announcement, and added that because of Zechariah's doubt he would be struck dumb and *not able to speak until the day that these things happen*. Consequently, when Zechariah went out to the waiting worshippers, he was unable to pronounce the customary blessing ([Luke 1:18-22](#)).

On his return home Elizabeth duly conceived. Eight days after she gave birth, when their son was to be [circumcised](#) according to Jewish tradition, their family members and neighbours assumed that he was to be named after his father, as was the custom. Elizabeth, however, insisted that his name was to be John, and so the family then questioned her husband. As soon as Zechariah had written on a [writing tablet](#): *His name is John*, he regained the power of speech, and praised God with a [prophecy](#) known as the [Benedictus](#) ([Luke 1:57-79](#)). The child grew up and *became strong in spirit*, but remained in the desert of Judaea ([Luke 3:2-3](#), cf. [Matthew 3:1](#)) until he assumed his ministry ([Luke 1:80](#)) that was to earn him the name [John the Baptist](#) (sometimes translated *Baptizer*).

Elisabeth

In [Luke 1:36](#) Elizabeth is described as a relative of [Mary](#), the mother of [Jesus](#). The Greek word used is συγγενίς, which can refer to various forms of kinship. According to the [Catholic Encyclopedia](#) their relation is given by [St. Hippolytus](#), according to whom they are cousins; the mother of Elizabeth, Sobe and the mother of Mary, [Saint Anne](#) are sisters. The mother of Mary is also known from another source, the [infancy Gospel of James](#).

Some translations of this verse states their relations as relative, kinswoman or 'of your family', others such as the King James, states that they are cousins.

According to the [Gospel of Luke](#), Elizabeth was a descendant of [Aaron](#) the [priest](#) ([Luke 1:5](#)). She and her husband [Zechariah](#) were "righteous before God, living blamelessly" ([1:6](#)), but childless. Zechariah was visited by the [angel Gabriel](#), who told him his wife would have a son who "will be great in the sight of the Lord" ([1:15](#)).

The pregnant Elizabeth [was visited](#) by her relative ([1:36](#)), who was pregnant with [Jesus](#):

And it came to pass, that when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the infant leaped in her womb.

And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost and she cried out with a loud voice: "Blessed are thou amongst women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb." ([1:41-42](#))

The Second Temple era

The Persian period

In [539 BCE](#) the Persians conquered Babylon. In [537 BCE](#), [Cyrus the Great](#) inaugurated the Persian period of Jewish history by allowing Jews to return to Judea and rebuild the Temple, which was completed in [515 BCE](#)). He did not, however, allow the restoration of the monarchy, which left the priests as the dominant authority. Without the constraining power of the monarchy, the authority of the Temple was amplified. Around this time the Sadducee party emerged as the party of priests and allied elites; the name *Sadducee* comes from [Zadok](#). Nevertheless, the [Second Temple](#) had been constructed under the auspices of a foreign power, and there were lingering questions about its legitimacy. This provided the condition for the development of various sects (including Josephus's "schools of thought"), each of which claimed exclusive authority to represent "Judaism," and typically shunned social intercourse, especially marriage, with members of other sects.

One of the earliest of these competing sects, the Pharisees, had its origins in a relatively new group of authorities — scribes and sages. The end of the Babylonian Exile saw not only the construction of the Second Temple, but canonical selection of the [Tanakh](#), the Hebrew Bible, by the [Sanhedrin](#). [Critical biblical scholarship](#) puts forth the claim that the [Torah](#) was also redacted during this period according to the [documentary hypotheses](#).

Although the priests controlled the monarchy and the Temple, scribes and sages (who would later come to be addressed as [rabbi](#), "my teacher") monopolized the study of the Torah, which was read publicly on market-days, a practice which was institutionalized after the return from the [Babylonian exile](#) as a replacement for the Biblical requirement of reading by the Monarch. These sages identified with the prophets (political and religious reformers active in the kingdoms of Judah and Israel, who came from other tribes than Levi), and developed and maintained an oral tradition, which they maintained originated at Mount Sinai alongside the Holy Writ. The rift between the priests and the sages developed during the Hellenistic period, when the Jews faced new political and cultural struggles.

The Hellenistic period

The Hellenistic period of Jewish history began in [332 BCE](#) when [Alexander the Great](#) conquered Persia. Upon his death in [323 BCE](#), his empire was divided among his generals. At first, Judea was ruled by the Egyptian-Hellenic [Ptolemies](#), but in [198 BCE](#), the Syrian-Hellenic [Seleucid Empire](#), under Antiochus III, seized control of Judea.

The Near East had long been cosmopolitan, and was especially so during the Hellenistic period. Several languages were used, and the matter of the *lingua franca* is still subject of some debate. The Jews almost certainly spoke [Aramaic](#) among themselves. [Greek](#) was at least to some extent a trade language in the region, and indeed throughout the entire eastern portion of the Mediterranean. Thus, historian Shaye Cohen has observed that

All the Judaisms of the Hellenistic period, of both the diaspora and the land of Israel, were Hellenized, that is, were integral parts of the culture of the ancient world. Some varieties of Judaism were more hellenized than others, but none was an island unto itself. It is a mistake to imagine that the land of Palestine preserved a "pure" form of Judaism and that the diaspora was the home of adulterated or diluted forms of Judaism. The term "Hellenistic Judaism" makes sense, then, only as a chronological indicator for the period from Alexander the Great to the Macabees or perhaps to the Roman conquests of the first century BCE. As a descriptive term for a certain type of Judaism, however, it is meaningless because all the Judaisms of the Hellenistic period were "Hellenistic." (Cohen 1987: 37)

There are significant distinctions in the manner in which Hellenism influenced factions within the Jewish world of that time. Some assimilated Greek language, dress and sciences. Others wholeheartedly incorporated Greek philosophy and culture, to the point where they assimilated their understanding of Judaism into a Hellenic idiom.

Hellenistic civilization

The term **Hellenistic** (derived from **Ἕλλην** *Héllēn*, the [Greeks](#)' traditional self-described ethnic name) was established by the [German historian Johann Gustav Droysen](#) to refer to the spreading of [Greek culture](#) and [colonization](#) over the non-Greek lands that were conquered by [Alexander the Great](#) in the 4th century BC. The Hellenistic age marks the unification of the [Greek world](#), sharing a common culture based on that of 5th and 4th century BC [Athens](#), along with a fusion of [Near Eastern](#) cultures. The period is characterized by a new wave of Greek colonization which established Greek cities and Kingdoms in [Asia](#) and [Africa](#). Those new cities were composed by Greek colonists who came from different parts of the Greek world, and not from a specific "mother city" (*metropolis*) as before. The main cultural centers expanded from mainland Greece, to [Pergamon](#), [Rhodes](#), as well as to new Greek colonies such as [Antioch](#) and [Alexandria](#). This mixture of Greek-speakers gave birth to a common [Attic](#)-based dialect, known as [Hellenistic Greek](#), which came to absorb and replace all idioms of the [Greek language](#).

Hellenistic History

Modern historians see the death of [Alexander the Great](#) in [323 BC](#) as the beginning of the Hellenistic period. Alexander's armies conquered the eastern Mediterranean, [Egypt](#), [Mesopotamia](#), and the [Iranian plateau](#), [Central Asia](#), and parts of [India](#). Following Alexander's death, there was a struggle for the succession, known as the wars of the [Diadochi](#) (Greek for *successors*). The struggle ended in [281 BC](#) with the establishment of four large territorial states.

His successors held on to the territory west of the [Tigris](#) for some time and controlled the eastern Mediterranean until the [Roman Republic](#) took control in the [2nd](#) and [1st](#) centuries BC. Most of the east was eventually overrun by the [Parthians](#), but Hellenistic culture held on in distant locations, like the [Greco-Bactrian kingdom](#) in [Bactria](#), or the [Indo-Greek kingdom](#) in northern [India](#), or the [Cimmerian Bosphorus](#). Hellenistic culture remained dominant in the Eastern part of the [Roman Empire](#) until its Christianisation and transition to the [Byzantine Empire](#).

Hellenism made considerable inroads and in [monarchies](#) governed by kings of [Persian](#), [Armenian](#) or [Thracian](#) origin, as was the case with [Armenia](#), [Bithynia](#) and [Cappadocia](#).

The end of the Hellenistic period is generally seen as [31 BC](#), when the kingdom of [Ptolemaic Egypt](#) was utterly defeated by the Romans at the [Battle of Actium](#). Octavian (Augustus) defeated Marc Antony at Actium, and as a result, Egypt's last ruler, [Cleopatra](#), (circa 30 BC) committed suicide and her kingdom was annexed by [Octavian](#)

Cultural struggles with Hellenism

Jews had to grapple with the values of [Hellenism](#) and Hellenistic philosophy, which were often directly at odds with their own values and traditions. Bath houses were built in [Jerusalem](#), for instance, and the [gymnasium](#) became a center of social, athletic, and intellectual life. Many Jews embraced these institutions, although Jews who did so were often looked down upon due to their circumcision, which some Gentiles viewed as an aesthetic defacement of the body. Many Jews lived in the [Diaspora](#), and the Judean provinces of Judea, Samaria, and the Galilee were populated by many Gentiles (who often showed an interest in Judaism). Under such conditions, Jews had to confront a paradox in their own tradition: their God was the God of all, but their covenant with God — the [commandments](#) and [laws](#) through which this covenant took material and practical form — applied only to them. This tension between the universal and the particular in Judaism led to new interpretations, some of which were influenced by Hellenic thought and in response to Gentile interest in Judaism.

Political struggles with Hellenism

Generally, the Jews accepted foreign rule when they were only required to pay tribute, and otherwise allowed to govern themselves internally. Nevertheless, Jews were divided between those favoring hellenization and those opposing it, and were divided over allegiance to the Ptolemies or Seleucids. When the High Priest Simon II died in [175 BCE](#), conflict broke out between supporters of his son Onias III (who opposed hellenization, and favored the Ptolemies) and his son Jason (who favored hellenization, and favored the Seleucids). A period of political intrigue followed, with priests such as [Menelaus](#) bribing the king to win the High Priesthood, and accusations of murder of competing contenders for the title. The result was a brief civil war. Huge numbers of Jews flocked to Jason's side, and in [167 BCE](#) the Seleucid king [Antiochus IV](#) invaded Judea, entered the Temple, and stripped it of money and ceremonial objects. Jason fled to Egypt, and Antiochus imposed a program of forced hellenization, requiring Jews to abandon their own laws and customs. At this point Mattathias and his five sons, John, Eleazar, Simon, Jonathan, and [Judah Maccabee](#), priests of the Hasmon family living in the area of ancient [Modi'in](#), assumed leadership of a bloody revolt against the Seleucids.

Judah liberated Jerusalem in [165 BCE](#) and restored the Temple. Fighting continued, and Judah and his brother Jonathan were killed. In [141 BCE](#) an assembly of priests and others affirmed Simon as high priest and leader, in effect establishing the [Hasmonean](#) dynasty. When Simon was killed in [135 BCE](#), his son [John Hyrcanus](#) took his place as high priest and king.

The Hasmonean period

After defeating the Seleucid forces, Judah's nephew [John Hyrcanus](#) established a new monarchy in the form of the priestly Hasmonean dynasty in [152 BCE](#) — thus establishing priests as political as well as

religious authorities. Although the Hasmoneans were heroes for resisting the Seleucids, their reign lacked the legitimacy conferred by descent from the Davidic dynasty of the First Temple Era.

The emergence of the Sadducees, Essenes, and Pharisees

The rift between the priests and the sages grew during the Hellenistic period, when the Jews faced new political and cultural struggles. Around this time the [Sadducee](#) party emerged as the party of the priests and allied elites (the name *Sadducee* may come from [Zadok](#)).

The [Essenes](#) may have emerged as a sect of dissident priests. They are believed to have rejected either the Seleucid appointed high priests, or the Hasmonean high priests, as illegitimate. Ultimately, they rejected the Second Temple, arguing that the Essene community was itself the new Temple, and that obedience to the law represented a new form of sacrifice.

The Pharisee ("separatist") party emerged largely out of the group of scribes and sages who harked back to Ezra and the Great Assembly. The meaning of the name is unclear; it may refer to their rejection of Hellenic culture or to their objection to the Hasmonean monopoly on power. It is difficult to state at what time the Pharisees, as a party, arose. [Josephus](#) first mentions them in connection with Jonathan, the successor of [Judas Maccabeus](#) ("Ant." xiii. 5, § 9). One of the factors that distinguished the Pharisees from other groups prior to the destruction of the Temple was their belief that all Jews had to observe the purity laws (which applied to the Temple service) *outside* the Temple. The major difference, however, was the continued adherence of the Pharisees to the laws and traditions of the Jewish people in the face of assimilation. As Josephus noted, the Pharisees were considered the most expert and accurate expositors of Jewish law.

During the Hasmonean period, the Sadducees and Pharisees functioned primarily as political parties. Although the Pharisees did not support the wars of expansion of the Hasmoneans and the forced conversions of the Idumeans, the political rift between them became wider when a Pharisee suggested that the Hasmonean king [Alexander Jannaeus](#) choose between being king and being High Priest. In response, Alexander Jannai openly sided with the Sadducees by adopting their rites in the Temple. His actions caused a riot in the Temple and led to a brief civil war that ended with a bloody repression of the Pharisees, although at his deathbed the king called for a reconciliation between the two parties. Alexander was succeeded by his widow, [Salome Alexandra](#), whose brother was Shimon ben Shetach, a leading Pharisee. Upon her death her elder son, [Hyrcanus](#), sought Pharisee support, and her younger son, Aristobulus, sought the support of the Sadducees. The conflict between Hyrcanus and Aristobulus culminated in a civil war that ended when the [Roman](#) general [Pompey](#) captured [Jerusalem](#) in [63 BCE](#) and inaugurated the Roman period of Jewish history.

Josephus attests that [Salome Alexandra](#) was very favorably inclined toward the Pharisees and that their political influence grew tremendously under her reign, especially in the institution known as the [Sanhedrin](#). Later texts like the [Mishnah](#) and the [Talmud](#) record a host of rulings ascribed to the Pharisees concerning sacrifices and other ritual practices in the Temple, torts, criminal law, and governance. The influence of the Pharisees over the lives of the common people remained strong and their rulings on Jewish law were deemed authoritative by many. Although these texts were written long after these periods, many scholars have said that they are a fairly reliable account of history during the Second Temple era.

The Roman period

According to Josephus, the Pharisees appeared before Pompey asking him to interfere and restore the old priesthood while abolishing the royalty of the Hasmoneans altogether ("Ant." xiv. 3, § 2). They regarded Pompey's defilement of the [Temple in Jerusalem](#) as a divine punishment of Sadducean misrule. Pompey ended the monarchy and named Hyrcanus high priest and ethnarch (a lesser title than "king"). Six years later Hyrcanus was deprived of the remainder of political authority and ultimate jurisdiction was given to the Proconsul of [Syria](#), who ruled through Hyrcanus's Idumaeen associate [Antipater](#), and later Antipater's two sons [Phasael](#) (military governor of Judea) and [Herod](#) (military governor of Galilee). In [40 BCE](#) Aristobulus's son Antigonus overthrew Hyrcanus and named himself king and high priest, and Herod fled to Rome.

The Herodian dynasty, the procuratorship, and the Sanhedrin

In Rome, Herod sought the support of [Mark Antony](#) and [Octavian](#), and secured recognition by the [Roman Senate](#) as king, confirming the termination of the Hasmonean dynasty. According to Josephus, Sadducean opposition to Herod led him to treat the Pharisees favorably ("Ant." xiv. 9, § 4; xv. 1, § 1; 10, § 4; 11, §§ 5-6). Herod was an unpopular ruler, perceived as a Roman puppet. Despite his restoration and expansion of the Second Temple, Herod's notorious treatment of his family and of the last Hasmonaeans further eroded his popularity. According to Josephus, the Pharisees ultimately opposed him and thus fell victims ([4 BCE](#)) to his bloodthirstiness ("Ant." xvii. 2, § 4; 6, §§ 2-4). The family of [Boethus](#), whom Herod had raised to the high-priesthood, revived the spirit of the Sadducees, and thenceforth the Pharisees again had them as antagonists ("Ant." xviii. 1, § 4).

After Herod's death in 4 BCE, various radical Jewish elements rose in revolt: Judas in the Galilee (or [Judas of Galilee](#)), whose followers tore down the Roman Eagle that had adorned the Temple; Simon in Perea, a former slave of Herod, who burned down the royal palace at Jericho, and Athronges in Judea, a shepherd who led a two-year rebellion. The Syrian legate [Publius Quinctilius Varus](#) took command of Judea, Samaria, and the Galilee, and immediately put down the uprisings, killing thousands of Jews by [crucifixion](#) and selling many into slavery. Rome quickly re-established governance and divided Herod's kingdom among his sons: [Archelaus](#) received the southern part of the territory ([Judea](#) and [Samaria](#)), [Herod Antipas](#) became tetrarch of the [Galilee](#) and the southern Transjordan ([Peraea](#)), and Philip received the northern Transjordan ([Batanaea](#)).

[Archelaus](#) antagonized the Jews as his father had, and in [6 CE](#) the emperor [Augustus](#) acceded to a delegation by placing Judea and Samaria under the indirect rule of a Roman procurator (or prefect), and the direct rule of a Roman-appointed high priest instead. During this period Judea and Galilee were effectively semi-autonomous client-states under Roman tribute. For the most part, Jews were willing to pay tribute, although they complained when it was excessive, and absolutely refused to allow a graven image in their Temple although some emperors considered imposing one. The primary tasks of the tetrarch and high priest were to collect tribute, convince the Romans not to interfere with the Temple, and ensure that the Jews not rebel.

In [57 BCE](#) the Proconsul Cabineus established five regional *synhedria* ([Sanhedrins](#), or councils) to regulate the internal affairs of the Jews. The Sanhedrinae was a legislative council of 71 elders chaired by

the high priest, that interpreted Jewish law and adjudicated appeals, especially in ritual matters. Their specific composure and powers actually varied depending on Roman policy.

Religious and cultural life during the Roman period

In the first decades of Roman rule, the Temple remained the center of Jewish ritual life. According to the Torah, Jews were required to travel to Jerusalem and offer sacrifices at the Temple three times a year: [Passover](#), [Sukkot](#), and [Shavuot](#). Yet, the Temple was not the only institution for Jewish religious life. During the 70 year exile in Babylon, Jewish houses of assembly (known in Hebrew as a "beit kneset" or in Greek as a "synagogue") were the primary meeting place for prayer. The house of study (in Hebrew: "beit midrash") was the counterpart for the synagogue. After the building of the Second Temple in the time of Ezra, the beit kneset and the beit midrash remained important institutions in Jewish life, although secondary in importance to the Temple. Outside of Roman Palestine, the synagogue was often called a house of prayer (in Greek: *proseuchai*; in Hebrew *Beit Tefilah*). One such synagogue in Alexandria, the Diopeloston, was a basilica with a double roofed colonnade, was said to be large enough to house one million worshippers (see [Succah 51b](#)). While that number is likely exaggerated, it demonstrates the importance and centrality of the synagogue at that time. While most Jews could not regularly attend the Temple service, they could meet at the synagogue for morning, afternoon and evening prayers. On Mondays, Thursdays and the Sabbath, a weekly Torah portion was read publicly in the synagogues, following the tradition of public Torah readings instituted by Ezra (see, [Nehemiah 8:1-18](#)).

The destruction of the Temple and the end of the Second Temple era

By [66 CE](#) Jewish discontent with Rome had escalated. At first, the priests tried to suppress rebellion, even calling upon the Pharisees for help. After the Roman garrison failed to stop Hellenists from desecrating a synagogue in [Caesarea](#), however, the high priest suspended payment of tribute, inaugurating the [Great Jewish Revolt](#). The destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans in [70 CE](#) not only put an end to the revolt, it was a profoundly traumatic experience for the Jews that marked the end of an era.

Roman Emperors

Imperial Roman Emperors Time Line

27 BC-14 AD	Gaius Octavius Augustus (The exalted one) Agripa went to school with Octavius
4 BC	Herod the Great dies Revolt Judas – Galilee – Tore down Roman Eagle of Temple Simon – Perea – Burned royal palace at Jerico Athronges – Judea – Led two year rebellion
6 BC	Publius Quinctiliua Varus – Put down rebellions in Galilee, Perea, Judea Killed thousands of Jews
14 AD-37	Tiberius – murdered (Sejanus-admin ran show 26AD-31) Appointed Pontius Pilate – Luke 3:1 shows high priest, governor and Herod
31 AD	Sejanus found out and executed
37 AD – 41	Caligula – Son of Germanicus - murdered
41 AD – 54	Claudius – brother of Germanicus-died suddenly (considered feeble minded) Empowered by Praetorian guard - Gave procurators the powers of governor
54 AD – 68	Nero (committed suicide-became highly deranged by AD 59)
64 AD	Great fire in Rome – blamed Christians which were used to light garden
67 AD	Beginning of great Jewish revolt – Nero dispatched Vespasian to put down the revolt
69 AD	Galba - slain
69 AD	Otho – committed suicide
69 AD	Vitellius – tortured and killed
69 AD – 79	Vespasian (previous Roman General)
70 AD	Elder son Titus takes over Jewish campaign and destroys Jerusalem
79 AD	Volcano eruption (Vesuvius) – destroys two cities–Herculaneum and Pompeii
79 AD – 81	Titus (Son of Vespasian) Was Co-emperor with Vespasian until AD 79
81 AD – 96	Domitian – murdered (Son of Vespasian)

Roman Emperor's Biographies

Augustus

Gaius Julius Octavius - Augustus

born on 23 September 63 BC in Rome, son of Gaius Octavius and Aita, niece of Julius Caesar, who adopted him as his heir. Consul 43, 33, 31-23 BC. Effectively became emperor in 27 BC, with extended powers in 23 BC. Married (1) Claudia, (2) Scribonia (one daughter; Julia), (3) Drusilia (one son; Tiberius). Died at Nola, 19 August AD 14. Deified on 17 September AD 14.

After the civil wars which brought Augustus to power, on the winning side alone, 60 legions stood combat-ready.

Augustus decided to retain 28, while the remainder would be demobilized and settled in the colonies. By this act, the west's first standing army of 150'000 legionaries and a similar number of auxiliaries was created. Length of service was set at sixteen years, later it was increased to twenty.

Though his army of 28 legions Augustus made sure to quickly spread across the far reaches of the empire, with all the legions being posted both far away from Rome as well as as far away as possible from each other.

It expressed Augustus' distrust of soldiers and of ambitious men who might rouse them against him. By keeping the armies close to the borders their energies would be directed outward, toward foreign enemies; and keeping them far from each other would ensure that no overwhelming force could be assembled which might threaten the throne.

While this caution, right after the civil war, was understandable, Augustus' arrangements would long outlive him.

Augustus disposition of the legions was matched by his manipulation of the provinces. Of these he retained the most powerful under his direct power on the grounds that they were insecure, either with enemies on their borders or were themselves capable of rebellion. But his real purpose was that he alone should have arms and maintain soldiers. In short, Augustus kept the outer, returning the inner provinces to the Senate. It was a muted way of assuring himself commander-in-chief, for the army would be stationed only in the outer provinces which would be governed and administered by the emperor's appointees. This meant that the frontier would be under direct imperial authority, establishing for the emperor a hold over foreign affairs and decisions of peace and war.

The division of territory into 'Senate's share' and 'Caesar's share' was accompanied by a ban on senators even visiting a frontier province without imperial permission.

It was clear from this that Augustus saw the Senate as one of the likeliest sources from which to expect a challenge to his position.

To this one must add, that to Augustus (as well as to later Caesars) the Senate, with its centuries of experience, remained indispensable in running the empire.

The East of the empire gave no trouble. The small dependent kingdoms still surviving in Asia Minor (Turkey) were peacefully and gradually absorbed into the Roman provincial system. Parthia under king Phraates had no desire to challenge Rome. The unavenged disaster of Carrhae in 53 BC however had always rankled in the Roman mind. So when in 20 BC a demand was made by Rome, emphasized by a military demonstration of force along the border, for the return of the captives and most importantly for the legionary standards, which had been in Parthian possession since the disastrous defeat of Crassus over

thirty years earlier. King Phraates wisely gave way, avoiding war against a newly united foe, increasing in strength. The standards were returned to Rome without a fight. An achievement which won Augustus high praise.

By 19 BC Agrippa had assured the submission of the Spanish tribes. But a German incursion across the Rhine in 16 BC defeated a Roman commander, Lollius, and called for the temporary presence of Augustus at the front, where he left the command in the hands of his stepson Drusus.

In 12 BC Agrippa died and with him Augustus lost his most obvious heir. For a while Augustus hoped for Gaius or Lucius, both sons of Agrippa to succeed him, but as they both died his choice somewhat reluctantly fell on Tiberius, the son by his wife out of a previous marriage.

Then followed a conquest of Germany, initially to the Elbe. At first it was led by Drusus, who died on campaign. He was succeeded by Tiberius who had established Roman supremacy over Pannonia and Noricum.

Sixteen years' struggle in mire and forest, amphibious landings and spectacular marches were rewarded with a succession of victories. A bold project, sometimes referred to as the 'Bohemian Plan', was mooted as a culminating blow. Tiberius would cross the Danube heading north, snip off what is now the western end of the Czech Republic, descend into the German plain and join hands with an army group advancing eastwards from the Rhine. The so-called 'Bohemian Plan' may have only been meant as one step in a much larger offensive.

Rome, of course, virtually unbeaten so far and inexorably rising to conquer the world, by now virtually understood the rule of the world its birthright.

But none of these grand schemes would be implemented. Shortly before commencement of operations, a revolt erupted in Tiberius' rear and spread rapidly across the Balkans. To quell it required almost half of Rome's fighting strength, to become tied up for three years in a mountain war.

Meanwhile it was deemed that Northern Germany, west of the Elbe was sufficiently pacified. P.

Quintilius Varus was entrusted as governor of the province. Though Germany was not ready for Roman civilization.

In AD 9 disaster struck an empire which until then had virtually met no opponent capable of halting its rise to supreme power.

Under the command of Varus three legions and three cavalry squadrons marched through the Teutoburger Wald (Saltus Teutoburgensis) The German tribe, the Cherusci, under their leader known to the Romans as Arminius, had learnt their lesson.

In open terrain, with room to manoeuvre, the Roman army was literally unbeatable. But in the middle of a forest, it was vulnerable. The trap was sprung and three entire legions were annihilated. Arminius' victory was a major turning point in the history of the Roman Empire. If Romans had previously marched as far as the Elbe, and even if they could do so in future, then this proved that they would never ever really rule any territory north of the Rhine and the Danube. - Rome had alas met its match in the barbarians of northern Europe.

Though it was a costly lesson for Rome. Three legions had been annihilated. Varus and his staff committed suicide. It was to be remembered by the Romans as the 'Varian disaster'.

Tiberius thereafter still could march his legions through Germany almost unhindered, in fact he did so.

But not to subdue it and conquer it. For this, one now understood, was beyond Roman power.

Tiberius was recalled from his task of restoring Roman authority in Germany. Instead command was left in the hands of Germanicus, who was to be highly popular with the legions, in contrast to the almost despised Tiberius.

Had Germanicus had any serious political ambitions he would certainly have become a formidable opponent to any future emperor. Yet, Germanicus was loyal and a devoted soldier.

Alas, Augustus went out with advice to his successors that the empire should be kept within its existing boundaries. This was an astonishing turn of events. The imperialist had recanted. Rome could not expand indefinitely. He had in office learned of the problems facing an empire of this scale and appreciated the difficulties in holding it together.

Any further expansion in the eyes of the elderly Augustus would take the empire beyond being practically governable.

Also, the Mediterranean part of Europe, Africa and Asia, which Rome now ruled had been developed prior to Roman occupation. There was roads, town, cities. What prize was there to win, defeating the barbarian hordes of the north. Augustus ultimate conclusion from the Varian Disaster was that only civilized territories were worth the blood of Roman legionaries.

His advice would have demanded a change in attitude by all Rome - to defend, not to conquer. Rome however, the she-wolf with her mighty legions, was not yet ready for such advice.

Tiberius Claudius Nero

Born on 16 November 42 BC, son of Tiberius Claudius Nero (d. 33 BC) and Livia Drusilla (c.58 BC - AD 29), who married Augustus in 39 BC. Became emperor in AD 14. Married (1) Vipsania (one son, Drusus 13 BC - AD23); (2) Julia, daughter of Augustus. Died at Misenum, 16 March AD 37.

When at last the old Augustus died it was a matter of course that the senate, still the nominal governing body, should petition Tiberius to accept the succession, and that he should do so with some reluctance. The soldiery was loyal to him, the representatives of the great families had neither experience of rule nor military position. Hence his accession went unchallenged.

As under Augustus the empire at large enjoyed peace and prosperity, showing no signs of general disaffection. The provincial system worked under Tiberius, as it had under Augustus, much better than under the old senatorial system.

No little insight and resolution were needed to face imperial problems as Tiberius dealt with agitators, vested interests and upholders of aristocratic tradition, all of whom were united in denouncing him as evil and corrupt.

Though much of Tiberius' bad image in history is due to his own doing. The responsibility for the vicious rule of his administrator Sejanus, the head of the praetorian guard, ultimately lay with the emperor who had chosen him for the job. So too Tiberius' treason laws created an air of terror in Rome. The introduction of a large network of paid informers under Tiberius only further increased the feeling of oppression.

Along the Rhine the troops would no doubt have hailed Germanicus to be the new emperor instead of the despised Tiberius, if only they could have won their champions' consent. But Germanicus remained loyal. His heart was instead set on the conquest of Germany, where he indeed did succeed in inflicting a heavy defeat on Arminius.

Tiberius though conscientiously followed the advice of Augustus in seeking to extend the empire any further and recalled Germanicus from Germany, in AD 17 instead dispatching him to the east. Many saw this as an act of jealousy by the emperor at the time, envious of his general's popularity. While in the east,

Germanicus died in circumstances which gave rise to rumours that his death had been designed by Tiberius, and his memory was cherished as a victim of the emperor's jealousy.

In AD 26 Tiberius retired to the island of Caprae (Capri) where he, according to rumour, lived a life of debauchery, leaving Rome in the hands of his praetorian prefect Sejanus.

Though Sejanus, having concentrated the praetorian guard in one camp, whereas before they had been scattered across Rome, was a brutal tyrant, who sought to eventually rid himself of Tiberius and become emperor himself.

Though Sejanus' intentions became apparent to Tiberius and he was stripped of his power and executed in AD 31.

The fall of Sejanus served only to relieve the nightmare, not to end it. For six more years Tiberius remained at Caprae. At last he died in AD 37, most likely murdered by his praetorian prefect Macro in favor of his nephew Caligula.

Caligula

Gaius Caesar

Born in AD 12, son of Germanicus Caesar (15 BC-AD 19), nephew of Tiberius, and Agrippina (14 BC-AD 33), granddaughter of Augustus. Became emperor in AD 37. Married (1) Junia Claudilla; (2) Livia Orestilla; (3) Lolliia Paulina; (4) Caesonia (one daughter, Julia). Assassinated on 24 January AD 41.

Caligula was the third son of Germanicus, his two elder brothers were both dead. Now twenty-four years of age, he was the sole contender to the throne. As the son of Germanicus he certainly had the support of the army. His uncle Claudius, the younger brother of Germanicus, was without ambition and was reputed to be feeble-minded, while Gaius was credited with all his father's virtues. He was forthwith acclaimed *princeps* (first citizen). Augustus on his death had been granted divine honors. Caligula was applauded for refusing them to the dead Tiberius.

For the moment it seemed that better days were in store. Much was to be hoped from a prince who was young, popular and generous - and who began his reign by liberating prisoners, recalling exiles, publicly burning incriminating documents, and showing great determination in the unaccustomed business of administration. But after a few months Caligula fell ill, and he rose from his sickness in effect a madman; bereft of all moral sense but not of that distorted but occasionally acute intelligence which accompanies some forms of mania. The new nightmare was more terrible than that which had passed with Tiberius.

Caligula slew, it might be with some definite reason, it might be merely because he had the fancy to slay, whether from blood-lust or as mere demonstration of power. He inaugurated magnificent public works, and forgot them when the fancy passed. He resolved to conquer Britain, gathered his invasion forces at Boulogne, and then set the men to gather shells on the shore, and these he sent to Rome as the spoils of the conquered ocean. He returned to Rome threatening slaughter because the senate had not been sufficiently zealous in preparing for him a magnificent triumph.

Finally an officer of the praetorians finally summoned up the courage to assassinate him with the aid of a few companions, in the fifth year of his crazed reign (AD 41).

Claudius

Tiberius Claudius Drusus Nero Germanicus

Born on 1 August 10 BC at Lugdunum, Gaul, son of Nero Claudius Drusus (38-9 BC), brother of Tiberius, and Antonia (36 BC - AD 37), daughter of Mark Antony. Became emperor in AD 41. Married (1) Plautia Urgulanilla (one son, Drusus, (d ca. AD 26) and one daughter, Claudia); (2) Aelia Paetina (one daughter, Antonia); (3) Valeria Messalina (one son, Tiberius Claudius Britannicus (AD 41 -55) and one daughter, Octavia (d. AD 62)); (4) Agrippina. Died on 12 October AD 54. Deified in AD 54.

As news of Caligula's assassination spread, the senate gathered in haste, several of them ready to press their own claims to the succession, other urged that the moment had come to restore the republic. Though the praetorian guard had its own ideas as to who should take the throne. Claudius, Caligula's feeble-minded uncle, had been dragged from his hiding place in the palace to the praetorian camp, where he was promptly hailed as emperor, and then marched back to the senate, who had no choice but to confirm their decision.

But the soldiers had chosen better than they knew. Claudius had spent his life at the almost forgotten, half-witted brother of the great Germanicus. But now in office he proved extremely conscientious. His intentions were excellent, and his political theory, if derived wholly from books, was intelligent. He was 'the wisest fool' in Rome, but he kept his wisdom for the state, while his domestic follies made him a figure of contempt to his contemporaries and ridiculous to posterity.

Claudius was already fifty years old when he began his reign (AD 41- 54). Throughout the period the empire enjoyed general prosperity and there were few complaints from the provinces. Claudius held firmly to the belief that the existing border was to be maintained but not extended.

Military expeditions conducted against the aggressive German tribes of the Chauca and Catti - who had probably absorbed the Cherusci - were completely successful, though not followed by any attempt of annexation.

Within the empire the practice of extending full Roman citizenship to favoured communities was actively developed.

But the main achievement of the reign of Claudius was the organized conquest of the south of Britain. Had Claudius stayed true to Augustus' advice not to expand the empire, this was the one time he broke with it. Was it either to prove himself worthy to his contemporaries in a bid to shake off his image as a half-wit, or simply because the threat of a largely unknown kingdom off the coast of Gaul was too serious to go unchecked, Claudius in AD 43 sent forth a giant invasion force under the command of Aulus Plautius.

Claudius himself took the field at one time and the entire expedition was resounding military success. It is however to the credit of Claudius that when the brave Caractacus, the leader of the Britons, was sent to Rome as a captive, he was granted an honorable liberty by the emperor.

But unhappily the feature of Claudius' reign most annoying to the public of the time, was the influence of freedmen, for the most part Greeks, who won his confidence, and by the successive wives who plotted against him while they fooled him as they pleased.

Of the freedmen the most notorious were perhaps Narcissus and Pallas. Their rivalry did not prevent them from working in concert to their common advantage. They quite literally sold public honours and privileges. Though they were men of ability, who rendered useful service when it was in their own interest to do so, forming a sort of imperial secretariat, free of influence by class interests or social prejudices.

In AD 48 Claudius finally rid himself of Messalina, a wife who had disgusted Roman society with her constant betrayal and ridicule of her husband, until alas his eyes had been opened to the fact. The place vacated by Messalina was secured by the emperor's ambitious niece, Agrippina the younger, sister of Caligula, widow of Domitius Ahenobarbus and the mother of the young Nero.

Right from the beginning Agrippina set out to see her son Nero become heir to the imperial throne. Alas he was persuaded to adopt Nero as his own son. Nero being three years the senior to Claudius' own son Britannicus meant that Agrippina had achieved her ambition.

But then as signs became apparent that Claudius was inclining to Britannicus rather than Nero Agrippina sought the advice with a certain Locusta, a woman of not only a shady, if not evil reputation, but also a known expert in poisons.

Claudius died suddenly. Nero, nor Britannicus, succeeded him.

Nero

Nero Claudius Drusus Germanicus

Born Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus at Antium in AD 37, son of Gnaeus Domitius Ahenobarbus, consul in AD 32, and Agrippina, sister of Caligula, who then married Crispus Passienus and, later, in AD 49, her uncle Claudius. Became emperor in AD 54. Married (1) Octavia; (2) Poppaea Sabina (one daughter, Claudia Augusta, who died in infancy); (Stailia Messalina. Committed suicide in AD 68.

Nero was highly educated, and his tutor was a famous philosopher and writer, Lucius Annaeus Seneca (5 BC - AD 65).

For five years the government was directed by Seneca and Burrhus, the prefect of the praetorian guard, whose support had ensured the succession of Nero. These initial five years were such of good, competent government and stood in stark contrast with the notorious period which was to follow.

Britannicus soon died in suspicious circumstances.

A breach opened up between the ministers and Agrippina, who found her influence with her son slipping away, and tried to recover it by means which only made the young man resent it more.

Meanwhile Nero became infatuated with Poppaea Sabina, who was to become one of the worst influences of his life.

He had his mother killed in AD 59, and divorced his wife Octavia, then married Poppaea Sabina who later died from his brutality.

Nero, by then clearly deranged, continued to reign for nine gruesome years.

The reign of Nero saw the confirmation of the Roman dominion in Britain, by the campaigns of Suetonius Paulinus in Wales and by the crushing of the great revolt of the Iceni in the eastern area under their queen Boadicea.

Still more familiar is the story of the Great Fire of Rome in AD 64, when half Rome was burnt to the ground while Nero gave himself up to the emotional joys of the thrilling dramatic moment, and then sought to recover his popularity with the mob by illuminating his gardens with a public display of burning Christians, on the pretence that they had set fire to Rome.

Roman sentiment was especially scandalized when the emperor gloried in taking personal part in public competitions which to Roman eyes were fit only for Greeks, or freedmen, as well as the shamelessness of his vices and extravagances. No man was safe, whose character earned the dislike of the emperor or whose wealth excited his desire.

In AD 67 the Jewish revolt broke out, which saw Nero dispatch Vespasian to put down the rebellion.

Eventually it became all too much and the old soldier Servius Sulpicus Galba raised his standard in revolt

in Spain against a despised emperor. Galba, a rigid old warrior, marched on Rome. Nero found himself deserted on all sides and killed himself.

Galba

Servius Sulpicius Galba

Born on 24 December 3 BC near Tarracina. Governor of Hispania Tarraconensis AD 61-68. Became emperor in AD 68. Married Lepida (two sons); all three died early in his career. Assassinated on 15 January AD 69.

Galba was hailed emperor but displayed such petty meanness and lack of generosity to the soldiery that the army in consequence transferred their allegiance to Marcus Salvius Otho and Galba was slain after only a reign of six months.

Otho

Marcus Salvius Otho

Born on 28 April AD 32. Governor of Lusitania AD 58-68. Became emperor on 15 January AD 69. Married Poppaea Sabina, future wife of Nero. Committed suicide on 14 April AD 69.

Otho was hailed emperor in January AD 69, but the legions of the Rhine preferred their own commander Vitellius, for no better reason than the fact that he was their commander.

Vitellius' generals defeated Otho's troops at Bedriacum (Cremona) and Otho duly committed suicide.

Vitellius

Aulus Vitellius

Born on 24 September AD 15. Consul AD 48. Became emperor in AD 69. Married (1) Petronia (one son; Patronianus); (2) Galeria Fundana (one son; Vitellius; one daughter; Vitellia). Assassinated on 24 December AD 69.

Vitellius entered Rome and took the throne in AD 69.

But his reign, too, was not to last. For in the east Vespasian arose in revolt, being hailed emperor in Egypt and Syria.

The troops along the Danube sided with him and general Antoninus Primus led an army into Italy, defeated Vitellius' forces and the second Battle of Bedriacum (Cremona) and marched on Rome.

Vitellius was dragged through the streets, tortured and alas flung into the river Tiber.

Vespasian

Titus Flavius Sabinus Vespasianus

born 17 November AD 9 at Reate. Served in Thrace, Crete, Cyrene, Germany, Britain and Africa. Military commander in Palestine AD 66-69. Became emperor in AD 69. Married Flavia Domitilla, who died AD 65 (two sons, Titus and Domitian, and one daughter Domitilla). Died on 24 June AD 79. Deified in AD 79.

Thus with the fall of Vitellius came the end of the first crisis of the Roman empire. With it was revealed the fundamental weakness from which the empire could never completely escape. So long as the troops held to their allegiance their emperor was an incredibly powerful figure. While he lived there was no-one they could transfer their allegiance except their immediate commander if he chose to accept it. Once an

emperor was firmly established with general consent he needed not to fear revolt unless he made himself wantonly intolerable. But the settlement of the succession lay with the soldiery and primarily with the praetorians, in their camp at Rome.

Vespasian arrived in Rome to take power in AD 70, having been represented in Rome by his younger son Domitian until his arrival.

Vespasian's men were loyal. There was no possible rival on the scene. Rome only craved for the anarchy to end so Vespasian's formal recognition as emperor was a foregone conclusion.

Vespasian was a practical man. Like Marius he was of the people, and in no way ashamed of the fact. He had been fighting, commanding troops organizing and administering for thirty years, hence he knew the system by personal experience. More so, he was a shrewd judge of character and knew the empire from end to end.

In the same year, in September AD 70, Jerusalem finally fell to Titus, Vespasian's' elder son who had taken charge of the Jewish campaign, as his father had left for Rome. The great Temple of Solomon was razed, the Jews were driven out of their homeland and dispersed.

Also in AD 70 a short lived rebellion in Germany, led by Gallic legionary officer Civilis. It is noteworthy as it proved just how well Vespasian had restored order in such short a time. Unlike during the previous time of civil strife, rebellions now had little chance of prospering.

The vices and extravagances of Roman society held no attraction for the gritty soldier.

His hard-headed shrewdness was the best possible answer to the corruption of the times, making decency more fashionable than indecency. Vespasian indulged in no violence and restored law and public confidence.

He was well served in the men he appointed and his public works were directed to the dignity of state and the welfare of the people. Meanwhile his expenditure was economical and put the state treasury back on a sound footing.

Vespasian was not picturesque, but he was effective and he gave the empire, and above all the heart of the empire, Italy, that peace and order which had been so rudely shaken during the civil war.

Titus

Titus Flavius Sabinus Vespasianus

Born on 30 December AD 40 in Rome, son of Vespasian and Flavia Domitilla. Legionary commander and then commander-in-chief in Palestine. Became associate emperor in AD 71, emperor in AD 79. Married (1) Arrecina Tertulla; (2) Marcia Furnilla (one daughter, Flavia Julia). Died on 13 September AD 81. Deified in AD 81.

Titus had been for some years formally associated with his father as co-emperor and succeeded him as a matter of course in AD 79. He reigned for only two years, long enough though to win a lasting reputation, hardly expected at the time of his accession, for clemency and generosity. He was emperor at the time of an appalling calamity for which there had been no precedent, the utter obliteration of the cities of Herculaneum and Pompeii by an eruption of the volcano Vesuvius in AD 79.

Domitian

Titus Flavius Domitianus Augustus

Born on 24 October AD 51 in Rome, younger son of Vespasian and Flavia Domitilla. Became emperor in 14 September AD 81. Married Domitia Longina (no children). Murdered on 18 September AD 96.

Titus left no son and was hence succeeded by his brother Domitian in AD 81, who left to posterity a reputation among the worst of all Roman emperors. The combination of personal depravity with superstitious fanaticism in him led to disaster. It drew him into the encouraging of some vile people and the revival of many of the worst excesses of Nero's reign, oddly accompanied by social legislation of the puritanical kind.

At the outset Domitian sought military glory, but his participation in frontier campaigns achieved little. The most creditable feature of Domitian's reign was the governorship of Britain by Gnaeus Julius Agricola (AD 37-93), for which though Domitian was not responsible, but which he jealously terminated in AD 85.

Agricola had been appointed to Britain by Vespasian in AD 78 and had since not only advanced the border to the line from the Solway Firth to the Tyne (the later position for Hadrian's Wall), but also partially subjugated the lowlands of Caledonia and advanced into the Highlands and there inflicted a heavy defeat on the Picts.

Domitian excited less terror but hardly less disgust in his latter years than Nero. Rome endured him with growing anxiety and displeasure, but only one serious revolt was ever attempted against him. Lucius Antoninus Saturninus who was in command of two legions along the Rhine, tried to follow the example of Galba, but was quickly overthrown by another officer.

The only effect of the rebellion was to increase the suspicion and fears of the emperor and intensify the worst traits of his character.

Bad as he was, no one wanted a renewal of the armed contests for the position of emperor.

However, a major plot against Domitian, including the praetorian prefects, several senators and even the emperor's wife, succeeded and the hated emperor was assassinated.

History of the Herod's

Herod Genealogy

Herod the Great

(Matt. 2:1-22; Luke 1:5; Acts 23:35)

The son of Antipater, an Idumaeen, and Cypros, an Arabian of noble descent

In the year B.C. 47 Julius [Caesar](#) made Antipater, a "wily [Idumaeen](#)," procurator of [Judea](#), who divided his territories between his four sons, Galilee falling to the lot of Herod, who was afterwards appointed tetrarch of Judea by Mark Antony (B.C. 40), and also king of Judea by the Roman senate.

He was of a stern and cruel disposition. "He was brutish and a stranger to all humanity." Alarmed by the tidings of one "born King of the Jews," he sent forth and "slew all the children that were in [Bethlehem](#), and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under" (Matt. 2:16). He was fond of splendour, and lavished great sums in rebuilding and adorning the cities of his empire. He rebuilt the city of [Caesarea](#) (q.v.) on the coast, and also the city of Samaria (q.v.), which he called Sebaste, in honor of Augustus. He restored the ruined temple of Jerusalem, a work which was begun B.C. 20, but was not finished till after Herod's death, probably not till about A.D. 50 (John 2:20). After a troubled reign of thirty-seven years, he died at Jericho amid great agonies both of body and mind, B.C. 4, i.e., according to the common [chronology](#), in the year in which Jesus was born.

After his death his kingdom was divided among three of his sons. Of these, Philip had the land east of Jordan, between Caesarea Philippi and [Bethabara](#), [Antipas](#) had Galilee and Peraea, while [Archelaus](#) had Judea and Samaria.

Herod Antipas

Herod's son by Malthace (Matt. 14:1; Luke 3:1, 19; 9:7; Acts 13:1). (See [ANTIPAS](#).)

Herod Antipas (short for Antipatros) (before 20 BC – after AD 39) was an ancient leader ([tetrarch](#), meaning "ruler of a quarter") of [Galilee](#) and [Perea](#). He is best known today for his role in the events that led to the executions of [John the Baptist](#) and [Jesus of Nazareth](#), both from the accounts of these events in the [New Testament](#) and their portrayal in modern media such as [film](#).

Herod Archelaus

The brother of [Antipas](#) (q.v.) (Matt. 2:22)

Herod Philip I

The son of [Herod the Great](#) by Mariamne, the daughter of Simon, the high priest (Mark 6:17)

He is distinguished from another Philip called "the tetrarch." He lived at Rome as a private person with his wife [Herodias](#) and his daughter Salome.

Herod Philip II

The son of [Herod the Great](#) and Cleopatra of Jerusalem

He was "tetrarch" of Batanea, Iturea, Trachonitis, and Auranitis. He rebuilt the city of Caesarea Philippi, calling it by his own name to distinguish it from the Caesarea on the sea-coast which was the seat of the Roman government. He married Salome, the daughter of Herodias (Matt. 16:13; Mark 8:27; Luke 3:1).

Herod Agrippa I.

Son of [Aristobulus](#) and [Bernice](#), and grandson of [Herod the Great](#)

He was made tetrarch of the provinces formerly held by [Lysanias II.](#), and ultimately possessed the entire kingdom of his grandfather, Herod the Great, with the title of king. He put the apostle James the elder to death, and cast Peter into [prison](#) (Luke 3:1; Acts 12:1-19). On the second day of a festival held in honor of the emperor [Claudius](#), he appeared in the great theatre of [Caesarea](#). "The king came in clothed in magnificent robes, of which silver was the costly brilliant material. It was early in the day, and the sun's rays fell on the king, so that the eyes of the beholders were dazzled with the brightness which surrounded him. Voices here and there from

the crowd exclaimed that it was the apparition of something divine. And when he spoke and made an oration to them, they gave a shout, saying, 'It is the voice of a god, and not of a man.' But in the midst of this idolatrous ostentation an angel of God suddenly smote him. He was carried out of the theatre a dying man." He died (A.D. 44) of the same loathsome malady which slew his grandfather (Acts. 12:21-23), in the fifty-fourth year of his age, having reigned four years as tetrarch and three as king over the whole of Palestine. After his death his kingdom came under the control of the prefect of Syria, and Palestine was now fully incorporated with the empire.

Temple, Herod's

The temple erected by the [exiles](#) on their return from Babylon had stood for about five hundred years, when [Herod the Great](#) became king of [Judea](#). The [building](#) had suffered considerably from natural decay as well as from the assaults of hostile armies, and Herod, desirous of gaining the favor of the Jews, proposed to rebuild it. This offer was accepted, and the work was begun (B.C. 18), and carried out at great labor and expense, and on a scale of surpassing splendour.

The main part of the [building](#) was completed in ten years, but the erection of the outer courts and the embellishment of the whole were carried on during the entire period of our Lord's life on earth ([John 2:16, 19-21](#)), and the temple was completed only A.D. 65. But it was not long permitted to exist. Within forty years after our Lord's [crucifixion](#), his prediction of its overthrow was accomplished ([Luke 19: 41-44](#)). [The Roman legions took the city of Jerusalem by storm, and notwithstanding the strenuous efforts Titus made to preserve the temple, his soldiers set fire to it in several places, and it was utterly destroyed \(A.D. 70\), and was never rebuilt.](#)

Several remains of Herod's stately temple have by recent explorations been brought to light. It had two courts, one intended for the Israelites only, and the other, a large outer court, called "the court of the Gentiles," intended for the use of strangers of all nations. These two courts were separated by a low wall, as Josephus states, some 4 1/2 feet high, with thirteen openings. Along the top of this dividing wall, at regular intervals, were placed pillars bearing in Greek an inscription to the effect that no stranger was, on the pain of death, to pass from the court of the Gentiles into that of the Jews. At the entrance to a graveyard at the northwestern angle of the

Haram wall, a stone was discovered by M. Ganneau in 1871, built into the wall, bearing the following inscription in Greek capitals: "No stranger is to enter within the partition wall and enclosure around the sanctuary. Whoever is caught will be responsible to himself for his death, which will ensue."

There can be no doubt that the stone thus discovered was one of those originally placed on the boundary wall which separated the Jews from the Gentiles, of which Josephus speaks.

It is of importance to notice that the word rendered "sanctuary" in the inscription was used in a specific sense of the inner court, the court of the Israelites, and is the word rendered "temple" in [John 2:15](#) and [Acts 21:28, 29](#). When [Paul](#) speaks of the middle wall of partition ([Eph. 2:14](#)), he probably makes allusion to this dividing wall. Within this partition wall stood the temple proper, consisting of:

1. the court of the women, 8 feet higher than the outer court
2. 10 feet higher than this court was the court of Israel
3. the court of the priests, again 3 feet higher
4. the temple floor, 8 feet above that

Thus in all 29 feet above the level of the outer court.

The summit of Mount [Moriah](#), on which the temple stood, is now occupied by the Haram esh-Sherif, i.e., "the sacred enclosure." This enclosure is about 1,500 feet from north to south, with a breadth of about 1,000 feet, covering in all a space of about 35 acres. About the center of the enclosure is a raised platform, 16 feet above the surrounding space, and paved with large stone slabs, on which stands the Islamic mosque called Kubbet es-Sahkra i.e., the "Dome of the Rock," or the Mosque of Omar. This mosque covers the site of [Solomon's temple](#). In the center of the dome there is a bare, projecting rock, the highest part of Moriah (q.v.), measuring 60 feet by 40, standing 6 feet above the floor of the mosque, called the sahkra, i.e., "rock."

Over this rock the [altar](#) of burnt-offerings stood. It was the threshing-floor of [Araunah](#) the [Jebusite](#). The exact position on this "sacred enclosure" which the temple occupied has not been yet definitely ascertained. Some affirm that Herod's temple covered the site of Solomon's temple and [palace](#), and in addition enclosed a square of 300 feet at the southwestern angle. The temple courts thus are supposed to have occupied the southern portion of the "enclosure,"

forming in all a square of more than 900 feet. It is argued by others that Herod's temple occupied a square of 600 feet at the southwest of the "enclosure."

Herodians

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The **Herodians** were a [sect](#) or party mentioned in the [New Testament](#) as having on two occasions--once in [Galilee](#), and again in [Jerusalem](#)--manifested an unfriendly disposition towards [Jesus](#) ([Mark 3:6](#), [12:13](#); [Matthew 22:16](#); cf. also [Mark 8:15](#), [Luke 13:31-32](#), [Acts 4:27](#)).

In each of these cases their name is coupled with that of the [Pharisees](#). According to many interpreters the courtiers or soldiers of [Herod Antipas](#) ("Milites Herodis," [Jerome](#)) are intended; but more probably the Herodians were a public political party, who distinguished themselves from the two great historical parties of post-exilic Judaism (Pharisees and [Sadducees](#)) by the fact that they were and had been sincerely friendly to [Herod the Great](#), the [King of the Jews](#), and to his [dynasty](#) (cf. such formations as "Caesariani," "Pompeiani").

It is possible that, to gain adherents, the Herodian party may have been in the habit of representing that the establishment of a [Herodian Dynasty](#) would be favourable to the realization of the theocracy; and this in turn may account for [Tertullian's](#) (*De praescr.*) allegation that the Herodians regarded Herod himself as the [Messiah](#). The sect was called by the Rabbis [Boethusians](#) as being friendly to the family of [Boethus](#), whose daughter [Mariamne](#) was one of Herod the Great's wives

Herodian Dynasty



The **Herodian Dynasty** was a [Jewish dynasty](#) of [Idumean](#) descent, who ruled [Judea Province](#) between 37 BC - AD 92.

Coin of Herod the Great

Origin

During the time of the [Hasmonean](#) ruler [John Hyrcanus](#), Judea conquered [Edom](#) (which the Romans called Idumea) and forced the [Edomites](#) to convert to [Judaism](#).

The Edomites were integrated into the Jewish people. In the days of [Alexander Jannaeus](#) one of them, [Antipas](#) was appointed governor of Edom.

His son [Antipater](#) was the head adviser of [Hyrcanus II](#) and managed to establish a good relationship with the [Romans](#), who at that time (63 BC) had conquered Judea.

[Julius Caesar](#) appointed Antipater to be procurator of Judea in 47 BC and he appointed his sons [Phasael](#) and [Herod](#) to be governors of [Jerusalem](#) and [Galilee](#) respectively.

Antipater was murdered in 43 BC, however his sons managed to hold the reins of powers and were elevated to the rank of tetrarch in 41 BC by [Mark Anthony](#).

Rise to power

In 40 BC the [Parthians](#) invaded the Roman eastern provinces and managed to expel the Romans. In Judea the Hasmonean dynasty was restored under king [Antigonus](#).

[Herod the Great](#), who was the son of [Antipater the Idumean](#) and Cypros, a [Nabataean](#) princess, managed to escape to Rome. There he was elected "[King of the Jews](#)" by the [Roman Senate](#)^[1]. However Herod did not fully conquer Judea until [37 BC](#). He ruled for 34 years.

Herod ruled Judea until 4 BC; at his death his kingdom was divided between his three sons.

[Herod Archelaus](#), son of Herod and Malthace the [Samaritan](#), was given the main part of the kingdom, Judea, Edom and Samaria. He ruled for ten years until 6 AD when he was "banished to [Vienne](#) in [Gaul](#), where—according to Dion Cassius Cocceianus, "Hist. Roma," lv. 27—he lived for the remainder of his days."^[2] See also [Census of Quirinius](#).

[Herod Philip I](#), son of Herod and his fifth wife Cleopatra of Jerusalem, was given jurisdiction over the northeast part of his father's kingdom; he ruled there until his death in 34.

[Herod Antipas](#), another son of Herod and Malthace, was made ruler of the [Galilee](#) and [Perea](#); he ruled there until he was exiled to [Spain](#) by emperor [Caligula](#) in 39.

[Agrippa I](#) was the grandson of Herod; thanks to his friendship with emperor Caligula he was appointed by him as ruler of the territories of Herod Philip after his death in 34, and in 39 he was given the territories of Herod Antipas. In 41 emperor [Claudius](#) added to his territory the parts of Iudea province that previously belonged to Herod Archelaus. Thus Agrippa re-united his grandfathers kingdom under his rule. He died in 44.

His son [Agrippa II](#) was appointed King and ruler of the northern parts of his fathers kingdom. He was the last of the [Herodians](#), and with his death in 92 the dynasty was extinct.

In addition some members of the Herodian dynasty were rulers of [Chalcis](#) and [Armenia](#).

References

[Jewish War - Mark Antony](#) " ...then resolved to get him made king of the Jews... told them that it was for their advantage in the [Parthian](#) war that Herod should be king; so they all gave their votes for it. And when the senate was separated, Antony and [Caesar](#) went out, with Herod between them; while the consul and the rest of the magistrates went before them, in order to offer sacrifices [to the Roman gods], and to lay the decree in the Capitol. Antony also made a feast for Herod on the first day of his reign."

Maccabees

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For other uses, see [Maccabees \(disambiguation\)](#).

Revolt of the Maccabees	
 <p>The Hasmonean Kingdom, 1st Century BCE</p>	
The Hasmonean Kingdom	
Date	167 BC-160 BC
Location	The Land of Israel
<i>Casus belli</i>	Antiochus' decrees forbidding Jewish religious practices
Result	Establishment of the Hasmonean kingdom
Territorial changes	Jews regained control over the Land of Israel
Combatants	
Jews of Judea	Seleucid Empire
Commanders	
Mattathias , Judah Maccabee , Jonathan Maccabeus	Antiochus IV Epiphanes Lysias Gorgias Nicanor

The **Maccabees** ([Hebrew](#): [מַכַּבִּים](#) or [מַקַּבִּים](#), *Makabim*) were a [Jewish](#) national liberation movement that fought for and won independence from [Antiochus IV Epiphanes](#) of the [Hellenistic Seleucid dynasty](#), who was succeeded by his infant son [Antiochus V Eupator](#). The Maccabees founded the [Hasmonean royal dynasty](#) and established Jewish independence in the [Land of Israel](#) for about one hundred years, from [164 BC](#) to [63 BC](#). The [Roman Catholic Church](#) regarded the *Holy Maccabees* as martyrs in their [Calendar of Saints](#), although this feast was suppressed in 1969.^[1] The [Eastern Orthodox Church](#) continues to celebrate the *Holy Maccabean Martyrs* on [August 1](#), the first day of the [Dormition Fast](#).

The revolt



[Wojciech Stattler's](#) *Machabeusze* (Maccabees), 1844

In [167 BC](#), after Antiochus issued decrees in Judea forbidding Jewish religious practice, a rural Jewish [priest](#) from [Modiin](#), [Mattathias](#) the [Hasmonean](#), sparked the revolt against the Seleucid empire by refusing to worship the [Greek gods](#). Mattathias slew a [Hellenistic Jew](#) who stepped forward to offer a sacrifice to an idol in Mattathias' place. He and his five sons fled to the wilderness of [Judea](#). After Mattathias' death about one year later, his son [Judah Maccabee](#) led an army of Jewish dissidents to victory over the [Seleucid dynasty](#). The term Maccabees as used to describe the Judean's army is taken from its actual use as Judah's surname.

The revolt itself involved many individual battles, in which the Maccabean forces gained infamy among the Syrian army for their use of [guerrilla](#) tactics. After the victory, the Maccabees entered [Jerusalem](#) in triumph and ritually cleansed the [Temple](#), reestablishing traditional [Jewish worship](#) there and installing Jonathan Maccabee as high priest. A large Syrian army was sent to quash the revolt, but returned to Syria on the death of Antiochus IV. Its commander Lysias, preoccupied with internal Syrian affairs, agreed to a political compromise that provided religious freedom.

Following the re-dedication of the temple, the supporters of the Maccabees were divided over the question of whether to continue fighting. When the revolt began under the leadership of Mattathias, it was seen as a war for religious freedom to end the oppression of the Seleucids. However, as Maccabees realized how successful they had been many wanted to continue the revolt as a war of [national](#) self-determination. This

conflict led to the exacerbation of the divide between the [Pharisees](#) and [Sadducees](#) under later Hasmonean monarchs such as [Alexander Jannaeus](#).^[2]

Those who sought the continuation of the war of national identity were led by Judah Maccabee. On his death in battle in [160 BC](#), Judah was succeeded as army commander by his younger brother, Jonathan, who was already High Priest. Jonathan made treaties with various foreign states, causing further dissent among those who desired religious freedom over political power. On Jonathan's death in [142 BC](#), [Simon Maccabee](#), the last remaining son of Mattathias, took power. That same year, Demetrius II, king of Syria, granted the Jews complete political independence and Simon, great high priest and commander of the Jews, went on to found the [Hasmonean](#) dynasty. Jewish autonomy lasted until [63 BCE](#), when the Roman general Pompey captured Jerusalem and subjected Palestine to Roman rule, while the Hasmonean dynasty itself ended in [37 BC](#) when the Idumean Herod the Great became de facto king of Jerusalem.

Every year Jews celebrate [Hanukkah](#) in commemoration of Judah Maccabee's victory over the Seleucids and subsequent miracles.

Mention in Deuterocanon

The story of the Maccabees can be found in the Catholic and Orthodox Bibles in the [deuterocanonical](#) books of [1 Maccabees](#) and [2 Maccabees](#). Books of [3 Maccabees](#) and [4 Maccabees](#) are not directly related to the Maccabees.

Origin of name

The name Maccabee^[3] is sometimes seen used as synonym for the entire [Hasmonean Dynasty](#), but the Maccabees proper were Judah Maccabee and his four brothers. The name Maccabee was a personal epithet of Judah, and the later generations were not his descendants. Although there is no definitive explanation of what the term means, one suggestion is that the name derives from the Aramaic maqqaba, "the hammer", in recognition of his ferocity in battle. It is also possible that the name Maccabee is an [acronym](#) for the [Torah](#) verse "*Mi kamocho ba'elim YHWH*", "Who is like unto thee among the mighty, O Lord!" ([Exodus](#) 15:11).

Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Zealots and Sicarii -Roman Period

Political party to sect

There is a definite record of only one high priest (Ananus, in [62](#)) being a Sadducee, although some scholars assume, based purely on speculation, that the Sanhedrin was dominated by Sadducees. Nevertheless, their power severely curtailed, during the Roman period Sadducees are better understood as a sect rather than a political party. Similarly, the Pharisees were politically quiescent, and studied, taught, and worshiped in their own way. Although popular and respected, they had no political power. Rather, they only had the power of persuasion.

During this period serious theological differences emerged between the Sadducees and Pharisees. Although the Essene lack of concern for the Second Temple alienated them from the great mass of Jews, their notion that the sacred could exist outside of the Temple was shared and elevated by the Pharisees.

Many, including some scholars, have characterized the Sadducees as a sect that interpreted the Torah literally, and the Pharisees as interpreting the Torah liberally. R' [Yitchak Isaac Halevi](#) (who takes the above view) suggests that this was not, in fact, a matter of religion. He claims that as complete rejection of Judaism would not have been tolerated under the Hasmonean rule, Hellenists maintained that they were rejecting not Judaism but Rabbinic law. Thus, the Sadducees were in fact a political party not a religious sect (*Dorot Ha'Rishonim*).

According to Jacob Neusner (1998:40), this view is a distortion. He suggests that two things fundamentally distinguished the Pharisaic from the Sadducean approach to the Torah. First, Pharisees interpreted Exodus 19:3-6 literally:

And Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him out of the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel: You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples; for all the earth is mine, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel."

Or, in the words of [2 Maccabees](#) 2:17, Pharisees believed that "God gave all the people the heritage, the kingdom, the priesthood, and the holiness."

The Pharisees believed that the idea that all of the children of Israel were to be like priests was expressed elsewhere in the [Torah](#), for example, when the Law itself was transferred from the sphere of the priesthood to every man in Israel ([Exodus](#) 19: 29-24; [Deuteronomy](#) 6: 7, 11: 19; comp. 31: 9; [Jeremiah](#) 2: 8, 18:18). Moreover, the Torah already provided some ways for all Jews to lead a priestly life: the [precepts concerning unclean meat](#) were perhaps intended originally for the priests, but were extended to the whole people ([Leviticus](#) 11; [Deuteronomy](#) 14:3-21); the prohibition of cutting the flesh in mourning for the dead ([Deuteronomy](#) 14: 1-2, [Leviticus](#) 19: 28; comp. Lev. 21: 5). The Pharisees believed that all

Jews in their ordinary life, and not just the Temple priesthood or Jews visiting the Temple, should observe rules and rituals concerning purification.

Second, the Pharisees believed that there were two Torahs. In addition to the Torah recognized by both the Sadducees and Pharisees and believed to have been written by Moses, the Pharisees believed that there was another Torah. They referred to the five books of Moses as the "Written Torah," and the corpus of oral laws and traditions as the "Oral Torah," because it was not written down but was rather transmitted by God to Moses orally, and was then memorized and then passed down orally by Moses and his successors over the generations. In other words, they did not interpret the Written Torah literally; rather, they asserted that the sacred scriptures were not complete and could therefore not be understood on their own terms. The Oral Torah functioned to elaborate and explicate what was written; it is unclear whether or not the Pharisees and later rabbis believed they were interpreting the Torah. The sages of the Talmud believed that the Oral law was simultaneously revealed to Moses at Sinai, *and* the product of debates among rabbis. Thus, one may conceive of the "Oral Torah" not as a fixed text but as an ongoing process of analysis and argument; this is an ongoing process in which God is actively involved; it was this ongoing process that was revealed at Sinai, and by participating in this ongoing process rabbis and their students are actively participating in God's ongoing revelation. That is, "revelation" is not a single act, and "Torah" is not a single or fixed text. It is this ongoing process of analysis and argument that is itself the substance of God's revelation. As Jacob Neusner has explained, the schools of the Pharisees and rabbis were and are holy because there men achieve sainthood through study of Torah and imitation of the conduct of the masters. In doing so, they conform to the heavenly paradigm, the Torah believed to have been created by God "in his image," revealed at Sinai, and handed down to their own teachers ... If the masters and disciples obey the divine teaching of Moses, "our rabbi," then their society, the school, replicates on earth the heavenly academy, just as the disciple incarnates the heavenly model of Moses, "our rabbi." The rabbis believe that Moses was (and the Messiah will be) a rabbi, God dons phylacteries, and the heavenly court studies Torah precisely as does the earthly one, even arguing about the same questions. These beliefs today may seem as projections of rabbinical values onto heaven, but the rabbis believe that they themselves are projections of heavenly values onto earth. The rabbis thus conceive that on earth they study Torah just as God, the angels, and Moses, "our rabbi," do in heaven. The heavenly schoolmen are even aware of Babylonian scholastic discussions, so they require a rabbi's information about an aspect of purity taboos. (1998: 8).

Finally, unlike the Sadducees, the Pharisees also believed in the [resurrection of the dead](#) in a future, messianic age. The Pharisees believed in a literal resurrection of the body^[2].

Pharisees

The word **Pharisees** comes from the [Hebrew](#) פְּרוּשִׁים *prushim* from פָּרוּשׁ *parush*, meaning "separated" , that is, one who is separated for a life of purity (Ernest Klein, *Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the Hebrew Language*). The Pharisees were, depending on the time, a political party, a social movement, and a school of thought among Jews that flourished during the [Second Temple](#) Era (536 BCE–70 CE). After the destruction of the Second Temple, the Pharisaic sect was re-established as [Rabbinic Judaism](#) — which ultimately produced normative, traditional Judaism, the basis for all contemporary forms of Judaism, including to some extent the [Karaites](#)^[1].

Relationship to other movements

The relationship between the Pharisees and Rabbinic Judaism (exemplified by the [Talmud](#)) is so close that many do not distinguish between the two. Nevertheless, the social standing and beliefs of the Pharisees changed over time, as political and social conditions in Judea changed.

More specifically, the Pharisees were one of the successor groups of the [Hasidim](#) (the "pious"), an anti-Hellenic Jewish movement that formed in the time of the [Seleucid](#) king, [Antiochus Epiphanes](#) (175–163 BCE). (This group is distinct from the [Hasidism](#) established in 18th century Europe.) The first mention of the Pharisees is by the Jewish-Roman historian [Josephus](#), in a description of the four "schools of thought" (that is, social groups or movements) into which the Jews were divided in the [1st century CE](#). The other schools were the [Essenes](#), revolutionaries, and the [Sadducees](#). The Essenes were apolitical; the revolutionaries, such as the [Sicarii](#) and the [Zealots](#), emerged specifically to resist the [Roman Empire](#). Other sects emerged at this time, such as the [Christians](#) in [Judea](#) and the [Therapeutae](#) in [Egypt](#). The Sadducees and Pharisees began earlier, as political factions in the [Hellenistic Hasmonean](#) period of the Second Temple era. At no time did any of these sects constitute a majority; most Jews were non-sectarian. However, Josephus indicates that the Pharisees received the backing and good-will of the common people. Nevertheless, these sects are emblematic of the different responses of Jews to the political, economic, and cultural forces that characterized the Second Temple era.

For most of their history, Pharisees considered themselves in opposition to the Sadducees. Conflicts between the Sadducees and the Pharisees took place in the context of much broader conflicts among Jews in the [Second Temple](#) era, which followed the [Babylonian captivity of Judah](#). One conflict was class, between the wealthy and the poor. Another conflict was cultural, between those who favored [hellenization](#) and those who resisted it. A third was juridico-religious, between those who emphasized the importance of the Temple, and those who emphasized the importance of other Mosaic laws and prophetic values. A fourth, specifically religious, involved different interpretations of the Bible (or [Tanakh](#)), and how to apply the Torah to Jewish life. These conflicts, practically speaking, define the Second Temple Era, a time when the Temple had tremendous authority but questionable legitimacy, and a time when the sacred literature of the Torah, and Bible or Tanakh were being canonized. Fundamentally, Sadducees and Pharisees took clearly opposing positions concerning the third and fourth conflicts, but at different times were influenced by the other conflicts. In general, whereas the Sadducees were conservative, aristocratic monarchists, the Pharisees were eclectic, popular and more democratic. (Roth 1970: 84) The Pharisaic position is exemplified by the assertion that "A learned *mamzer* takes precedence over an ignorant High Priest." (A *mamzer*, according to the Pharasaic definition, is an outcast child born of a forbidden relationship, such as adultery or incest; the word is often, but incorrectly, translated as "illegitimate" or "bastard.")

Background: religion of ancient Israel

Although the Pharisees did not emerge until the Hasmonean period, their origins, like those of the Sadducees, may be traced to institutions that developed during the First Temple era. The religion of ancient Israel was centered on a Temple and served by a caste of [priests](#), who sacrificed [offerings](#) to the [God](#) of Israel. Among the Children of Israel, [Kohanim](#) (priests) claimed descent from [Aaron](#) of the tribe of [Levi](#), and were believed to have been chosen by God to serve God in the [Tabernacle](#) during Israel's wanderings in the desert. After the settlement of the land of Canaan, a number of sites served as centers of worship and the priestly service, including Shiloh.

In ancient Israel, as in most ancient Near Eastern societies, the institution of the priesthood was closely tied with the monarchy. According to the [Tanakh](#), after a period of decentralized and un-institutionalized political authority (described in the book of [Judges](#)), the Children of Israel demanded that God provide them with a king. At first, [Samuel](#) (who may be considered the last judge) anointed [Saul](#) of the tribe of Benjamin; later he anointed [David](#) of the tribe of Judah, and established the House of David as the definitive royal line.

The religious authority of the Kohanim was centralized and institutionalized with the construction of [Temple in Jerusalem](#) around [950 BCE](#), and when the [Kohen Gadol](#) (high priest) Zadok anointed Solomon king. Priests during the [First Temple](#) Era (from around [950 BCE](#) to [586 BCE](#)) were limited to the Temple service and interpreting and teaching Torah; political power officially rested in the hands of a king who ruled, according to the Tanakh, by divine right.

Although sharing the practice of offering [sacrifices](#) with other near eastern religions of the time, the Children of Israel also had sacred texts (the [Torah](#), or Five Books of Moses) which contained moral stories and teachings, as well as laws, which provided all people with ways to worship their God in the course of their everyday lives. [Prophets](#), inspired by God and by the values and teachings embodied in the sacred texts, however, often criticized the king, elites, or the masses and provided another potent political force.

Both the Temple and the Monarchy were destroyed by the [Babylonians](#) in [586 BCE](#), and most Jews were sent into exile.

From Pharisees to rabbis

Revolutionaries like the Zealots had been crushed by the Romans, and had little credibility (the last Zealots died at [Masada](#) in [73 CE](#)). Similarly, the Sadducees, whose teachings were so closely connected to the Temple cult, disappeared. The Essenes too disappeared, perhaps because their teachings so diverged from the concerns of the times.

Sadducees

The [sect](#) of the **Sadducees** - possibly from Hebrew **Tsdoki** צדוקי [sʰə.ðo.'qi], whence **Zadokites** or other variants - was founded in the [2nd century BCE](#), possibly as a political party, and ceased to exist sometime after the [1st century CE](#).

Etymology

The [Hebrew](#) name, Tsdoki, indicates their claim that they are the followers of the teachings of the High Priest Tsadok, often spelled [Zadok](#), who anointed [Solomon](#) king at the start of the [First Temple Period](#). F. Bruce claims that this explanation is unlikely since they make their *début* in history as supporters of the Hasmonaean high priests. He therefore suggests that 'Sadducees' (Heb. צדוקים) is a Hebraization of the Greek word συνδικοι *sündikoi* ('syndics', 'members of the council') and that it marks them out as the councillors of the Hasmonaean; although they themselves came to associate the word with the Heb. צדק, 'righteous'.^[1]

Rabbinic tradition suggests that they were not named after the High Priest Zadok, but rather another Zadok (who may still have been a priest), who rebelled against the teachings of [Antigonus of Soko](#), a government official of Judea in the [3rd century BCE](#) and a predecessor of the Rabbinic tradition.

Sadducee History

While little or none of their own writings have been preserved, the Sadducees seem to have indeed been a [priestly](#) group, associated with the leadership of the [Temple in Jerusalem](#). Possibly, Sadducees represent the aristocratic clan of the [Hasmonean high priests](#), who replaced the previous high priestly lineage that had allowed the Syrian Emperor [Antiochus IV Epiphanes](#) to desecrate the Temple of Jerusalem with idolatrous sacrifices and to martyr monotheistic Jews. The Jewish holiday of [Hanukkah](#) celebrates the ousting of the Syrian forces, the rededication of the Temple, and the installment of the new Hasmonean priestly line. The Hasmoneans ruled as "priest-kings", claiming both titles high priest and king simultaneously, and like other aristocracies across the Hellenistic world became increasingly influenced by Hellenistic [syncretism](#) and Greek philosophies: presumably [Stoicism](#), and apparently [Epicureanism](#) if the Talmudic tradition criticizing the anti-Torah philosophy of the "Apikorsus" אפיקורסוס (i.e., Epicurus) refers to the Hasmonean clan qua Sadducees. Like Epicureans, Sadducees rejected the existence of an [afterlife](#), thus denied the Pharisaic doctrine of the Resurrection of the Dead.

The [Dead Sea Scrolls](#) community, who are probably [Essenes](#), were led by a high priestly leadership, who are thought to be the descendents of the "legitimate" high priestly lineage, which the Hasmoneans ousted. The Dead Sea Scrolls bitterly opposed the current high priests of the Temple. Since Hasmoneans constituted a different priestly line, it was in their political interest to emphasize their family's priestly pedigree that descended from their ancestor, the high priest Zadok, who had the authority to anoint the kingship of Solomon, son of David.

Most of what is known about the Sadducees comes from [Josephus](#), who wrote that they were a quarrelsome group whose followers were wealthy and powerful, and that he considered them boorish in social interactions (see Josephus's [Wars of the Jews, Book II, Chapter VIII, Paragraph 14](#)). We know something of them from discussions in the [Talmud](#) (mainly the Jerusalem), the core work of [rabbinic](#) Judaism, which is based on the teachings of [Pharisaic](#) Judaism.

Sadducee Beliefs

Sadducees rejected certain beliefs of the Pharisaic interpretation of the [Torah](#). They rejected the Pharisaic tenet of an oral Torah, and interpreted the verses literally. In their personal lives this often meant a more stringent lifestyle, as they did away with the ability to interpret.

R' Yitchak [Isaac Halevi](#) suggests that while there is evidence of a Sadducee sect from the times of Ezra, It emerged as major force only after the [Hashmenite rebellion](#). The reason for this was not, in fact, a matter of religion. He claims that as complete rejection of Judaism would not have been tolerated under the Hasmonean rule, the Hellenists joined the Sadducees maintaining that they were rejecting not Judaism but Rabbinic law. Thus, the Sadducees were for the most part a political party and not a religious sect (*Dorot Ha'Rishonim*).

However there is evidence^[2] that there was an internal schism among those called "Sadducees" - some who rejected Angels, the Soul, and Resurrection - and some which accepted these teachings and the entirety of the Hebrew Bible.

In regard to criminal jurisdiction they were so rigorous that the day on which their code was abolished by the Pharisaic Sanhedrin under [Simeon ben Shetah](#)'s leadership, during the reign of Salome Alexandra, was celebrated as a festival. The Sadducees are said to have insisted on the literal execution of the law of retaliation: "Eye for eye, tooth for tooth", which pharisaic Judaism, and later rabbinic Judaism, rejected. On the other hand, they would not inflict the [death penalty](#) on false witnesses in a case where capital punishment had been wrongfully carried out, unless the accused had been executed solely in consequence of the testimony of such witnesses.

According to the Talmud, they granted the daughter the same right of inheritance as the son in case the son was dead.(see chapter Yeish Nochalin of the Babylonian Talmud, tractate Bava Batra) Emet L' Yaakov explains that the focus of their argument was theological. The question was whether there is an afterlife (see above), and if there is, can the dead person be in the line of inheritance as if they were alive.

According to the Talmud, they contended that the seven weeks from the first barley-sheaf-offering ("omer") to [Shavuot](#) ([Pentecost](#) in Christian reference) should, according to [Leviticus](#) 23:15-16, be counted from "the day after Sabbath," and, consequently, that Shavuot should always be celebrated on the first day of the week (Meg. Ta'an. i.; Men. 65a). In this they followed a literal reading of the Bible which regards the festival of the firstlings as having no direct connection with Passover, while the Pharisees, connecting the festival of the Exodus with the festival of the giving of the Law, interpreted the "morrow after the Sabbath" to signify the second day of Passover.

In regard to rituals at the Temple in Jerusalem:

- They held that the daily [burnt offerings](#) were to be offered by the high priest at his own expense, whereas the Pharisees contended that they were to be furnished as a national [sacrifice](#) at the cost of the Temple treasury into which taxes were paid.
- They held that the meal offering belonged to the priest's portion; whereas the Pharisees claimed it for the altar.
- They insisted on an especially high degree of purity in those who officiated at the preparation of the ashes of the [Red Heifer](#). The Pharisees, by contrast, opposed such strictness.
- They declared that the kindling of the incense in the vessel with which the high priest entered the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement ([Yom Kippur](#)) was to take place outside, so that he might be wrapped in smoke while meeting the [Shekhinah](#) within, according to Lev. xvi. 2; whereas the Pharisees, denying the high priest the claim of such supernatural vision, insisted that the incense be kindled within.
- They opposed the popular festivity of the water libation and the procession preceding it on each night of the [Sukkot](#) feast.

- They opposed the Pharisaic assertion that the scrolls of the Holy Scriptures have, like any holy vessel, the power to render ritually unclean the hands that touch them.
- They opposed the Pharisaic idea of the *eruv*, the merging of several private precincts into one in order to admit of the carrying of food and vessels from one house to another on the Sabbath.
- In dating all civil documents they used the phrase "after the high priest of the Most High," and they opposed the formula introduced by the Pharisees in divorce documents, "According to the law of Moses and Israel".
- [Ben Sira](#), one of the [Deuterocanonical books](#), is believed by many scholars to have been by a Sadducee ^[*citation needed*]. (Note, the Talmud says clearly he was rejected by the Sadducees.)

Reliability of claims

None of the writings we have about Sadducees present their own side of these controversies, and it is possible that positions attributed to "Sadducees" in later literature are meant as [rhetorical](#) foils for whatever opinion the author wishes to present, and do not in fact represent the teachings of the sect. Yet, although these texts were written long after these periods, many scholars have said that they are a fairly reliable account of history during the Second Temple era.

Legendary origin of Sadducees

Josephus relates nothing concerning the origin of the Sadducees; he knows only that the three "sects" — the Pharisees, [Essenes](#), and Sadducees — dated back to "very ancient times" (Ant. xviii. 1, § 2), which point to a time prior to [John Hyrcanus](#) (ib. xiii. 8, § 6) or the Maccabean war (ib. xiii. 5, § 9).

Among the rabbis of the second century the following legend circulated: [Antigonus of Soko](#), successor of [Simeon the Just](#), the last of the [Men of the Great Assembly](#), and consequently living at the time of the influx of Hellenistic ideas (i.e., [Hellenization](#)), taught the maxim, "Be not like servants who serve their master for the sake of a reward, but be rather like those who serve without thought of receiving a reward" (Avot 1:3); whereupon two of his disciples, Zadok and [Boethus](#), mistaking the high ethical purport of the maxim, arrived at the conclusion that there was no future retribution, saying, "What servant would work all day without obtaining his due reward in the evening?" Instantly they broke away from the Law and lived in great luxury, using many silver and gold vessels at their banquets; and they established schools which declared the enjoyment of this life to be the goal of man, at the same time pitying the Pharisees for their bitter privation in this world with no hope of another world to compensate them. These two schools were called, after their founders, Sadducees and [Boethusians](#).

New Testament/Greek Scriptures

The Sadducees are mentioned in the [New Testament/Greek Scriptures](#) of the [Christian Bible](#). The [Gospel of Matthew](#) indicates that the Sadducees did not believe in the [resurrection](#) of the dead. [Matthew 22:29](#), 31-32 says:

²⁹ In reply [Jesus](#) said to them: “You are mistaken, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of [God](#) ... [30] ... ³¹ As regards the resurrection of the dead, did you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, ³² ‘I am the God of [Abraham](#) and the God of [Isaac](#) and the God of [Jacob](#)’? He is the God, not of the dead, but of the living.”

The Acts of the Apostles likewise indicates that Sadducees did not share the Pharisees’ belief in a resurrection; Paul starts a conflict during his trial, by claiming that his accusers were motivated by his advocacy of the doctrine of the resurrection (in an aside, Acts 23:8 asserts that “The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, or angel, or spirit; but the Pharisees acknowledge all three”).

The End of the Sadducees

Being associated closely with the Temple in Jerusalem, after the Temple was destroyed in 70 CE the Sadducees vanish from history as a group. There is, however, some evidence that Sadducees survived as a minority group within Judaism up until early medieval times. In refutations of Sadducean beliefs, [Karaites](#) Sages such as [Ya'akov al-Qirqisani](#) quoted one of their texts, which was called *Sefer Zadok*. Translations into English of some of these quotes can be found in Zvi Cahn's "*Rise of the Karaite sect*".

Essenes

Contemporary ancient sources

The main source of information about the life and belief of Essenes is the detailed account contained in a work of the 1st century Jewish historiographer Flavius [Josephus](#) entitled *The Jewish War* written about 73-75 AD (*War* 2.119-161) and his shorter description in his *Antiquities of the Jews* finished some 20 years later (*Ant.* 18.11 & 18-22). Claiming first hand knowledge (*Life* §§10-11), he refers to them by the name *Essenoi* and lists them as the followers of one of the three sects in "Jewish Philosophy" (*War* 2.119) alongside the [Pharisees](#) and the [Sadducees](#). The only other known contemporary accounts about the Essenes are two similarly detailed ones by the Jewish philosopher [Philo](#) (fl. c. 20 AD - c. 54 AD; *Quod Omnis Probus Liber Sit* XII.75-87, and the excerpt from his *Hypothetica* 11.1-18 preserved by [Eusebius](#), *Praep. Evang.* Bk VIII), who, however, admits to not being quite certain of the Greek form of their name that he recalls as *Essaioi* (*Quod Omn. Prob.* XII.75), the brief reference to them by the Roman [equestrian Pliny the Elder](#) (fl. 23 AD - 79 AD; *Natural History*, Bk 5.73). Pliny, also a geographer and explorer, located them in the desert near the northwestern shore of the [Dead Sea](#), where the [Dead Sea Scrolls](#) were discovered in 1947.

The Dead Sea Scrolls, found in caves at [Qumran](#), are widely believed to be the work of Essenes or to reflect Essene beliefs. See [below](#).

Essenes Name

[Josephus](#) uses the name *Essenes* in his two main accounts (*War* 2.119, 158, 160; *Ant.* 13.171-2) as well as in some other contexts ("an account of the Essenes", *Ant.* 13.298; "the gate of the Essenes", *War* 5.145; "Judah of the Essene race", *Ant.* 13.311, but some manuscripts read here *Essaion*; "holding the Essenes in honour", *Ant.* 15.372; "a certain Essene named Manaemus", *Ant.* 15.373; "to hold all Essenes in honour",

Ant. 15.378; "the Essenes", *Ant.* 18.11 & 18; *Life* 10). In several places, however, Josephus has *Essaios*, which is usually assumed to mean *Essene* ("Judas of the *Essaios* race", *War* I.78; "Simon of the *Essaios* race", *War* 2.113; "John the *Essaios*", *War* 2.567; 3.11; "those who are called by us *Essaioi*", *Ant.* 15.371; "Simon a man of the *Essaios* race", *Ant.* 17.346). Philo's usage is *Essaioi*, although he admits this Greek form of the original name that according to his etymology signifies "holiness" to be inexact (*NH* XII.75). Pliny's Latin text has *Esseni*. Josephus identified the Essenes as one of the three major Jewish sects of that period.

According to a controversial view put forward by Dead Sea Scrolls Scholar [Géza Vermes](#), both Josephus and Philo pronounced the Essenes' name as "Esaoin", which means in Arabic followers of "Esa", which Vermes says is the name of Jesus according to the most ancient mosaic portrait found in Turkey dated 70 A.D. which says underneath "Esa our Lord". Mainstream scholars usually stress a number of fundamental differences between Dead Sea Scroll theology and early Christian theology to argue that the Essenes cannot be considered identical to any kind of Christianity.

In Eerdman's *Beyond the Essene Hypothesis*, Gabriele Boccaccini (p.47) implies that a convincing etymology for the name Essene has not been found, but that the term applies to a larger group within Palestine that also included the Qumran community.

It is possible that the Talmudic statement (Kiddushin Ch. 4) "the best of the physicians will go to hell" were referring to the Essenes. The Talmudic term for healer is Assia. ([Reuvein Margolies](#) Toldot Ha'Adam).

Essenes Location

According to Josephus the Essenes had settled "not in one city" but "in large numbers in every town" (*War* 2.124). Philo speaks of "more than four thousand" *Essaioi* living in "Palestinian Syria" (*Quod Omn. Prob.* XII.75), more precisely, "in many cities of Judaea and in many villages and grouped in great societies of many members" (*Hyp.* 11.1).

Pliny locates them "on the west side of the Dead Sea, away from the coast ... [above] the town of [Engeda](#)".

Some modern scholars and archaeologists have argued that Essenes inhabited the settlement at [Qumran](#), a [plateau](#) in the [Judean Desert](#) along the [Dead Sea](#), citing [Pliny the Elder](#) in support, and giving credence that the [Dead Sea Scrolls](#) are the product of the Essenes. This view, though not yet conclusively proven, has come to dominate the scholarly discussion and public perception of the Essenes.

Josephus' reference to a "gate of the Essenes" in the Temple Mount perhaps suggests an Essene community living in this quarter of the city or regularly gathering at this part of the Temple precincts.

Essene Rules, customs, theology and beliefs

Following the qualification above that it is correct to identify the community at [Qumran](#) with the Essenes) and that the community at Qumran are the authors of the [Dead Sea Scrolls](#), then according to the Dead Sea Scrolls the Essenes' community school was called "Yahad" (meaning "oneness of God") in order to

differentiate themselves from the rest of the Jews who are repeatedly labeled "The Breakers of the Covenant", especially in their prophetic book-scroll entitled "Milhama" (meaning "The War") in which the master of the Essenes (referred to as "[The Teacher of Righteousness](#)") prophesied that the so-called "Breakers of the Covenant" Jews will be on the side of the Antichrist. The accounts by Josephus and Philo show that the Essenes (Philo: *Essaioi*) led a strictly [celibate](#) but [communal](#) life — often compared by scholars to later [Christian monastic](#) living — although Josephus speaks also of another "rank of Essenes" that did get married (*War* 2.160-161). According to Josephus, they had customs and observances such as collective ownership (*War* 2.122; *Ant.* 18.20), elected a leader to attend to the interests of them all whose orders they obeyed (*War* 2.123, 134), were forbidden from [swearing oaths](#) (*War* 2.135) and [sacrificing animals](#) (Philo, §75), controlled their temper and served as channels of peace (*War* 2.135), carried [weapons](#) only as protection against robbers (*War* 2.125), had no [slaves](#) but served each other (*Ant.* 18.21) and, as a result of communal ownership, did not engage in [trading](#) (*War* 2.127). Both Josephus and Philo have lengthy accounts of their communal meetings, meals and religious celebrations.

After a total of three years probation (*War* 2.137-138), newly joining members would take an oath that included the commitment to practice piety towards Yahweh and righteousness towards humanity, to maintain a pure life-style, to abstain from criminal and immoral activities, to transmit their rules uncorrupted and to preserve the books of the Essenes and the names of the Angels (*War* 2.139-142). Their theology included belief in the immortality of the [soul](#) and that they would receive their souls back after death (*War* 2.153-158, *Ant.* 18.18). Part of their activities included purification by water rituals, which was supported by rainwater catchment and storage.

The Church Father [Epiphanius](#) (writing in the fourth century AD) seems to make a distinction between two main groups within the Essenes [\[1\]](#): "*Of those that came before his [Elxai, an Ossaean prophet] time and during it, the Osseaens and the Nazarean.*" (Panarion 1:19). Epiphanius describes each group as following:

The Nazarean - they were Jews by nationality - originally from Gileaditis, Bashanitis and the Transjordan... They acknowledged Moses and believed that he had received laws - not this law, however, but some other. And so, they were Jews who kept all the Jewish observances, but they would not offer sacrifice or eat meat. They considered it unlawful to eat meat or make sacrifices with it. They claim that these Books are fictions, and that none of these customs were instituted by the fathers. This was the difference between the Nazarean and the others...

(Panarion 1:18)

After this [Nazarean] sect in turn comes another closely connected with them, called the Ossaeanes. These are Jews like the former ... originally came from Nabataea, Ituraea, Moabitis and Arielis, the lands beyond the basin of what sacred scripture called the Salt Sea... Though it is different from the other six of these seven sects, it causes schism only by forbidding the books of Moses like the Nazarean.

(Panarion 1:19)

Scholarly discussion

The Essenes are discussed in detail by [Josephus](#) and [Philo](#).

Many scholars believe that the community at Qumran that allegedly produced the Dead Sea Scrolls was an offshoot of the Essenes; however, this theory has been disputed by [Norman Golb](#) and other scholars.

Since the 19th century attempts have been made to connect early Christianity and Pythagoreanism with the Essenes: It was suggested that [Jesus](#) of Nazareth was an Essene, and that evolved from this sect of Judaism, with which it shared many ideas and symbols. According to [Martin A. Larson](#), the now misunderstood Essenes were Jewish [Pythagoreans](#) who lived as monks. As [vegetarian](#) celibates in self-reliant communities who shunned marriage and family, they preached a coming [war with the Sons of Darkness](#). As the Sons of Light, this reflected a separate influence from [Zoroastrianism](#) via their parent ideology of Pythagoreanism. According to Larson, both the Essenes and Pythagoreans resembled *thiasoi*, or cult units of the [Orphic](#) mysteries. [John the Baptist](#) is widely regarded to be a prime example of an Essene who had left the communal life (see *Ant.* 18.116-119), and it is thought they aspired to emulate their own founding *Teacher of Righteousness* who was crucified. However, J.B. Lightfoot's essay ([On Some Points Connected with the Essenes](#)) argues that attempts to find the roots of Essenism in Pythagoreanism and the roots of Christianity in Essenism are flawed. Authors such as [Robert Eisenman](#) present differing views that support the Essene/Early Christian connection.

Another issue is the relationship between the *Essaioi* and Philo's [Therapeutae](#) and *Therapeutrides* (see *De Vita Contemplativa*). It may be argued that he regarded the *Therapeutae* as a contemplative branch of the *Essaioi* who, he said, pursued an active life (*Vita Cont.* I.1).

One theory on the formation of the Essenes suggested the movement was founded by a Jewish High Priest, dubbed by the Essenes the [Teacher of Righteousness](#), whose office had been usurped by [Jonathan](#) (of priestly but not [Zadokite](#) lineage), labeled the "man of lies" or "false priest".

Connections with Kabbalah

According to a Jewish legend, one of the Essenes, named Menachem, had passed at least some of his mystical knowledge to the Talmudic mystic [Nehunya Ben Ha-Kanah](#),^[1] to whom the [Kabbalistic](#) tradition attributes [Sefer ha-Bahir](#) and, by some opinions, [Sefer ha-Kanah](#), [Sefer ha-Peliah](#) and [Sefer ha-Temunah](#). Some Essene rituals, such as daily immersion in the [Mikvah](#), coincide with contemporary [Hasidic](#) practices; some historians had also suggested, that name "Essene" is an hellenized form of the word "Hasidim" or "Hasin" ("pious ones"). However, the legendary connections between Essene and Kabbalistic tradition are not verified by modern historians.

Connection to Pharisees

The Talmud also refers to Hasidim. In the mishna Tractate Berachot, It is stated that "the early Hasidim would spend an hour in preparation for prayer, an hour praying. and an hour coming away from prayer", "The Hasidim would pray with sunrise". [Tzvi Hirsch Chajes](#) believes that the Essenes can be identified with the Hasidim, an offshoot of the [Pharisees](#). (Kol Kitvei Maritz Chiyus Vol. 2). See however the statement of Reuvain Margolies above.

Zealots

The Zealots were a [Jewish](#) political movement in the [1st century](#) which sought to incite the people of [Judaea Province](#) to rebel against the [Roman Empire](#) and expel it from the country by force of arms during the [Great Jewish Revolt](#) (CE [66-70](#)). When the Romans introduced the [imperial cult](#), the Jews unsuccessfully rebelled. The Zealots continued to oppose the Romans due to Rome's intolerance of their culture and on the grounds that [Israel](#) belonged only to a Jewish king descended from [King David](#).

Josephus's [Jewish Antiquities](#)^[1] states that there were three main Jewish sects at this time, the [Pharisees](#), the [Sadducees](#), and the [Essenes](#). The Zealots were a "fourth sect", founded by [Judas of Galilee](#) (also called Judas of Gamala) and [Zadok the Pharisee](#) in the year 6 against [Quirinius' tax reform](#), shortly after the Roman state declared what had most recently been the territory of the tribe of [Judah](#) a Roman Province, and that they "agree in all other things with the Pharisaic notions; but they have an inviolable attachment to liberty, and say that God is to be their only Ruler and

Sicarii

Sicarii (Latin plural of **Sicarius** 'dagger-' or later contract- killer) is a term applied, in the decades immediately preceding the destruction of [Jerusalem](#) in [70 CE](#), (probably) to an extremist splinter group^[1] to the [Jewish Zealots](#), (or [insurgents](#)) who attempted to expel the [Romans](#) and their partisans from [Judea](#):

"When [Albinus](#) reached the city of Jerusalem, he bent every effort and made every provision to ensure peace in the land by exterminating most of the Sicarii." —[Josephus](#), *Jewish Antiquities* (xx.208)

The Sicarii resorted to terror to obtain their objective. Under their cloaks they concealed *sicae*, or small daggers, from which they received their name. At popular assemblies, particularly during the pilgrimage to the [Temple Mount](#), they stabbed their enemies (Romans or Roman sympathizers, [Herodians](#), and wealthy Jews comfortable with Roman rule), lamenting ostentatiously after the deed to blend into the crowd to escape detection. Literally, Sicarii meant "dagger-men".

The victims of the Sicarii included [Jonathan](#) the High Priest, though it is possible that his murder was orchestrated by the Roman governor [Felix](#). Some of their murders were met with severe retaliation by the Romans on the entire Jewish population of the country. On some occasions, they could be bribed to spare their intended victims. If the narrative of [Barabbas](#) is not an invention to create a [parable](#), even convicted Sicarii were occasionally released on promising to spare their opponents, though there is no evidence for this practice outside the Gospels, which are largely in accord on this point. Once, Josephus relates, after kidnapping the secretary of Eleazar, governor of the Temple precincts, they agreed to release him in exchange for ten of their captured comrades.

At the beginning of the Jewish Revolt ([66](#)), the Sicarii, and (possibly) Zealot helpers (Josephus differentiated between the two but did not (in depth) explain the main differences), gained access to Jerusalem and committed a series of atrocities, in order to force the population to war. In one account, given in the [Talmud](#), they destroyed the city's food supply, so that the people would be forced to fight against the Roman siege instead of negotiating peace. Their leaders, including Menahem ben Jair, [Eleazar ben Jair](#), and [Bar Giora](#), were important figures in the war, and Eleazar ben Jair eventually succeeded in

escaping the Roman onslaught. Together with a small group of followers, he made his way to the abandoned fortress of [Masada](#), where he continued his resistance to the Romans until [73](#), when the Romans took the fortress and found that most of its defenders had committed suicide rather than surrender.

In Josephus' *Jewish War* (vii), after the fall of the Temple in 70 CE, the *sicarii* became the dominant revolutionary Jewish party, scattered abroad. Josephus particularly associates them with the mass suicide at [Masada](#) in 73 and to the subsequent refusal "to submit to the taxation census when Cyrenius was sent to Judea to make one" (Josephus) as part of their religious and political scheme as resistance fighters:

"Some of the faction of the *Sicarion*...not content with having saved themselves, again embarked on new revolutionary scheming, persuading those that received them there to assert their freedom, to esteem the Romans as no better than themselves and to look upon God as their only Lord and Master" (quoted by Eisenman, p 180).

In the name of [Judas Iscariot](#), the apostle who betrayed Jesus, the [epithet](#) "Iscariot" is read by the majority of scholars as a Hellenized transformation of *sicarius*. The suffix "-ote" denotes membership or belonging to - in this case to the sicarii. This meaning is lost when the Gospels are translated into [modern Hebrew](#): Judas is rendered as "Ish-Kerayot," making him *a man from the townships*. Robert Eisenman presents the general view of secular historians (Eisenman p 179) in identifying him instead as "Judas the *Sicarios*". Most of the consonants and vowels tally—in Josephus

Samaritans

Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizim

The precise date of the schism between Samaritans and Jews is unknown, but was certainly complete by the end of the fourth century BCE. Archaeological excavations at Mount Gerizim suggest that a Samaritan temple was built there c. 330 BC¹

according to Samaritans [\[7\]](#) that Abraham offered Isaac on Mount Gerizim [Genesis 22:2](#).

The Torah mentions the place where God shall choose to establish His name (Deut 12:5), and Judaism takes this to refer to Jerusalem. However, the Samaritan text speaks of the place where God *has chosen* to establish His name, and Samaritans identify it as Mount Gerizim, making it the focus of their spiritual values.

The [Gospel of John](#) relates an encounter between a Samaritan woman and [Jesus](#) in which she asserts that the mountain was the center of their worship [John 4:20](#).

Antiochus IV Epiphanes and hellenization

In the second century BC a particularly bitter series of events eventually led to a revolution.

[Antiochus IV Epiphanes](#) was on the throne of the Seleucid Empire from 175 to 163 BC. His determined policy was to Hellenize his entire kingdom and standardize religious observance. He proclaimed himself the incarnation of the Greek god Zeus and mandated death to anyone who refused to worship him (1 Maccabees 1:41-50). A major obstacle to his ambition was the fidelity of the Jews to their historic religion.

The universal peril led the Samaritans, eager for safety, to repudiate all connection and kinship with the Jews. They sent ambassadors and an epistle asking to be recognized as belonging to the Greek party, and to have their temple on Mt. Gerizim named "The Temple of Jupiter Hellenius". ^[citation needed] The request was granted. This was evidently the final breach between the two groups indicated in John 4:9, "For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans." ²

Several centuries before the birth of Jesus, the Samaritans had built their own temple on Mt. Gerizim to rival the one in Jerusalem. Here, they offered sacrifices according to the Mosaic code. Anderson notes that during the reign of Antiochus IV (175-164 BC):

the Samaritan temple was renamed either Zeus Hellenios (willingly by the Samaritans according to Josephus or, more likely, Zeus Xenios, (unwillingly in accord with 2 Macc. 6:2) Bromiley, 4.304). ³

Josephus Book 12, Chapter 5 quotes the Samaritans as saying:

We therefore beseech thee, our benefactor and saviour, to give order to Apolonius, the governor of this part of the country, and to Nicanor, the procurator of thy affairs, to give us no disturbances, nor to lay to our charge what the Jews are accused for, since we are aliens from their nation and from their customs, but let our temple which at present hath no name at all, be named the Temple of Jupiter Hellenius.

II Maccabees 6:1-2 says:

Shortly afterwards, the king sent Gerontes the Athenian to force the Jews to violate their ancestral customs and live no longer by the laws of God; and to profane the Temple in Jerusalem and dedicate it to Olympian Zeus, and the one on Mount Gerizim to Zeus, Patron of Strangers, as the inhabitants of the latter place had requested.

In 167 BC the [Seleucid](#) ruler Antiochus Epiphanes set up an altar to Zeus over the altar of burnt offerings in the Jewish temple in Jerusalem. He also sacrificed a pig on the altar in the Temple in Jerusalem. This event is known as the "abomination of desolation". ⁴

The authority of the high priesthood was severely damaged when first Jason and then Meneleus bought their office from Antiochus.

The persecution and death of faithful Jewish persons who refused to worship and kiss Antiochus' image eventually led to a revolt led by [Judas Maccabeus](#) and his family.

Judas's priestly family, the [Hasmoneans](#), introduced a dynasty that ruled during a period of conflict, with tensions arising both from within the family as well as from external enemies.

This Samaritan Temple at Mount Gerizim was destroyed by [John Hyrcanus](#) in about 128 BC, having existed about 200 years. Only a few stone remnants of it exist today.

164 BC and after

During the [Hellenistic](#) period, Samaria (like Judea) was largely divided between a Hellenizing faction based in Samaria (Sebastea) and a pious faction, led by the High Priest and based largely around Shechem and the rural areas.

Samaria was a largely autonomous state nominally dependent on the Seleucid empire until around [129 BC](#), when the Jewish [Hasmonean](#) king Yohanan Girhan ([John Hyrcanus](#)) destroyed the Samaritan temple and devastated Samaria.

Roman times

Samaritans fared badly under the [Roman Empire](#), when Samaria was part of the Roman province of [Judea](#). However, this period was also something of a golden age for the Samaritan community. The Temple of Gerizim was rebuilt after the [Bar Kochba](#) revolt, around AD [135](#). Much of Samaritan liturgy was set by the high priest [Baba Rabba](#) in the [fourth century](#).

There were some Samaritans in the [Persian](#) Empire, where they served in the [Sassanid](#) army.

Sanhedrin

Introduction

A **Sanhedrin** ([Hebrew](#): סנהדרין; [Greek](#): συνέδριον, ^[1] *synedrion*, "sitting together," hence "[assembly](#)" or "council") is an assembly of 23^[2] judges Biblically required in every city. The Great Sanhedrin is an assembly of [Jewish](#) judges who constituted the [supreme court](#) and [legislative body](#) of [ancient Israel](#). The make-up of the Great Sanhedrin included a Chief/Prince/Leader called [Nasi](#), a [Cohen Gadol](#) or the High Priest, a vice chief justice ([Av Beit Din](#)), and sixty-nine general members who all sat in the form of a semi-circle when in session. "The Sanhedrin" without qualifier normally refers to the **Great Sanhedrin**. When the [Temple in Jerusalem](#) was standing, (prior to its destruction in 70 CE), the Great Sanhedrin would meet in the [Hall of Hewn Stones](#) in the Temple during the day, except before [festivals](#) and [Shabbat](#).

Traditions of origin

The Greek root for the name suggests that the name was adopted during the [Hellenistic period](#). [Judaism](#) asserts that the concept was founded by [Moses](#), at the command of God. The Torah records God commanded Moses as follows:

"Assemble for Me (Espah-Li) seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the people's elders and officers, and you shall take them to the Tent of Meeting, and they shall stand there with you."^[3]

Further, God commanded Moses to lay hands on [Joshua](#) son of Nun.^[4] It is from this point, classical Rabbinic tradition holds, the Sanhedrin began: with seventy elders, headed by Moses, for a total of seventy-one. As individuals within the Sanhedrin died, or otherwise became unfit for service, new members underwent ordination, or [Semicha](#)^[5]. These ordinations continued, in an unbroken line: from Moses to Joshua, the [Israelite](#) elders, the [prophets](#) (including [Ezra](#), [Nehemiah](#)) on to all the sages of the Sanhedrin. It was not until sometime after the destruction of the [Second Temple](#) that this line was broken, and the Sanhedrin dissolved.

Jewish tradition proposes non-Greek derivations of the term *Sanhedrin*. P'siqta D'Rav Kahana (chapter 25), teaches that the first part of the word, *sin*, referring to the Torah that was received at Mount *Sin-ai*, was combined with the second part of the word, *hadrin*, meaning, "glorification," to express the Great Court's role, the glorification of God's Torah through its application. Rabbi Ovadia Bartenura suggests an alternative meaning (commentary on Mishnah Sota, chapter 9, Mishnah 11). Also taking the term as a combination of two words to mean, *son'im hadarath pan'im b'din*, "foes (opposing litigants) give respect and honor to its judgment." Other commentators confirm his interpretation, suggesting further that the first letter was changed from "sin" to "samekh," at a later date (Tosofoth Yom Tov and the Maharal).

Great Sanhedrin and Lesser Sanhedrin

The Talmud (tractate [Sanhedrin](#)) identifies two classes of rabbinical courts called Sanhedrin, a Great Sanhedrin and a Lesser Sanhedrin. Each city could have its own lesser Sanhedrin of 23 judges, but there could be only one Great Sanhedrin of 71, which among other roles acted as a sort of Supreme Court, taking appeals from cases decided by lesser courts.

Function and procedures

The Sanhedrin as a body claimed powers that lesser [Jewish](#) courts did not have. As such, they were the only ones who could try the king, extend the boundaries of the Temple and Jerusalem, and were the ones to whom all questions of law were finally put. It was presided over by an officer called the [Nasi](#). After the time of [Hillel the Elder](#) (late 1st century BC and early 1st century AD), the Nasi was almost invariably a descendant of Hillel. The second highest-ranking member of the Sanhedrin was called the [Av Beit Din](#), or "Head of the Court" (literally, Beit Din = "house of law"), who presided over the Sanhedrin when it sat as a criminal court.^[6]

The Sanhedrin met in a building known as the [Hall of Hewn Stones](#) (*Lishkat Ha-Gazith*), which has been placed by the Talmud and many scholars as built into the north wall of the [Temple Mount](#), half inside the sanctuary and half outside, with doors providing access both to the Temple and to the outside. The name presumably arises to distinguish it from the buildings in the Temple complex used for ritual purposes, which had to be constructed of stones unhewn by any [iron](#) implements.

In some cases, it was only necessary for a 23-member panel (functioning as a Lesser Sanhedrin) to convene. In general, the full panel of 71 judges was only convened on matters of national significance (e.g., a declaration of war) or in the event that the 23-member panel could not reach a conclusive verdict.^[7]

Early Christianity

In the Gospels

The Sanhedrin is mentioned frequently in the [Gospels](#). According to the Gospels, the council conspired to have [Jesus](#) killed by paying one of his disciples, [Judas Iscariot](#), thirty pieces of silver in exchange for delivery of [Jesus](#) into their hands. When the Sanhedrin was unable to provide evidence that Jesus had committed a capital crime, the Gospels states that witnesses came forward and accused the [Nazarene](#) of [blasphemy](#) — a [capital crime](#) under [Mosaic law](#). But, because the Sanhedrin was not of Roman authority, it could not condemn criminals to death, according to [John 18:31](#), but this claim is disputed, for example [Acts 6:12](#) records them ordering the stoning of [Saint Stephen](#) and also [James the Just](#) according to [Antiquities of the Jews 20.9.1](#). The [Jesus Seminar](#)'s *Scholars Version* translation notes for John 18:31: "it's illegal for us: The accuracy of this claim is doubtful."

Circa [30 AD](#), the Gospels continues, Jesus was brought before the Roman governor of [Judea Province](#), [Pontius Pilate](#), for decision. The Christian account says that Pilate disagreed with the Sanhedrin's decision, and found no fault — but that the crowd demanded crucifixion. Pilate, it is speculated, gave in because he was concerned about his career and about revolt — and conveyed the death sentence of crucifixion on Jesus. For more information on this subject, see [Jesus' Roman Trial](#).

It should be noted, however, that the New Testament also claims certain members of the Sanhedrin as followers of Jesus. [Nicodemus](#) and [Joseph of Arimathea](#) are two such men that are named in the [Gospels](#).

The Christian accounts of the Sanhedrin, and the role the council played in the [crucifixion](#) of Jesus, is frequently cited as a cause of [Christian anti-Semitism](#), and is thus normally considered a sensitive topic.



A Sanhedrin also appears in [Acts 4-7](#) and [22:30-23:24](#), perhaps the one led by [Gamaliel](#).

Pontius Pilate

Pontius Pilate ([Latin](#): **Pontius Pilatus**, [Greek](#): Πόντιος Πιλάτος) was the [governor](#) of the [Roman Judaea province](#) from A.D. [26](#) until [36](#). In modern times he is best known as the man who, according to the [canonical Christian Gospels](#), presided over the [trial of Jesus](#) and ordered his [crucifixion](#). Pilate's biographical details before and after his appointment to Judaea are unknown, but have been supplied by tradition, which include the detail that his wife's name was [Procula](#) (she is canonized as a [saint](#) in the [Coptic Orthodox Church](#)).

Titles and duties of Pontius Pilate

Pontius Pilate's title was traditionally thought to have been [procurator](#). [Tacitus](#) speaks of him as such. However, an inscription on a limestone block — apparently a dedication to [Tiberius Caesar Augustus](#) — that was discovered in [1961](#) in the ruins of an amphitheater called [Caesarea Maritima](#) refers to Pilate as "[Prefect](#) of Judea". [Archaeologists](#) believe it to be genuine and settles the argument about the historicity of Pontius Pilate. (See [Pilate Stone](#)).

The title used by the governors of the region varied over the period of the [New Testament](#). When [Samaria](#), [Judea](#) and [Idumea](#) were first amalgamated into the Roman [Judaea Province](#), from [6](#) to the outbreak of the [First Jewish Revolt](#) in [66](#), officials of the [Equestrian order](#) (the lower rank of governors) governed. They held the Roman title of prefect until [Herod Agrippa I](#) was named *King of the Jews* by [Claudius](#). After Herod Agrippa's death in [44](#), when Judaea reverted to direct Roman rule, the governor held the title procurator. When applied to governors, this term *procurator*, otherwise used for financial officers, connotes no difference in rank or function from the title known as prefect. Contemporary archaeological finds and documents such as the Pilate Inscription from Caesarea attest to the governor's more accurate official title only for the period 6 through 44: [prefect](#). The logical conclusion is that texts that identify Pilate as procurator are more likely following Tacitus or are unaware of the pre-44 practice.

The procurators' and prefects' primary functions were military, but as representatives of the empire they were responsible for the collection of imperial taxes,^[1] and also had limited judicial functions. Other civil administration lay in the hands of local government: the municipal councils or ethnic governments such as — in the district of Judea and Jerusalem — the [Sanhedrin](#) and its president the [High Priest](#). But the power of appointment of the High Priest resided in the Roman legate of [Syria](#) or the prefect of Judaea in Pilate's day and until [41](#). For example, [Caiaphas](#) was appointed High Priest of [Herod's Temple](#) by Prefect Valerius Gratus and deposed by Syrian Legate [Lucius Vitellius](#). After that time and until 66, the Jewish client kings exercised this privilege. Normally, Pilate resided in Caesarea but traveled throughout the province, especially to [Jerusalem](#), in the course of performing his duties. During the [Passover](#), a festival of deep national as well as religious significance for the Jews, Pilate, as governor or prefect, would have been expected to be in Jerusalem to keep order. He would not ordinarily be visible to the throngs of worshippers because of the Jewish people's deep sensitivity to their status as a Roman province.

Equestrians such as Pilate could not command legionary forces, and so in military situations, he would have to yield to his superior, the legate of Syria, who would descend into Palestine with his legions as necessary. As governor of Judaea, Pilate would have small auxiliary forces of locally recruited soldiers stationed regularly in Caesarea and Jerusalem, such as the [Antonia Fortress](#), and temporarily anywhere else that might require a military presence. The total number of soldiers at his disposal numbered in the range of 3000.

Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa

Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa

63 BC – 12 BC



Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa

Place of birth	Unknown
Place of death	Campania
Allegiance	Roman Empire
Years of service	45 BC – 12 BC
Rank	General
Commands	Roman army Caesar's civil war
Battles/wars	Battle of Munda Battle of Mutina Battle of Philippi Battle of Actium

Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa (c. 63 BC–12 BC) was a Roman statesman and general. He was a close friend, son-in-law, lieutenant and minister to Octavian, the future emperor Caesar Augustus. He was responsible for most of Octavian's military triumphs, most notably winning the naval [Battle of Actium](#) against the forces of [Mark Antony](#) and [Cleopatra VII of Egypt](#).

Early life

Agrippa was born in 64–62 BC^[1] in an uncertain location.^[2] His father was Lucius Vipsanius Agrippa. He had an elder brother whose name was also Lucius Vipsanius Agrippa, and a sister named Vipsania Polla. The family had not been prominent in Roman public life.^[3] However, Agrippa was about the same age as Octavius (the future emperor Augustus), and the two were educated together and became close friends. Despite Agrippa's association with the family of Julius Caesar, his elder brother chose another side in the

[civil wars](#) of the 40s BC, fighting under [Cato](#) against Caesar in Africa. When Cato's forces were defeated, Agrippa's brother was taken prisoner but freed after Octavius interceded on his behalf.^[4]

It is not known whether Agrippa fought against his brother in Africa, but he probably served in Caesar's campaign of 46–45 BC against Gnaeus Pompeius, which culminated in the [Battle of Munda](#).^[5] At any rate, Caesar regarded him highly enough to send him with Octavius in 45 BC to study in Apollonia with the [Macedonian legions](#), while Caesar consolidated his power in Rome.^[6] It was in the fourth month of their stay in Apollonia that the news of Julius Caesar's assassination in March 44 BC reached them. Despite the advice of Agrippa and another friend, Quintus Salvidienus Rufus, that he march on Rome with the troops from Macedonia, Octavius decided to sail to Italy with a small retinue. After his arrival, he learnt that Caesar had adopted him as his legal heir.^[7] (Octavius now took over Caesar's name, but is referred to by modern historians as "Octavian" during this period.)

Legacy



The [Maison Carrée](#) at [Nîmes](#), modern France, built in 19 BC; Agrippa was its patron.

Agrippa was also known as a writer, especially on the subject of [geography](#). Under his supervision, Julius Caesar's dream of having a complete [survey](#) of the empire made was carried out. He constructed a circular chart, which was later engraved on marble by Augustus, and afterwards placed in the colonnade built by his sister Polla. Amongst his writings, an autobiography, now lost, is referred to.

Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa, along with [Gaius Maecenas](#) and Octavian, was a central person in the establishing of the [Principate](#) system of emperors, which would govern the [Roman Empire](#) up until the [Crisis of the Third Century](#) and the birth of [Dominate](#) system. His grandson Gaius is known to history as the Emperor [Caligula](#), and his great-grandson Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus would rule as the Emperor [Nero](#).

Julius Caesar

Gaius Julius Caesar

Dictator of the [Roman Republic](#)



Reign	October, 49 BC – March 15, 44 BC
Full name	Gaius Julius Caesar
Born	12 July 100 BC - 102 BC Rome , Roman Republic
Died	15 March 44 BC (aged 56) Rome , Roman Republic
Successor	Augustus (as Roman Emperor)
Issue	Julia Caesaris
Royal House	Julio-Claudian
Father	Gaius Julius Caesar
Mother	Aurelia Cotta

Gaius Julius Caesar^[1] ([pronounced](#) [ga-ius ju-lius ka-sar] in Classical [Latin](#); conventionally [pronounced](#) ga-əs ju-liəs si-zar in [English](#); [July 13, 100 BC](#)^[2] – [March 15, 44 BC](#)), was a [Roman military](#) and [political](#) leader and one of the most influential men in world history. He played a critical role in the transformation of the [Roman Republic](#) into the [Roman Empire](#).

A politician of the *populares* tradition, he formed an unofficial [triumvirate](#) with [Marcus Licinius Crassus](#) and [Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus](#) which dominated Roman politics for several years, opposed in the [Roman Senate](#) by *optimates* like [Marcus Porcius Cato](#) and [Marcus Calpurnius Bibulus](#). His conquest of [Gaul](#) extended the Roman world all the way to the [Atlantic Ocean](#), and he also conducted the first [Roman invasion of Britain](#) in 55 BC; the collapse of the triumvirate, however, led to a stand-off with Pompey and the [Senate](#). Leading his legions across the [Rubicon](#), Caesar began a [civil war](#) in [49 BC](#) from which he became the undisputed master of the Roman world.

After assuming control of government, he began extensive reforms of Roman society and government. He was proclaimed [dictator](#) for life (*dictator perpetuus*), and heavily centralised the bureaucracy of the Republic. However, a group of senators, led by Caesar's former friend [Marcus Junius Brutus](#), assassinated the dictator on the [Ides of March](#) (March 15) in 44 BC, hoping to restore the normal running of the Republic. However, the result was another [Roman civil war](#), which ultimately led to the establishment of a permanent autocracy by Caesar's adopted heir, [Gaius Octavianus](#). In 42 BC, two years after his assassination, the Senate officially sanctified Caesar as one of the [Roman deities](#).

In 63 BC Caesar had been elected Pontifex Maximus, and one of his roles as such was settling the calendar. A complete overhaul of the old [Roman calendar](#) proved to be one of his most long lasting and influential reforms. In 46 BC, Caesar established a 365-day year with a leap year every fourth year (this [Julian Calendar](#) was subsequently modified by [Pope Gregory XIII](#) in 1582 into the modern [Gregorian calendar](#)). As a result of this reform, a certain Roman year (mostly equivalent to 46 BC in the modern Calendar) was made 445 days long, to bring the calendar into line with the seasons.

In Rome, Caesar was appointed [dictator](#), with [Mark Antony](#) as his [Master of the Horse](#); Caesar resigned this dictatorship after 11 days and was elected to a second term as consul with [Publius Servilius Vatia](#) as his colleague.

He pursued Pompey to [Alexandria](#), where Pompey was murdered by a former Roman officer serving in the court of [King Ptolemy XIII](#). Caesar then became involved with the Alexandrine civil war between Ptolemy and his sister, wife, and co-regent queen, the [Pharaoh Cleopatra VII](#). Perhaps as a result of Ptolemy's role in Pompey's murder, Caesar sided with Cleopatra; he is reported to have wept at the sight of Pompey's head, which was offered to him by Ptolemy's chamberlain [Pothinus](#) as a gift. In any event, Caesar defeated the Ptolemaic forces in 47 BC in the [Battle of the Nile](#) and installed Cleopatra as ruler, with whom he is suspected to have fathered a son, [Caesarion](#). Caesar and Cleopatra celebrated their victory of the Alexandrine civil war through a triumphant procession on the Nile in the spring of 47 B.C. The royal barge was accompanied by 400 additional ships, introducing Caesar to the luxurious lifestyle of the Egyptian pharaohs.

Caesar and Cleopatra never married: they could not do so under Roman Law. The institution of marriage was only recognised between two Roman citizens; Cleopatra was Queen of Egypt. In Roman eyes, this did not constitute adultery, and Caesar is believed to have continued his relationship with Cleopatra throughout his last marriage, which lasted 14 years and produced no children. Cleopatra visited Rome on more than one occasion, residing in Caesar's villa just outside Rome across the [Tiber](#).

Offices of The Early Roman Empire

Emperor (Proconsul)

Ruler of the [Roman State](#) during the imperial period (starting at about 27 BC). The Romans had no single term for the office: [Latin](#) titles such as [imperator](#) (from which English [emperor](#) ultimately derives), [augustus](#), [caesar](#) and [princeps](#) were all associated with it. In practice, the Emperor was supreme ruler of Rome and supreme commander of the [Roman legions](#). In theory, however, Rome remained [a republic](#), the [res publica](#), and the Emperor's status was merely that of [primus inter pares](#)—first among equals. This [legal fiction](#) became increasingly meaningless as the Emperors consolidated their power.

Governor (Prefect or Procurator)

Types of Governor: Imperial (appointed by Emperor), Senatorial (appointed by Senate), Equestrian (nobility like a knight). Must be a Roman Citizen.

The titles of Governor, Prefect, Procurator and/or President seemed to relate to the amount of territory and military authority given to the individual holding one or more of the titles. Procurators could also serve under a governor (prefect).

The governor of any Roman province had many tasks to carry out during his administration.

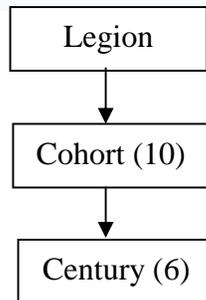
Firstly, he was responsible for taxation and financial management. Depending on the basis of his appointment, he was either the [Emperor's](#) personal agent, or the [Roman Senate's](#) financial agent, and had to supervise the local authorities, the private tax collectors, and levy taxes. A governor could mint coins and negotiate with wealthy institutions such as temples and private money-lenders that could advance money. The governor was also the province's chief accountant. He inspected the books of major cities and various operations as well as supervising large-scale building projects throughout the province.

Aside from these financial duties, the governor was the province's chief judge. The governor had the sole right to impose [capital punishment](#), and capital cases were normally tried before him. To appeal a governor's decision necessitated travelling to Rome and presenting one's case before either the [Praetor Urbanus](#), or even the Emperor himself, an expensive, and thus rare, process. An appeal was unlikely to succeed anyway, as a governor wouldn't generally take the chance of convicting someone contrary to the Emperor's wishes. The governor was also supposed to travel across his province to administer justice in the major towns where his attention was required.

Finally, and most importantly, he commanded the military forces within the province. In the more important provinces, this could consist of [legions](#), but elsewhere, there were only auxiliaries. As a part of his standing orders the governor had the authority to use his legions to stamp out organized criminal gangs or rebels in the area without need for the Emperor's or Senate's approval.

The size of a typical legion varied widely throughout the history of ancient Rome, with complements of 4,200 legionaries in the republican period of Rome (split into 35 [maniples](#) of 120 legionaries each), to

5,200 plus auxiliaries in the imperial period (split into 10 [cohorts](#) of 480 men each, with the first cohort holding 800 men.



Note: 5 Centuries in first cohort. Each century had 30 to 40 soldiers or 100 to 200 soldiers. A Centurion commanded a century; however, there were varying ranks of centurions depending on what cohort/century they commanded or other important assignments.

King

A title given to a Non Roman official. The title may be bestowed by the Emperor or Roman Senate. The king remained subservient to the Romans.

Tetrarch

Ruler of a fourth. Appointed by the Roman Emperor.

The constellation of Jewish principalities in [Roman Palestine](#): for instance, [Herod Antipas](#) ruled [Galilee](#) and [Perea](#) as a tetrarch (so styled in the [gospel of Matthew](#), but rendered as king in the [Gospel of Mark](#)).

2nd Temple Era Timeline - 1

Year	Name of Period/Leader	Description
537 BC	Persian King Syrus	Constricted 2 nd Temple King Syrus the Great - Decree Zerubbabel Govenor & Joshua (High Priest) – 536 BC King Xeres, King Artaxerxes, King Darius
332 BC	Greek – Hellenistic Alexander the Great	323 BC Alexander the Great dies 323 – 281 Wars of Diadochi (successors) Four large territorial states established
323 BC	Egyptian – Hellenic Potolemus	
198 BC	Syrian – Hellenistic Seleucid Antiochus III	
167 BC	Hellenistic-Seleucid Enforced Antiochus IV – Epiphanes Anitochus V - Eupator	Forced jews to abandon laws and customs-stripped temple 166 BC Judah Maccabee, priest of Hasmon family leads Maccabeen revolt – dies in battle 160 BC
152 BC	Hasmonean Period John Hyrcanus Alexandar Jannaeus Salome Alexandra	Cleansed Temple-Installed Johnathan Maccabee as High Priest - Maccabees founded the Hasmonian Dynasty Favored Sadducees – Appointed Edomite Antipas gov Edom (Sadducees/Pharisees divided over war issue) Favored Pharisees
142 BC	Demetrius II, King of Syria	Granted Jews complete political independence
63 BC	Roman Pompey – Roman General	Conquers Greeks Hyranus II - Anitpator establishe good relationship with Romans
47 BC	Julius Ceaser	Appointed Antipater procurator of Judea Sons Phasael Jerusalem Governor Herod Galilean Governor
43 BC		Antipater is murdered

2nd Temple Era Timeline - 2

Year	Name of Period/Leader	Description
41 BC	Mark Anthony	Made Herod the Great a tetrarch
40 BC	Parthians invade eastern provinces	Hasmonean dynasty restored
37 BC	Herod the Great	Elected King of Jews by Roman Senate Considers himself a god. Is able to fully conquer Judea by this date
20 BC	John 2:20 – 46 years to initially re-build the temple	Started building Herod's temple – took 18 months
4 BC	Herod the Great dies-kingdom split into three parts Acts 12:21-23 Jesus was born	Herod Archelaus the Samaritan – Judea, Edom and Samaria – ruled until 6 AD Herod Philip I – Northeast part of kingdom – dies 34 AD Herod Antipas – Galilee and Perea – ruled to 39 AD Mark 6:14 and following
34 & 39 AD	Emperor Caligula Emperor Claudius	Appoints Herod Agrippa I as ruler – dies 44 AD Adds Judea to his territory
44 AD	Herod Agrippa II	Rules until 92 AD
50 AD	Herod's Temple Finished	
92 AD	Herod Agrippa II dies	He was last of Herodians and the dynasty is extinct.

Herod Dynasty

