

# Worldviews

## Foundations - Unit 318



### Week 6 – First Century worldviews

## **Jewish Worldview of the First Century**

Acknowledging that we all live out our worldview, consistently or inconsistently, consciously or unconsciously, then we need to recognise that the Biblical writers also wrote out of the worldview in which they lived. But by understanding their worldview as much as possible then we can have a better understanding of Scripture.

**The clips that we look at come from an online course by N. T. Wright from <https://www.udemy.com/courses/> I would very much recommend the courses that are offered here.**

## **Roman Story:**

- A small city state which grew into an empire
- No emperor until Julius Caesar
- Civil war with peace through winning by Augustus
- Belief in justice and freedom through military
- Augustus rewrote the story with himself as the 'messiah'
- Julius Caesar is deified
- Augustus is the 'son of god' who has brought peace to the world, the King of Peace

## **Roman Symbols:**

- Coins
- Statues
- Monuments

## **Roman Praxis:**

- Rome's justice system – crucifixion
- Building of roads and colonies established
- Military conquest
- Social stratification
- Honour and shame – places at dinner, Corinthians, slaves at the bottom who are property

## **Roman Religions:**

- Totally interwoven with ordinary life
- Worship of the emperors
- All people needed to be involved in the worship of the gods
- Lots of different views existed about the gods

**Matthew 2:1-18**

Matthew 2:1-18 gives a description of the visit of the Magi to Herod and, eventually, their visit to the infant, Jesus. What we would ask in this section of the Bible are questions like this:

- Who are the actors in the story?
- What are the story/symbol/praxis/questions of each of the actors in the story?

**The Jewish Story:**

- The story revolves around Family and Land
- Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the 12 tribes
- The most important part of the story was the Exodus – Yahweh rescues his family from slavery
- Prophets and Kings
- Exile into Babylon
- What will happen now?
- Return from Babylon and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple Period
- The end of the story is told in a range of different ways;
  - The High Priest in the temple
  - The Essenes
  - The Pharisees – the keeping of the law
- The storytelling festivals
- A story in search of an ending.....

Consider the following Scriptural verses and identify which aspect of the Jewish story is being referred to;

- ✓ Mark 12:26
- ✓ John 8:39
- ✓ Romans 11:1
- ✓ Matt 26:2
- ✓ John 1:29
- ✓ 1 Peter 1:19
- ✓ 1 Peter 2:9
- ✓ Mark 11:7-11
- ✓ Mark 1:13
- ✓ Matthew 2:13-15
- ✓ Matthew 1:17

## Jewish Symbols

- Temple
  - The place where heaven and earth overlapped
  - When you are in the temple you are in God's space
  - The Temple was the focal point of the land and the people
  - A sign of God's purposes for the world
- Torah
  - The Law or the 1<sup>st</sup> 5 books of the Hebrew Bible
  - The covenant document – the marriage document “I will be your God, you will be my people”
  - It spoke of ‘This is God's purpose for the world and for Israel, as the ones who are taking God's purpose to the world and this is how I am rescuing you from slavery to be my people, and this is what my people need to look like.’
  - Both Temple and Torah were meant to be a look ahead to the total re-establishment of the Kingdom of God.
  - Shaped by Torah and Temple Israel saw themselves as the family of Yahweh

### ***Read John 5:39-40.***

Even though we are only looking at two verses here, in the context of the passage these two verses become very important. Through these two verses we see the importance of Torah or the Jewish Scriptures in general. We must remember that when Jesus talks about searching the Scriptures, He is referring to the Hebrew Scriptures. The New Testament had not yet been written. So, we ask the following questions:

What is the role of the symbol in the narrative?

How does Jesus interact with their understanding of the importance of one of the chief Jewish symbols, the Torah?

How does the understanding of how a redefining of the point of the Torah work in the narrative of John 5? What point does Jesus make in declaring what He does in this narrative particularly with reference to Torah?

## Jewish Praxis

Focused on the 2 symbols – Temple and Torah

- Torah
  - Circumcision

- Sabbath keeping
- Food laws – including not eating with non-Jews
- Temple
  - Yearly festivals
  - Sacrifice

## Jewish Questions

- Who are we? We are Israel
- Where are we? We are still in exile
- What's wrong? People are not following Temple and Torah as they should
- What time is it? A mixture of answers – waiting, working, already changing, an in-between time

### *Read John 7:1-52*

Identify the key elements of our worldview diagram; story, symbols, praxis, in this text for each of the main characters:

- Jesus' brothers
- The Jewish leaders
- The crowd
- Jesus

### *Read Luke 4:14-30*

Identify the different elements of worldview at work within this text:

- Story
- Symbols
- Praxis
- Questions

In what way does Jesus reinforce different elements in the Jewish worldview diagram?

In what ways does Jesus seem to go against the prevailing Jewish worldview?

## Why does it Matter?

“...because if we don't understand why things are the way they are (for better and for worse), it makes it much harder to conserve what we like and fix what we don't. It matters, too, because one-sided history makes for a more belligerent, polarised, contemptuous public discourse.” Nick Spencer, *The Evolution of the West: How Christianity has shaped our Values*.