

Week 2. Noach Paul, a Sketch From Acts

What was the environment Paul knew? Both the Diaspora and Jerusalem?

Jerusalem: Paul part of the Pharisee sect.

(Ac 23:6) But perceiving that one group were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, Paul began crying out in the Council, "Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead!"

Paul was a multigenerational Pharisee. He was not apologetic for it.

Pharisee: Christian and modern terminology makes this a pejorative term
Legalistic. Overtly religious. Much attention to law. Trying to be too good.

Gospels view: The accusations of Yeshua were two-fold.

A misunderstanding of the relationship of Torah to people. Accused of being harsh, not caring for people.

Using a religious cloak as a pretext for doing evil.

Never an accusation of trying to follow law to earn salvation.

Sadducees were accused of neither knowing or understanding the power of Scripture

Acts and its Historical Reliability

Acts presents Paul as quite Jewish, Jewish friendly

Epistles do not speak of these events directly

Usually interpreted as Hellenistic, or Jewish unfriendly

Acts and Epistles placed in contradistinction to one another

Modern views: Acts not reliably historical.

Knox: 1950s scholar.

Acts not to be used as a theological base

Luke was exaggerating, not entirely honest in presenting Paul

Paul was too Jewish in Acts

In Epistles, he is understood as formerly Jewish, or opposed to the continuation
Of distinctly Jewish practice for any believers.

Luke and Galatians opposed to one another

Prominent Author: Cannot imagine that Paul would ever encourage Jewish practices
In Corinth.

Hanegraaf: First, in remembrance of the resurrection the early Christian church changed
the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday. Within weeks, thousands of Jews willingly
gave up a theological tradition that had given them their national identity.

Jewish Community in the Roman Empire

Common assumptions

Jews within weeks turned from Judaism to Churches

Hanegraaf: Thousands within weeks gladly gave up Judaism for Sunday
D.A. Carson. Sunday was the norm within weeks

Witherington. Maybe one in ten thousand Jews in Christianity by 70 CE

Contrary data:

Akiva: 130 or so. Large numbers of Messianic disciples.

Perhaps a majority of Jerusalem Messianic just before destruction of Temple

So many defections in 66 and in 135 from Jewish army due to Messianic belief.

Both wars lost because of Messianic defections (in traditional Jewish texts).

Reading ancient documents today is similar to print media today.

Opponents given short shrift, but really a large movement

Writing about Messianics similar in early Christian and Jewish writings.

The leaders had much to say about the dangers of the Messianics.

Since the Messianics writings did not survive, it is often assumed they were gone.

Jewish Community in Roman Empire Continued

The Jewish community had spread throughout the Roman Empire in the first century

Even in Acts we have Jewish communities in practically every place Paul travelled

Corinth had a synagogue. Rome had a huge Jewish community.

Galatia had a thriving Jewish community in Paul's day.

Ephesus, and most other places had well-known Jewish communities

In the Diaspora, Many Jewish communities had large Gentile populations

In some cases the Gentiles were a majority, in the synagogue even.

Diaspora and Judean Judaism had different attitudes towards Gentiles. Or perhaps the Gospels did not intend to paint a clear picture of the Jew-Gentile relationships. Or it is possible that the Saduccees and Pharisees are not accurately represented in the popular mythology surrounding them.

Paul and His Travels

Jewish community in Roman Empire was ubiquitous

Paul traveled pretty much only to known Jewish settlements

Was it deliberate? Or was there no civilization where Jews were not living?

Overlay of maps of Jewish community and Paul's travels.

Paul's travels in all of his journeys almost exactly coincide with the known Jewish world in that century. Even his desire to go to Hispania was coincident with a Jewish community there.

The vast majority of Paul's dealings with Gentiles was in synagogues. The few times that he spoke to Gentiles outside of any overt Jewish connection, it was 'accidental' or he was compelled by circumstance, as in Ephesus and in Athens. His desire to go to Spain was due to Messiah not being known there, not that there was no Jewish community there.

Significant Jewish Settlements in Roman Empire



A Sketch of Paul

Paul introduced in conjunction with Stephen (Acts 6-7)

Stephen's address to leaders in Jerusalem:

Main point is their obdurate and multi-generational disobedience

No hint of them trying too hard to work for salvation

Response was to execute Stephen. Paul in agreement.

Likely the sect was causing great dissension:

(Ac 6:7)

7 The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.

Dissension around Stephen was in the synagogues (of Freedmen, made up of Diaspora Jews)

The movement was fast becoming a major threat in the synagogues not only in Jerusalem but was spreading out into into the Diaspora

Acts 8: Paul sent to Damascus by High Priest to remove believers from Diaspora synagogues. (timing perhaps 32)

This is good evidence that the Messianics were throughout the synagogues into the Diaspora within a few years of the resurrection. (Timing often placed around 33).