

The Forgotten Jesus Podcast

S2E11

Title - The Corruption Of The Priesthood

Description - We've looked at how Hellenism impacted all facets of Jewish society, in this episode we will look specifically at how it impacted the Priesthood in Israel.

We left off on a cliffhanger last time, saying that the priests in Jesus' day set out to kill Jesus. But what we're going to see today is that they didn't even have the authority to execute Jesus.

Just to set the scene, there were 5 major religious groups of the day when Jesus came:

1. The Essenes
2. The Sadducees
3. The Pharisees
4. The Herodians - very political, tied to Herod, passionate about the nation / state of Israel.
5. The Zealots - like the Herodians on steroids. They were so zealous they would kill and assassinate anyone who would stand in their way. They were all about the nation / state of Israel and the messiah's rule & reign over his enemies.

The Essenes were priests by birth, meaning they had a right to serve as priests, they were from the tribe of Levi.

Note: All priests were from the tribe of Levi, but not all Levites were priests.

The impact of Hellenism which we've covered in the previous podcasts and hellenistic culture was so great that it impacted every facet of Jewish life, including the priesthood.

The corruption in Jerusalem was so great that according to Ray Vanderlan they couldn't even carry out the priestly duties in the temple because so many men were crossing over to the decapolis to watch the games.

This corruption brought about the Essene movement.

Essenes were priests who left the priesthood in Jerusalem over corruption and went out to the desert near Qumran, where the dead sea scrolls were found.

What happened in the 400 years of silence?

In 260 BC the Old Testament as we know it is canonized, and brought together by the Jews.

The TaNaK - The Torah, The Nev'im, (The Prophepts), and The Ketuvim (The Writings)

People have now in written form prophecies, promises of the birth, life and death of the Messiah.

The Old Testament conceals what the New Testament Reveals.

So the stage is now set for these scholars and these priests who are pouring over the scriptures and who are looking for the Messiah to come.

But then something big happened in 167 BC.

During this period the Maccabean revolt occurred, they were fed up with the oppression of the Roman empire, who defiled the temple with a statue of Jupiter / Zeus, who were sacrificing pigs.

The Maccabees revolt, and retake the temple. They purge the temple of the idols, but they only had enough oil to fill the menorah in the temple for one day.

The miracle was that the Menorah burned for 7 days, and didn't run out of oil. On the 8th day they were able to get oil and add it to the temple menorah to keep it going. This is where we get the celebration of Hanukkah.

When the priesthood was setup with Aaron, the Zadokian priesthood goes all the way from Aaron to Onious, from 1560 BC to the year 172 BC. So in 1388 years, there were 43 high priests. You lived your whole life as the high priest, you'd live and pass it on to your son, then he'd be the high priest and pass it on to his son.

But then in 171 BC, a high priest named Jason, began to barter with Antiochus Epiphanes, (A self-given name, meaning "god manifested," the Roman ruler who controlled Jerusalem).

The priesthood became a way to make money. Jason purchases the priesthood and from 171 BC to the fall of the temple in 70 AD, there were 38 high priests in 240 years.

So the priesthood is no longer the Zadokian priesthood of Aaron. This was a mafia-like priesthood being run by the Sadducees. So the very man, Caiaphas, the son of Annas, who was the high priest who condemned Jesus to death, didn't even have the authority to condemn Jesus. He had bought the priesthood and was corrupt to the core.

Next time we'll look at one more insight before we get to Matthew.