

The Dead Sea Scrolls

Intertestamental Period Seminar

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“Request Night”

“Three Questions”

Answer Me These Questions Three...

- What happened between 30 and 70 CE?
- What have the Scrolls taught us about the early Church?
- What is Midrash?



“What happened between 30
and 70 CE?”

Conversion of Helena

- Parthian Queen, converted to Judaism
- Allegedly very pious, lived under the Nazarite vow for 21 years
- Many of her people also converted.
- Following the end of the Jewish War, many Parthian Jews became Christians.



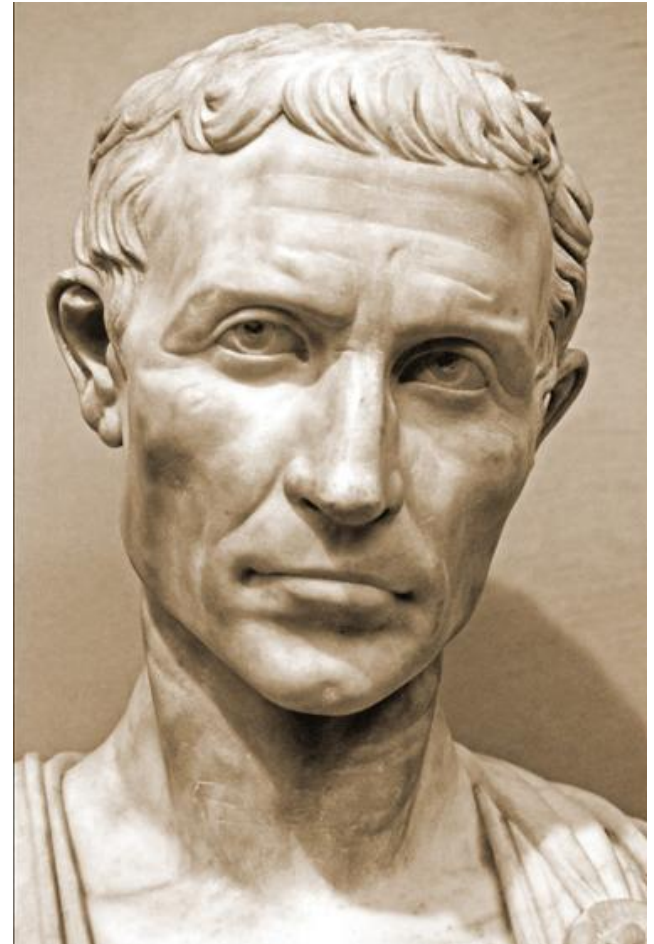
Judeo-Roman Conflict

- Growing discontent with Roman Rule
- Heightened messianic expectations
- Declining economic situation
- Multiple small rebellions leading up to the Jewish War



Pontius Pilate (26-36 CE)

- Refused to respect Jewish religious mores
- Famous for summary executions
- Confiscated Temple treasury to build an aquaduct
- Massacre of Samaritans on Mt. Gerezim



Caligula and the Jews (d. 41 CE)

- Declared himself a deity in 39 CE
- Ordered his statue to be set up in the Temple
- Threatened to destroy Temple when Jews refused
- “So you are the enemies of the gods, the only people who refuse to recognize my divinity.”



Death of Herod Antipus (44 CE)

- “And there was much rejoicing...”
- Prompted several revolts:
 - Theudas (Acts 5:36)
 - Simon and Jacob
- Revolts crushed by 48 CE



66 CE – The Revolt Begins

- Last Roman Procurator, Florus steals vast amount of silver from the Temple.
- Florus put down resulting riots by unleashing his garrison; 3,500 people killed.
- Jewish population drove the Romans from Jerusalem.
- Zealot leader Eleazar ordered the slaughter of Roman prisoners, assassinated Zealot leader Menahem, killed the High Priest.

Early Jewish Victories

- Zealots seize Masada
- Wiped out Roman garrison in Jerusalem
- Destroyed a Roman force sent from Syria to quell the uprising
- Jews became overconfident, believed they could defeat Rome



Jewish Infighting

- Zealot leaders distrusted, sometimes fought against each other.
- John of Gischala and Simon bar Gioria weakened Jews through civil war
- Destruction of food supply meant stored against siege



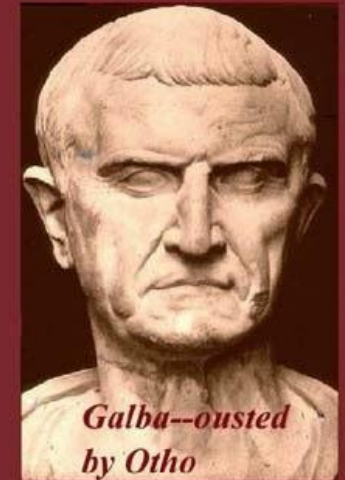
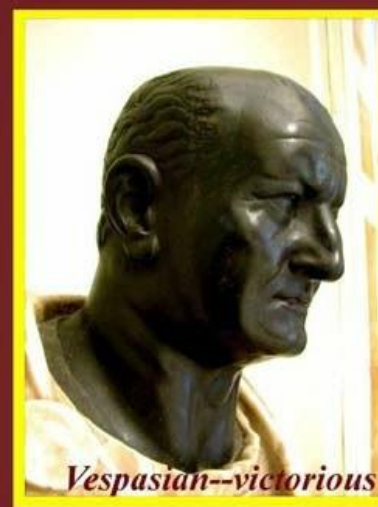
Defeat

- Jerusalem Temple destroyed
- Estimated 1 million Jews killed in the uprising
- “Price of a slave fell below the price of a donkey.”
- Center of Jewish culture moved to Babylon

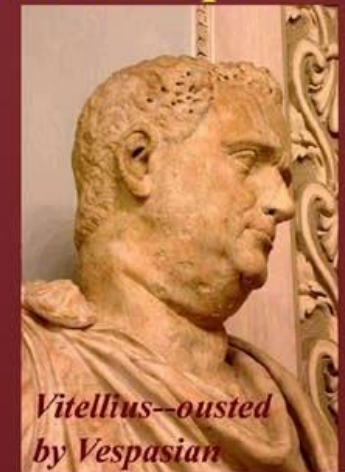
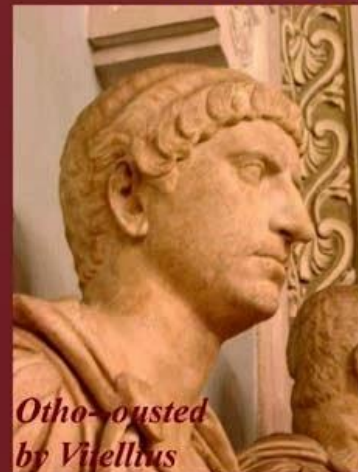


68 CE: The Year of the Four Emperors

- Galba, supplanted by Otho
- Otho, supplanted by Vitellus
- Vitellus, supplanted by Vespasian
- Marked the end of the Augustan imperial dynasty



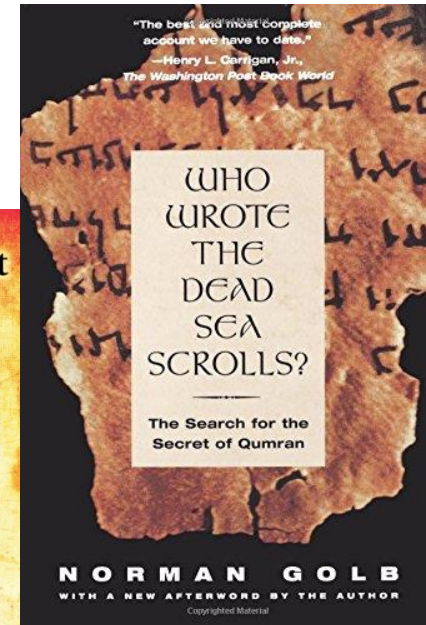
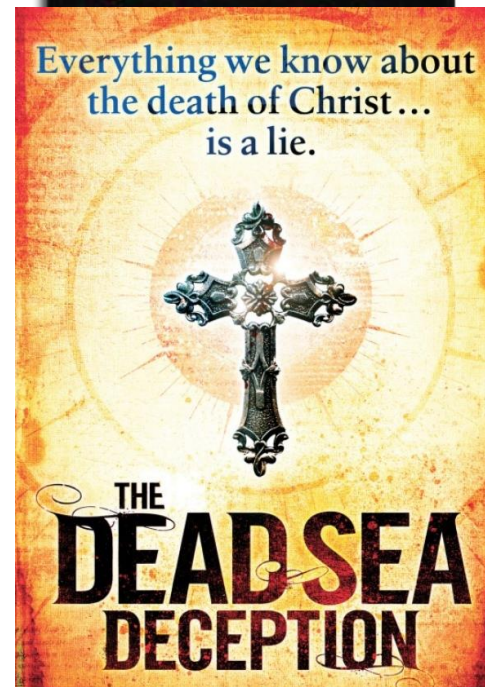
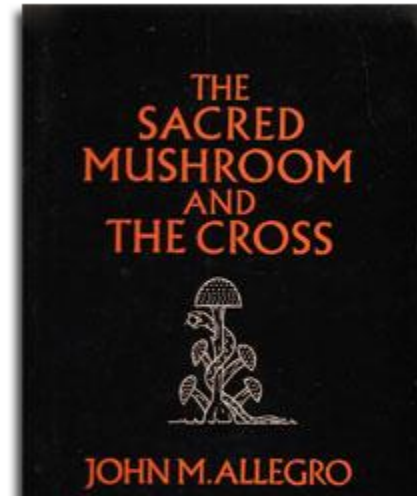
**69 AD--
The Year of Four Emperors**



What have the Scrolls taught us
about the early Church?

Christians and Cranks

- Not written by Christians
- Pre-Christian
- Not suppressed by the Vatican
- Does not “overturn” Christianity (whatever that means)



“The Galilean Master . . . appears in many respects as an astonishing reincarnation of [the Teacher of Righteousness in the scrolls]. Like the latter, He preached penitence, poverty, humility, love of one's neighbor, chastity. Like him, He prescribed the observance of the law of Moses, the whole Law, but the Law finished and perfected, thanks to His own revelations. Like him, He was the Elect and Messiah of God, the Messiah redeemer of the world. Like him, He was the object of the hostility of the priests....

“Like him He was condemned and put to death. Like him He pronounced judgment on Jerusalem, which was taken and destroyed by the Romans for having put Him to death. Like him, at the end of time, He will be the supreme judge. Like him, He founded a Church whose adherents fervently awaited his glorious return.”

-- Andre Dupont-Somer

What We Have Learned

- Greater detail about the larger messianic movements of which Christianity was part
- Legitimacy questions of the temple administration
- Christianity has a better context.



“What is Midrash?”

The Bible: Working Assumptions

1. The text was multi-layered. There was a surface interpretation, and another deeper interpretation, often more than one
2. Every word of the text had import; there are no wasted, superfluous words in the Bible, so when there is a repetition, the second instance must have a different or additional meaning apart from the first.

Midrash

- A type of interpretation
- A literary genre
- A verb, “to midrash” a text
- Imaginative expansions of scripture to make a point
- Often used to justify a later rabbinic law that isn’t specifically stated in the Torah
- Authority lies in derivation from Biblical text (See “*Assumptions*”)

Example of a Midrash

“*Tzedek, tzedek* shall you pursue in order that you may live and inherit the land that the Lord your God is giving you” (Deut. 16:20).

“Justice you shall pursue.” How do we know that one who is acquitted by the *beit din* [court] cannot later be convicted? The text says, “Justice, justice you shall pursue.” How do we know that one who is convicted can go back to court to be acquitted? The text says, “Justice, justice you shall pursue.”

A New Testament Midrash

“Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.”

-- Luke 4

The Temptations as Midrash

- Plays off Deuteronomy 6 and 8
- Audience would catch the comparison with the Israelites in the desert
 - Man does not live on bread alone
 - Fear the Lord your God and serve him only
 - Do not put the Lord your God to the test



A Midrash About Abraham

“And Haran died in the presence of his father Terah in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees.”

-- Gen. 11:28

The Question:

“Why and how did Haran die in the presence of his father?”

THANK YOU!!!