

Society and Culture:
Social classes, economic life and entertainment



The New Testament World - Week 4
Adult Education

Roman Society & Culture

Military

Legions –

- Citizen soldiers
- By Tiberius, mostly non-Italian
- Recruits obtain citizenship
- Legion was 6000 soldiers
- 25 legions under Tiberius
- Divided into 10 cohorts of 6 centuries (100 men)
- While not at war, legionaries performed civil service: construction, maintenance, roads, etc.
- 17-46 years old can be drafted
- Went through rigorous evaluation before enlisting
- Wore nails in their sandals

Emblems and Weapons –

- Eagle (aquila) was the principal legionary emblem
- Main weapons of foot soldiers were the short sword and lance (3.5 feet long with an iron point joined to staff of wood)

Auxiliaries –

- Specialized troops: cavalry, slingers, archers, etc.
- Recruited from native populations
- Received citizenship for themselves and their families
- Regiment (cohort) was either 500 or 1000 men

Praetorian Guard –

- 9 or 12 cohorts of 500 or 1000
- Formed body guard of the princes
- Higher standard and higher pay than regular soldiers

Social Classes

Senatorial Order –

- Filled by official magistracies of Rome (quaestor, praetor, consul)
- Broad purple stripe on toga
- Chief civilian and military administrators
- Must be rich before entering the Senate
- Senatorial was worth 250,000 dinarii

Equestrian Order –

- Knights
- Wealth of 100,000 denarii
- Wealthy, educated and related to senatorial families
- Either born into the order or advanced into it

Municipal Aristocracies –

- Top members were decurions (municipal senates)
- 100 members in town in the west
- Paid heavy tax for the prestige

Plebeians and Other Free Persons –

- Not senatorial or equestrian or decurions

Freedmen –

- Former slaves in relationship with their owners
- Mutual responsibilities

Slaves –

- Very extensive
- POWs made cheap slaves
- 1 in 5 residents of Rome were slaves
- Legal status of a possession
- No legal rights, completely subjugated to their master
- Generally, could not marry and their children belonged to the slave mother
- Did every kind of work
- Did not always have a negative economic consequences
- *Peculium* was money or property of the owner available to the slaves
- Christianity gave instructions for existing social structure

Roman Citizenship

- Gradually discovered dual citizenship
- Could be obtained:
 - Birth to citizen parents
 - Slaves of citizens
 - Favor for special service
 - Discharge from service
- Privileges of citizenship:
 - Voting
 - Freedom from degrading forms of punishment
 - Right to appeal to Rome

Roman Law

- Sources:
 - Laws and statues enacted by a vote of the people
 - Resolutions of the Senate
 - Edicts of magistrates
 - Constitutions of emperors
 - Replies of jurists
- Imperium could be held to impose the death sentence

- Roman officials became involved in matters affecting public order
- Judicial process – drawing up of charges by interested party, no public prosecutor
- No professional lawyers (“lawyers” in the New Testament were Torah experts)
- Adoption – at any age, debts were cancelled, name was taken and entitled to inheritance

Social Relations

Patron-Client Relationship –

- Both had duties to each other
- Was a personal relationship – not business
- Different social classes
- Voluntary

Friendship –

- All things in common
- Mutual exhortations and frankness
- Willingness to share troubles and make sacrifices for one another

Social Networks –

- Neighborhoods, ethnic groups, cities of origin, occupations, religious cults, etc.

Honor and Shame –

- The standard was public opinion
- Individual’s behavior was judged according to what brought honor and shame on the social group
- Honor came to a person because of birth or family
- Might be achieved through acts of courage or benevolence
- Shame came from conduct that should not be done in society

Morality –

- Slavery gave occasion for cruelty and sexual license
- Common punishment for crimes were sentencing to the mines and execution by crucifixion
- Jewish apologetics said immorality came from idol worship
- Sacred prostitutes were common in other cults
- Grouping of duties:
 - Husbands-wives
 - Parents-children
 - Masters-slaves
- Cult had little to do with morality except grave offenses

Marriage and Family –

- Basic unit of society
- Husband, wife, children, slaves and sometimes other relatives
- Greek law required that marriage be preceded by a betrothal agreement
- Marriages are two parts – betrothal and ceremony

- Early betrothals were ceremonial with witness and dowry
- Later it became a business agreement
- Girls were married in their teens, men around 30 (partly due to army service)
- United by common religious observances
- Father pledged to groom with witnesses and dowry agreement
- Roman Republic had three forms of marriage:
 - *Confarreatio* (religious ceremony)
 - *Coemptio* (sale of a woman)
 - *Usus* (common law for one year or more)
- Roman Weddings:
 - Bride was prepared for wedding with a bath and special garments
 - Torchlight procession to the grooms house
 - Couples clasp hands, formulas of marriage are pronounced, contract is read and signed
 - Girls married in early teens, men around 30
- Jewish Weddings:
 - Contract between two families
 - Two stages – betrothal and wedding
 - Betrothal was legal and could only be broken by divorce
 - Bride price
 - Ketubah listing the husbands duties to his wife and the amount due to her if he should divorce her or die
 - Huppah was set up and bride went to the groom's house
 - Jewish men expected to marry at 18
- Prostitution and adultery were common for Greeks and Romans
- Divorce required little formality
- 1st century marriage could be ended by woman or man
- Egypt – women could divorce husband for sexual misconduct
- Dowry was returned to the woman in a divorce
- Children went with the father
- Augustus brought family under the state in 19/18BCE
- Tried to increase birth rate by encouraging marriage and stable family life
- Bachelors were limited in the inheritances
- Widowed and divorced women were required to remarry within stipulated times
- Men could not be prosecuted for adultery, but women could and were banished

Place of Women –

Greek:

- Confinement to the home prevented suspicion of infidelity and to protect the legitimacy of the children
- Woman managed the household and in that sphere they were supreme
- Men had female companions that could act as prostitutes – they provided entertainment and conversation at parties
- Slave girls were kept for household duties
- Wives bore legitimate children and managed affairs in the absence of their husbands

Jewish:

- Jewish women had less freedom than Roman women but more than Greek women
- Household duties of a Jewish woman – grinding flour, cooking, laundry, making beds and spinning wool
- Husbands were required to provide food, clothing and sexual relations
- Women's influence in the family was greater than the man
- Life expectancy for a woman was shorter than a man's because of malnutrition, childbearing at an immature age, etc.

Roman:

- Some women were patrons due to wealth
- Patrons had considerable power and influence
- Frequently held civil offices
- Some were priestesses
- Variety of occupations – physicians, musicians, artists, athletes, merchants, manufacturing, etc.
- Virtues – chastity, loyalty to the husband, hardworking, able to manage the household and train children

Children –

- High mortality rate
- Important for the security of their family and community
- Puberty also brought the ability to reason
- Adulthood – marriage for girl and registry as a citizen (17) for a boy
- Many children were abandoned and left exposed to die
- After 230BCE, a one-child family was commonest in Greece
- Daughter was an economic liability (dowry)
- Abortions were often attempted, often fatal for the mother and were made illegal under Septimius Severus
- Child was not accepted as family until acknowledged by the father as his child and received through a religious ceremony
- Exposure was not considered murder but refusal to admit to society
- Miscarriages and infant mortality were extremely common

Economic Life

- Basis for agricultural economy – olives, grapes, grain and sheep
- No large industry
- Traditional industry – ceramics, mining, textiles and small handicrafts
- Blown glass emerged in NT times
- Marketplace was a large open area, rectangular, public monuments and statues, surrounded by a *stoa* which had shops and offices behind
- City had offices for magistrates, gymnasium, theater, public fountain and agora
- Ptolemies: (South/Egypt)
 - Land in hand and the king's land in grant

- Grant land was temple lands, cleruch land (military settlers), gift land (officials) and private land (house and garden cultivated by peasants)
- Seleucids: (North)
 - Three land categories – king’s land, temple land, city land
 - Better governed than Egypt
- Palestine: (In the middle)
 - Less prosperous than other regions
 - Jewish population was primarily engaged in agriculture
 - Chief products – olives, wine, wheat and barley
 - Jesus’ parables give an accurate portrayal of common life

Trade and Travel –

- Four main lines of communication between Rome and the eastern Mediterranean – 2 land and 2 sea
 - Sea Route from Ostia or Petoli to Alexandria (merchant ships)
 - Appian Way to Brundisium and then by ship to Corinth and beyond
 - Appian Way and then by ship to Ephesus and from there by land to the interior (most common by Christians)
 - Land Route to Brundisium across the Adriatic Sea to Dyrrachium and across Macedonia
- Sea travel was dangerous but frequent
- Estimated 53,000 miles of Roman roads from Scotland to the Euphrates
- Appian Way – oldest, began in 312BCE, route that Paul used to Rome
- Egnatian Way – began in 145BCE
- Inns were common but with bad reputation
- Upper class stayed with friends along the way
- Churches provided hospitality for traveling Christians
- Many synagogues had guest houses

Coinage –

- Began in western Asia Minor in the 7th century BCE (lumps of metal stamped to guarantee weight and quality)
- 516BCE Persian coins issued
- 580BCE first Athenian coins with mythological scenes of gods and heroes
- Alexander issued extensive coinage
- Heroes, gods and sacred animals were popular
- Coinage proper began in 269BCE
- 211BCE first Roman coins, the denarius
- 197BCE special issue gold coins in Greece in honor of Flamininus who defeated Philip V
- Rulers used coins for propaganda
- Palestine:
 - 5th and 4th centuries BCE Persian coinage
 - Shekel in the OT was weight only
 - Jewish coinage started with either John Hyrcanus (134-104), Aristobolus (104-103) or Alexander Jannaeus (103-76BCE)

- Hasmoneans avoided images and used anchor pomegranate, etc
- Local mints issued bronze coins, imperial mints issued gold and silver

Taxation –

- Census started with Augustus
- Excellent work in supervising tax collecting and making taxation equitable
 - Direct taxes (tribute)
 - Agriculture (tributum soli) by land owners
 - Head tax (tributum capitis)
 - Indirect taxes (vectigalia) and frontier dues (portoria were most important)
- Publicans were contractors employed to collect indirect taxes (class of nights)
- Telonai (east) were local men of wealth and influence who contracted with their city or district (in Palestine they had no authority to collect payment)
- Telonai were Zaccheus and Matthew, employed by Antipas

Culture and Entertainment

Clothing and Appearance –

- Undergarment was tunic (Latin) or chiton (Greek)
- Outer garment was himation (or pallium/palla in Latin)
- Roman freeborn males wore a toga. (High rank had purple border)
- Veils for women:
 - Jewish women were always veiled in public
 - Greek and Roman sources say mixed
 - Classical Greece – veil was worn outside the house by women who had reached sexual maturity

Theaters

- Theater –
 - semi-circle, called “amphitheater” today, backdrop was a “skene”,
 - actors did not speak
 - orchestra was the voices
 - 1 Cor 13, love was talking about brass jars that set in front of the state, when the gods spoke the actor spoke into the brass jars which echoed deep, thunder was a thin, brass sheet
- Amphitheater –
 - Round Arena
 - Gladiator fights, athletics, etc. (very bloody) Gladiator games drew huge crowds and replaced Greek drama and athletics
- Hippodrome –
 - Hippo is Greek for horse
 - Chariot races Hippodrome was name in Greek east, enclosed for chariot racing
 - Important sport among aristocratic Greeks
 - Winners received large sums of money and popularity
- Greek drama began in the festivals of Dionysus

- Altar of Dionysus occupied the center of the orchestra (round in center front area)
- Roman theater had enclosed structure with back wall, orchestra was a half circle
- Largest place for public gathering
- Comedy flourished in Hellenistic theater
- By Christian era, Greek drama had passed
- Vulgar and sexual content was common
- Few actors would play all the parts (hypocrite)

Athletics –

- Contests accompanied Greek religious festivals
- Religious games began with sacrifice and prayer
- Contestants made vows to the deity
- Hellenistic and Roman times had paid professional athletes
- Physical training centered in the gymnasium
- Foot races were held in the stadium
- Major sports were running, boxing, pentathlon (running, long jump, discus, javelin and wrestling) and pankration (combination of boxing, wrestling, kicking – anything except biting and gouging)

Gymnasia and Baths –

- Gym was Greek, bath was Roman but hybrid developed
- Cultural and social institutions
- Primarily for citizens or at least moderately wealthy
- Gymnasia :
 - Court yard in the middle of a portico with rooms around
 - Bathing rooms, dressing rooms and storage rooms
 - Lecture hall and statues, altars and emblems to Hermes and Heracles
- Baths:
 - Every town had one or more
 - Pools for bathing, different temperatures
 - Warm, hot, warm and cold (order)
 - Furnaces and underground ducts with hot air flues
 - Large baths had large halls, smaller game or conversation rooms, gardens, swimming pools, dressing rooms and palaestrae.
 - Country club and community center
 - Mixed bathing started in the first century CE
 - Public nudity was not always a matter for concern
 - Baths were sometimes associated with immorality

Banquets –

- Dinner party was the most important social occasion
- Greek:
 - Guests elected a president who determined the mixture of wine and water and presided over the evening's entertainment
- Rome:

- Established rules about rank and honor determined by one's place in the dining room
- Three couches (triclinium)
- Ate reclining
- Wine was served after dinner
- Guests might play games or be entertained

Music –

- Weddings, funerals, banquets, official occasions, sacrifice and ritual acts
- Aulos was wind instrument which sounded like an oboe
- Syrinx had different lengths of pipes (pop among rural folk)
- Kithara was stringed instrument to accompany singing
- Played an important role in Greek education

Education

Roman/Greek:

- Most schools were small and private with a single teacher
- Teaching was a humble and despised occupation
- School year went from October to June
- Classroom was usually a shop in the town center
- Primary, secondary and advanced
- Primary began at age 7 – reading, writing and basic arithmetic
- Emphasis on memorization and copying
- Discipline was stern
- Secondary was for upper class – grammar, rhetoric, geometry, arithmetic, astronomy and music
- Physical education was for sport and moral training
- Advanced education – finishing school for young men, PE, rhetoric, philosophy with a library. For greater social significance and political office
- Graduate could choose from philosophy, medicine or law
- Rhetorical education was highly important
- Speech was the queen of studies
- Education was voluntary
- Literacy rate of Hellenistic and early Roman times was high
- Girls and boys went to elementary schools
- Most boys learned a trade and most girls learned household skills

Jewish education:

- Mainly religious
- Home was center for religious education, elementary school for reading and writing
- Classes often in synagogue or adjoining room
- Expected to be able to read the Hebrew scriptures
- Great emphasis on memorizing scripture
- Secondary school – oral law, probably began at 13

- Advanced study – interpretation and rabbinic legal opinions, to prepare for rabbinic ordination or scholar
- Jewish women were discouraged from legal studies

Jewish Society and Culture

Jewish Marriage –

- Judaism expected male to be married at 18
- Torah student could delay
- The point is procreation
- If the wife doesn't bear children in 10 years she was divorced
- *Betrothal*
 - Formal act
 - She became his legal wife
 - A "get" (divorce) was required to break betrothal
 - Virgin had to wait one year from betrothal to marriage
 - Divorced or widow waited 30 days
 - Permissible but not practical to have more than one wife
 - Dowry is the groom's and the gift of the groom to the bride belonged only to the bride
- *Ketubah*
 - Written in Aramaic
 - Legally binding document
 - Includes the amount of money husband will pay wife for a divorce (often high enough to make it impossible)
 - Duties of both parties
 - Promise that he wouldn't have more than one wife
- *Divorce*
 - Only a man could file for divorce
 - Woman was paid the amount specified in the Ketubah
 - A tanner's wife could ask for a divorce and it was granted (tanners stunk from the dung used in dying hide)
 - Man could not force his wife to spin flax for linen because it makes the fingers and mouth swell and bleed
 - Woman could remarry, but if she did, she could not return to first husband
 - Woman could not release her husband from the price in the ketubah
 - Talmud talks extensively about divorce
 - Men would simply leave, assume a new name start a new family
 - Grounds for divorce:
 - Infidelity (man was obligated to divorce), she could be forgiven and she would not be stoned rather than pressing charges. He could not remarry her.

- Hillel took theoretical divorce and tried to find exactly what the law stipulated
- Shamai made it very difficult to divorce – the only situation where Yeshua sided with Shamai

Status of Women –

- Their job was to manage the household which was not below the man
- Did not study, some believed that women lacked the ability
 - Aristocratic women were taught Greek (after Herod's death)
 - Rural women were generally illiterate because she had no need for such education.
 - Children belonged to their mother until 3
 - From 3 to 5, the boys went with their fathers, formal education began
 - Talmud says that if children are nursed beyond 3 years, they will be retarded
 - At 5 boys started school and to read the Torah
 - Girls were not educated
 - Some torah topics were beyond women
- Women are exempt from time related commandments (prayers)
- All negative commandments are required (Thou shalt not)
- Responsible for household religious life (mezuzah, Shabbat, etc)
- Men and women were not separated in Second Temple period

Education –

- Synagogue was dependant on school, not the other way around
- Nothing written regarding Jewish education in the Second Temple Period, only Talmud
- Children started at age 6
- Learned Hebrew at school
- Talmud describes school:
 - Every town with 25 boys or 125 families
 - Community paid the chazzan/teacher regardless of whether or not they have children
 - Studied Torah
 - After school, went to Beit Midrash
 - Did not exist before Hillel (7 rules of exegesis)
 - Everything is learned orally and memorized
 - A good student became a scribe (many meanings)
 - Good memory and analysis
 - Earliest office of “scribe” was a secretary
 - Sage / Wise person (Talmudic time only)
 - Ordained office, after the rabbinut
 - Not allowed to live in a town with no teacher or school
 - All teaching was in Hebrew
- Scribes:
 - Biblically, scribes were wise teachers and respected teachers with authority

- Help make community decision
- Later became epigraphers
 - Minor or non-existent during 2nd Temple
- Most scribes were Pharisees
 - In Mishnaic times (tanna'im), ordained position
 - Later scribes were called rabbi (or sage)
- Considered the descendants of the Prophets

Jewish Society –

- *Royal court:*
 - The highest class
 - Herod was extremely wealthy
 - Personal guard of 500
 - Private tutors, cupbearers, scribes, etc
 - Copper mines in Cyprus
 - Arrested rich men and confiscated their wealth
 - Taxed the people
 - Had 10 wives and 1 queen
 - Only eunuchs were allowed near his wives
- *Small wealthy population (not Aristocracy):*
 - Gave large dowries (10% to bride)
 - Took poor into their homes during Pesach
 - Nicodemus and Joseph of Aramathea
 - Most Pharisees were wealthy class
 - Many Sadducees were Aristocracy
 - Chief priests were part of wealthy class
 - Unsure if the salary was paid from treasury
 - Chief priest:
 - Collected taxes and got kick backs
 - Almost always a Zadokite until Jason
 - After Jason it was bought and sold
- *Middle class:*
 - Merchants, traders, shopkeepers, craftsmen, etc
 - Most successful business men were tourism and religious wares
 - Innkeepers made a good living
 - Pilgrims were required to stay over night in Jerusalem
 - Second tithe in mishnah was to be spent on oneself inside Jerusalem (new clothes, etc)
- *Farmers:*
 - Am Israel (the majority)
 - Most owned small plots of land
 - Helped by children
 - Grow crops to live off of and some for bartering
 - Lots of bartering in this class
 - Self-sufficient lifestyle
 - Not based on money

- Drought brings in the money system which makes farmers poor
 - Have to sell land or become tenant farmers
- Inheritance gave a double portion to the oldest son
- Other sons became beggars, day laborers, thieves, etc.
- Prime land belonged to the king
- *Poor:*
 - Poor class only exist in an urban society
 - Day laborers, beggars or slaves
 - Priests
 - 24 courses, twice a year
 - Scattered throughout the country
 - Two kinds of slaves:
 - Hebrew slave
 - Jew who sold his property or his children
 - Belonged bodily to his master
 - Could be sold but only to another Jew and only in payment to another debt
 - Had families
 - Could only serve up to 6 years
 - Had to be freed on the year of Jubilee unless he chose to be a bondservant
 - Canaanite slave (any non-Jew)
 - Lower than a human
 - Property like an animal
 - Sold in the marketplace
 - Average worth was 100 dinar (1 month's wage)
 - Had no status, no connection to their family
 - Could be punished however the master seemed fit, if disfigured he was set free. If he was killed the master was punished
 - Jew was allowed non-Jewish slaves, but they had to be circumcised. (not conversion)
 - Allowed them to eat the Passover
 - If refused, they were sold in a year
 - Could not be counted in the minyan
 - Non-Jewish female slaves were mikved
- *Tax Collector:*
 - The right to be a tax farmer was sold
 - Tax farmers had tax collectors
 - Rome set the price and each added a little more
 - Were considered thieves
 - Tax collector's money was not accepted in the Temple
 - The terms "tax collector" and "sinner" were synonymous