

7th Grade New Testament (Gospels)

Lesson Plan: Introduction to the NT World (Part 2)

Learning Goals: Students should be able to recognize and identify the social and religious groups of the New Testament period and articulate the sources of disagreement between Jesus and the Jewish religious leaders.

Question: Why did Jesus run into so many problems with the religious leaders of his day?

Prayer.

Discuss Question on board.

2. Social

Hellenism vs. Hebrew identity - There was a distinct push among the Jewish community to retain their distinct cultural identity. Therefore, adoption of Hellenistic practices and customs was generally frowned upon.

Diaspora: refers to the scattered Jewish community. Hellenized Jews (those influenced by Greek culture and language) functioned as a bridge for the gospel to the Gentiles. It was converts like the Apostle Paul who had grown up outside of Jerusalem and were familiar/comfortable in a Hellenized setting that grasped the fact that Jesus had opened the door for inclusion of the Gentiles. Therefore, a Hellenized Jew became the “Apostle to the Gentiles”

Zealots: a nationalistic group of Jews who wanted to overthrow Roman rule. They were opposed to paying taxes to Rome and would attack (stab) important Jewish leaders who were cooperating with Roman officials.

3. Religious/Philosophical:

The following are a list of religions/philosophies of the day:

Paganism: these religions encompass a wide range of deities. Many of the Greek and Roman gods were a part of this worship culture.

Emperor Worship: Worship of the Roman Emperor. Many Emperors claimed themselves to be divine.

The following are different sects (divisions) of Judaism:

Pharisees: These folks numbered about six thousand during the time of Jesus. Their name means “separated ones.” They were a strict, legalistic group, whom Jesus battled with on a regular basis. The two pillars of Pharisaism were Torah and the oral traditions. The oral traditions preserved the judgments of the scribes as to how the law should be applied to virtually every area of life. The oral traditions were like a hedge around the law.

Major beliefs of the Pharisees:

1. Exclusive - They kept themselves from the common people who they thought to be indifferent to the law
2. Legalistic - The oral traditions were held up as authoritative along with the scripture
3. Immortality, Resurrection - they believed in a bodily resurrection of the dead

4. They believed in a coming Messiah

Sadducees : These people were an aristocratic group that had wealth and power. They were politically involved and had control over the temple and the priesthood. They were notorious for corruption and rejecting the oral law. They did not believe in a bodily resurrection of the dead. They also only held to the books of Moses as authoritative.

God-fearers: Gentiles who desired to worship Yahweh and adopted Judaism. If they decided to get circumcised, they were called proselytes.

Some additional vocabulary related to the Jewish people:

Herodians: Jews who supported the rule of Herod the Great

Sanhedrin: This group was composed of the chief priests, elders, and scribes. Rome gave them a good deal of authority over Jewish affairs.

Scribes: These were professional interpreters of the law. Other names are, “lawyer,” “teacher,” and “rabbi.”

Synagogue vs. Temple

- Temple - only one, reserved for sacrificial system, limited access (only to Jews, those ritually clean, etc.)
- Synagogue - must have 10 men, informal, used for teaching and worship, where Paul first visited when he came to a city.

Conflict between Jesus and the Religious Leaders of his Day

Why did the Religious leaders dislike Jesus?

- They felt that his claim to be one with God was blasphemy (John 14:9)
- They despised his messianic claims of authority (John 2:18; Mark 2:1-3:6)
- Jesus claimed the ability to forgive sin
- Jesus’ association with tax collectors and sinners
- Jesus transgressed the teaching on fasting
- Jesus’ blatant disregard for the Sabbath (according to their traditions)

Why was Jesus so harsh with the religious leaders?

- Their pride (they loved the seat of honor, praying publicly, tithes - all this Jesus found abominable); pride led to spiritual blindness (Matthew 15)
- Religious Formalism
- Their heart was centered on man, not on God (Mark 7; Matthew 23)

Lesson Summary /Review:

Students should review and highlight the following vocabulary terms and concepts from this lesson in their notes:

- Pharisees
- Sadducees
- Diaspora
- Zealots
- Paganism
- Scribes
- God-fearers
- Herodians
- Sanhedrin
- Synoptic
- Torah
- Oral Tradition
- Why did the religious leaders dislike Jesus?
- Name two major beliefs of the Pharisees.
- What is the difference between the temple and the synagogue?