

No Other Gods
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Slide 1

1. This is the first in a series of four presentations about experiences of the Jewish people during about the last 2,600 years.
2. During this series, we will look at the many times and many places where Jews have been hated, discriminated against, persecuted and killed because of their beliefs and practices or merely because of their existence.
2. But one criticism of a classic book on Jewish persecution is that it portrays the **“Jewish people as perpetual victims.”** Flannery, *The Anguish of the Jews* viii.
3. Alongside the Jewish history of persecution is a history of extraordinary resilience and achievement.
4. As Mark Twain wrote in the nineteenth century: **“[The Jew’s] contributions to the world’s list of great names in literature, science, art, music, finance, medicine, and abstruse learning are . . . way out of proportion to the weakness of his numbers. He has made a marvelous fight in this world in all ages and has done it with his hands tied behind him.”** <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/mark-twain-quotations-on-judaism-and-israel>
5. As we will see, Jewish anguish and achievements have often been linked – the persecutions leading to opportunities for achievement and the achievements sometimes leading to more persecutions.
6. Today we look at the Jewish experience until about 400 A.D., starting well before Christianity had begun.
7. We will see that many of the charges against the Jewish people, both before and after the emergence of Christianity, came from their insistence that Yahweh, the God of Moses, is the only God in the universe.
8. We will also see that some of the early charges against the Jewish people became part of the ongoing charges against them.

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1. The term “Jew” comes from the Kingdom of Judah, which existed in the southern portion of what is now the State of Israel, with its capital in Jerusalem.
2. So long as the Jews lived in Judah, their homeland, persecution against them as a group was impossible – there was no one else to persecute them.

3. As one author notes: **“There is no antisemitism until the Jews, having abandoned their native land, settle as immigrants in foreign countries and come into contact with natives or older settlers, whose customs, race and religion are different from those of the Hebrews.”** Lazare, *Antisemitism* at 19.

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1. In 586 B.C., the Babylonians under King Nebuchadnezzar conquered Judah and destroyed the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem.
2. **“The king and his bureaucracy were taken [to Babylon], together with ten thousand members of the aristocracy and the military and all blacksmiths and metalworkers.”** Armstrong, *Jerusalem* at 77.
3. Many remaining **“fled to Egypt for fear of the Babylonians.”** *2 Kings* 25:26.
4. After Cyrus the Great of Persia conquered Babylon in about 539 B.C., he helped rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem and allowed the Jews to return to Judah, but many of the Jews decided to stay where they were.

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1. At the time of the dispersal of Jews, the people into whose lands they settled worshipped gods derived from nature, represented by idols.
2. Because the gods were similar, most people at the time could easily accept the gods of other cultures – the foreign gods were the same as theirs with different names.
3. In addition, these ancient cultures were polytheistic, so there was no concern that worshipping a foreign god was inconsistent with their religious beliefs.

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1. The Jews were different.
2. Yahweh, the God of Moses, was not in nature and was invisible.
3. More important, Yahweh had commanded the Jews to **“have no other gods before me”** and to **“not make for yourself an idol.”** *Exodus* 20:3-4.
4. As a result, the Jews refused to worship the gods of the people around them and refused to worship human beings, no matter their status.
5. They also refused to participate in the regular festivals honoring foreign gods, typically seen as a way of keeping the gods happy and things on earth running smoothly.
6. The Jews themselves recognized that these views put them in jeopardy.

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1. *Esther* was written by a Jewish author around the middle of the fifth century B.C., when the Persians were in control of the Middle East.
2. According to the story, an aide to King Xerxes became angry when Mordecai, a descendant of Jews exiled by Nebuchadnezzar, refused to kneel before him. *Esther* 3:2.
3. Enraged, the aide asked the king to **“destroy all Mordecai’s people, the Jews, throughout the whole kingdom of Xerxes.”** *Esther* 3:5.
4. The aide explained his reasons to Xerxes: **“There is a certain people dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom who keep themselves separate. Their customs are different from those of all other people, and they do not obey the king’s laws; it is not in the king’s best interest to tolerate them.”** *Esther* 3:8.
5. The king agreed with the plan, but was stopped from executing it by the beautiful Esther, who had become his queen after concealing her Jewish identity.
6. The king then gave the Jews **“the right to assemble and protect themselves”** and **“to destroy, kill and annihilate any armed force of any nationality or province that might attack them or their children; and to plunder the property of their enemies.”** *Esther* 8:11.
7. Mordecai the Jew **“became more and more powerful”** and **“the Jews got the upper hand over those who hated them.”** *Esther* 9:2, 4.
8. As a result of their new-found status and power, **“many people of other nationalities became Jews because fear of the Jews had seized them.”** *Esther* 8:17.
9. Although most scholars believe the story of Esther is fictional, it illustrates the story of the Jews throughout history – after being persecuted for their refusal to abandon their religious beliefs, they often gain influence beyond their numbers.
10. That additional influence sparks more resentment and hatred.

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1. In the fifth century B.C., Jews on Elephantine Island, near Aswan at the southern end of Egypt, built a temple to Yahweh, modeled on the Temple in Jerusalem.
2. As was their custom, they sacrificed lambs at their Temple.
3. In 410 B.C., Egyptians in the area, who worshipped a god represented as a ram, were outraged by this practice and destroyed the Elephantine Island Temple.
4. This is the first anti-Jewish action reported outside the Bible – it is not the last.

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1. In about 332 B.C., Greek forces under Alexander the Great took control of Egypt and the surrounding areas, including Judah, from the Persians.
2. Alexander founded the city of Alexandria along the Mediterranean coast in northern Egypt, which developed quickly into an important center of culture and learning.
3. Alexander invited Egyptian Jews to come to Alexandria to populate his new city and gave them a separate section of the city in which to live.

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1. When the Greeks looked at the gods of the conquered Egyptians, they found many of their gods with different names.
2. As a result, Greek and Egyptian religious practices soon merged, with some of the most impressive temples to Egyptian gods being built by the Greeks, like this temple to Horus at Edfu.
3. Jews refused to worship the Greco/Egyptian gods and did not participate in the various religious festivals taking place throughout the year in Alexandria.
4. This **“Jewish refusal to accept common religious and social standards was resented by the strongly Hellenized population”** of Alexandria. Flannery, *The Anguish of the Jews* at 11.
5. This resentment soon led to the first known writing directed against the Jews, a writing whose ancient characterization of the Jews **“proved remarkably stable across time.”** Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism* at 30.

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1. Manetho was an Egyptian priest who wrote a history of Egypt in about 300 B.C.
2. Although Manetho’s original writings have been lost, they are quoted in other ancient writings, including those of Josephus, the first century Jewish historian.
3. Manetho took the story of the Jews’ Exodus from Egypt set out in the Hebrew Scriptures and reversed the heroes and villains.
4. In Manetho’s retelling, the Egyptians expelled the Jews from Egypt because they were lepers and carried other diseases that were being transmitted to the Egyptians.
5. Manetho’s claim that Jews are responsible for disease and misery has been repeated over and over again in the years since, leading to the deaths of tens of thousands.
6. Manetho wrote that Moses imposed laws that **“were mainly opposite to the customs of the Egyptians.”** Josephus, *Against Apion* 1:26, 31.

7. According to Manetho, Moses taught the Jews that they should not worship the Egyptian gods and should kill animals sacred to the Egyptians. *Id.* at 1:26.
8. Manetho also wrote that Moses had taught that the Jews “**should join themselves to nobody but to those that were of this confederacy.**” *Id.*
9. Manetho’s claim that Jews were taught not to associate with other people is another charge that has been repeated in the more than two thousand years since.

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1. After Alexander the Great’s death in 323 B.C., his generals took over the territories he had conquered.
2. The area that includes what we now call Syria and Israel was controlled by Seleucus -- he and his successors became known as the Seleucids.
3. Some of the Jews in Jerusalem apparently began to worship the Greek gods, perhaps to avoid the many “**disasters have come upon us**” by not doing so. *1 Maccabees* 1:11.
5. But the majority of Jews insisted on remaining faithful to the laws of Moses and clashes arose between Jews true to their faith and those who were not.
6. Seeing an opportunity to force obedience to Greek gods, in 168 B.C., Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the Seleucid ruler at the time, initiated a surprise attack on Jerusalem.
7. He entered the Holy of Holies of the Temple, pillaging the religious items there and rededicating the Temple to the Greek god Zeus.
8. Antiochus ordered the cessation of all Jewish practices, including circumcision and worship on the Sabbath, on penalty of death.
9. The assault on Jerusalem killed as many as 40,000 Jews and sent 40,000 more into slavery. *2 Maccabees* 5:14.

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1. The attack of Antiochus IV led to the Maccabean Revolt, which succeeded in the Jews gaining almost complete independence from the Seleucids in what is now Israel and western Jordan and restoring their right to practice their traditional beliefs.
2. The unexpected success of the Maccabees against the Seleucids increased the prestige and attractiveness of Judaism throughout the Middle East and people began converting to Judaism.
3. According to several accounts, Jews were expelled from Rome in 139 B.C. because they were successfully converting Romans to Judaism.

4. Other Romans became so-called “God-fearers,” **Gentiles who liked the ethics and monotheistic beliefs of Judaism. They valued its antiquity. They found that these writings, discussions, and intellectual debates represented a sober contrast to the enthusiastic and orgiastic celebrations of the Roman mystery religions.**” Wilson, *How Jesus Became Christian* at 112.
5. The God-fearers worshipped alongside the Jews in the synagogues and many observed the Sabbath but were not circumcised.

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1. Writing in the early first century, the Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria, wrote: **“Our customs win over and convert the barbarians and the Helenes, the continent and the isles, the Orient and the Occident, Europe and Asia, the whole world, from end to end.”** Lazare, *Antisemitism* at 19.
2. A more recent author writes: **“The position of the Jews now little resembled what it had been a century or more before. Then a small, clannish people, they were now representative of an influential and proselytizing nation that threatened to rival the best efforts of Greek civilization in spiritual influence and industriousness.”** Flannery, *The Anguish of the Jews* at 14.
3. The independent Jewish kingdom established by the Maccabees came to an end in 63 B.C., when the Romans under General Pompey took control of Jerusalem.

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1. By the early first century A.D., there were about 20,000 Jews in Rome.
2. **“The majority resided in the dirtiest and busiest quarter of the city,”** where they **“were engaged in retail trade and the sale of second hand goods.”** Lazare, *Antisemitism* at 24.
3. As a Jewish-born author writes: **“The Jew of the Ghetto is already there.”** *Id.*
4. But some of the Jews in Rome had become both wealthy and influential.
5. As one author writes: **“They entered the business life of the city; they won many converts to their faith, and were endowed by the emperors with many privileges.”** Flannery, *The Anguish of the Jews* at 19.
6. As had happened before and would happen again and again, the success of Jews in Rome triggered resentment and hostility.
7. Seneca, the great Roman philosopher and statesman, wrote: **“This abominable nation has succeeded in spreading its usages throughout the whole world; the conquered have given their laws to the conquerors.”** Lazare, *Antisemitism* at 27.

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1. Apion was born and educated in Egypt and then moved to Rome, where he became a well-known first century writer.
2. Because of his popularity, Emperor Tiberius called him *cymbalum mundi*, the noise maker of the world.
3. More recently, he was called **“the Mt. Everest of Greco-Oriental antisemites.”** Flannery, *The Anguish of the Jews* at 16.
4. In *The History of Egypt*, Apion repeated Manetho’s claim that the Jews were driven from Egypt because they were lepers, adding that they were also blind and lame.
5. Apion claimed that the Jews had been forced to rest on the seventh day as they fled from Egypt because of a groin disease, which led them to Sabbath observance.
6. He claimed Antiochus IV Epiphanes found Jews worshipping the golden head of an ass in the Holy of Holies of the Temple, a claim that would be repeated later.
7. More important to later charges against Jews, Apion wrote that when Antiochus entered the Temple, he found a Greek man being fattened as part of an annual Jewish ritual.
8. Josephus quotes Apion’s account: **“[A]t the same time every year . . . they used to catch a Greek foreigner, and fatten him thus up every year, and then lead him to a certain wood, and kill him, and sacrifice with their accustomed solemnities, and taste of his entrails, and take an oath upon this sacrificing a Greek, that they would ever be at hostility with the Greeks; and that then they threw the remaining parts of the miserable wretch into a certain pit.”** Josephus, *Against Apion* 2:8.
9. As we will see, Apion’s claim of ritual murder by Jews has been modified and retold over and over, giving rise to what is often called the “blood libel.”

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1. By the first century, Alexandria, then under Roman rule, was one of the world’s most important cities, rivaling Rome in both size and influence.
2. About one-fifth of Alexandria’s one million inhabitants were Jewish, living in two sections of the city set aside for them and being governed by their own separate Senate.
3. The Jews of Alexandria had become farmers, ship-owners and traders and some of them were quite wealthy.
4. Josephus reports that the King of Egypt had given the Jews the exclusive right to control commerce on the Nile. Josephus, *Against Apion* 2:5.

5. According to Josephus, a pious Jew named Alexander Lysimachus was in charge of collecting the customs dues on arriving goods and became one of the richest men in the ancient world. Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 20:5:2.

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1. Most of Alexandria's Jews spoke Greek and read their Scriptures in Greek thanks to the Septuagint, initiated by Ptolemy II Philadelphus, the King of Egypt.
2. But, like their ancestors, they refused to worship the Greek and Egyptian gods and to participate in non-Jewish religious festivals.
3. They specifically refused to worship Roman Emperor Caligula as a god.
4. In 38 A.D., Avilius Flaccus, the prefect of Alexandria, decided to ingratiate himself with Emperor Caligula.
5. He issued a decree **“denouncing Alexandria’s ancient Jewish population as foreigners with no legal rights.”** Pollard, *The Rise and Fall of Alexandria* at 199.
6. With at least the acquiescence, if not encouragement, of Flaccus, Jews of all classes were **“rounded up and forced into a small part of the Delta district”** by a mob, where they were expected to starve to death. *Id.*
7. According to Philo of Alexandria, the older brother of Alexander Lysimachus who reported on these events, Jews who escaped the confinement were hunted down and killed, some by burning and some by crucifixion.
8. Philo himself went to Rome to plead for relief from what can be seen as the first pogrom directed at Jews.

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1. Although the persecution of Jews in Alexandria occurred a few years after the death of Jesus, it had nothing to do with Christianity.
2. In the earliest days of Christianity, there was no possibility of anti-Jewish animus among Christians -- the earliest followers of Jesus, like Jesus himself, were Jews.
3. So, as the Bible reports, **“[e]very day [the followers of Jesus] continued to meet together in the temple courts.”** *Acts* 2:46.
4. The *Epistle of James* is expressly directed **“[t]o the twelve tribes scattered among the nations”** (*James* 1:1) and asks readers to suppose **“there may come into your synagogue a man with a gold ring.”** (*James* 2:2 [Young's Literal Translation]).
5. Even after Christianity had spread beyond Jerusalem and among Gentiles, many followers of Jesus were Jewish and Christianity was **“ensconced within Judaism as one**

more form of this religion alongside such other Jewish factions as the Sadducees, Pharisees, Essenes and Zealots.” Wilson, *How Jesus Became Christian* at 95.

6. **“Thus, during the first years of the Christian era, the Synagogue and the ancient Church were despised alike.”** Lazare, *Antisemitism* at 28.

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1. In 66 A.D., a minor disturbance got out of hand in Caesarea Maritima, built by Herod the Great along the Mediterranean coast.
2. The riot spread to Jerusalem, where Zealots, violently opposed to Roman authority, took up the fight.
3. Hearing of what became known as the First Jewish Revolt, Emperor Nero sent 60,000 troops to the area to put it down.

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1. In 70 A.D., after a long siege, Roman troops broke down the walls of Jerusalem and entered the city.
2. Josephus reports that there were a total of 1.1 million casualties from the First Jewish Revolt, most of them Jewish. Josephus, *The Jewish War* 6.9.3.
3. The Temple was completely destroyed.
4. The fall of Jerusalem was an **“early signal of distinction of one [Jewish] entity from the other.”** Shanks, *Partings* at 73.
5. For their part, some Jews who accepted Jesus as the Messiah claimed that God had destroyed Jerusalem because the Jewish establishment had killed James, their first leader. Eusebius, *The History of the Church* at 61.
6. Others claimed that God had destroyed Jerusalem because not all its residents had accepted Jesus as the Messiah. *Id.* at 69.
7. On the other hand, the majority of Jews, who did not believe Jesus was the Messiah, **blamed the rise of Christianity, seeing the spiritual desertion of the Christian Jews as a cause of the ‘enmity’ between the people of Israel and their God.”** Klinghoffer, *Why the Jews Rejected Jesus* at 117.

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1. After the destruction of the Temple, **“the Israelite religion of priests performing rituals in the Jerusalem Temple gave way to a new religion of rabbis reading and interpreting texts in synagogues and Judaism as we know it was born.”** Prothero, *God is Not One* at 261.

2. Each synagogue was now the center of Jewish life in a particular community and **“church and synagogue often competed for converts from the pagan world and for recognition by the governing powers.”** Helyer, *Exploring Jewish Literature of the Second Temple Period* at 488.

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1. Competition was not the only concern of Jews who rejected Jesus as the Messiah.
2. As the Gospel writers more and more came to understand and describe Jesus as the divine Son of God, the continued existence of Christians in the synagogues threatened to undermine Jewish beliefs about the oneness of God that had prevented Jews from worshipping the gods of Greece and Rome
3. As one author writes: **“Judaism could not admit of the deification of a man; to recognize anyone as the son of God was blasphemy; and as the Jewish Christians had not severed their connections with the Jewish community, they were disciplined.”** Lazare, *Antisemitism* at 31.
4. In about 80 A.D., an important rabbi named Gamaliel II required a so-called “test benediction” to be recited in synagogues under his control: **“For the renegades let there be no hope, and may the arrogant kingdom soon be rooted out in our days, and the Nazarenes and the *minim* perish as in a moment and be blotted out from the book of life and with the righteous may they not be inscribed.”** Barrett, *The New Testament Background* at 210 – 211.
5. **“Nazarenes”** was a common description for followers of Jesus. *Acts* 24:5.
6. The word **“*minim*”** also **“include[d] Jewish Christians.”** Barrett, *The New Testament Background* at 210 – 211.
7. The requirement that all members of the synagogue repeat this anti-Christian benediction **“effectively excommunicated Christians from the synagogues and formalized the break between the two faiths.”** Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* at 49.
8. **“Any Jew who wished to remain faithful to his religion could not also be a Christian. The new faith had become and would remain a gentile movement.”** Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language* at 23.

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1. The *Gospel of John*, written between 90 and 100 A.D., says that Christians **“were afraid of the Jews, for already the Jews had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue.”** *John* 9:22.
2. *John* quotes Jesus as saying that in addition to putting Christians out of the synagogues, the Jews would kill them. *John* 16:2.

3. Although *John* places these statements during the life of Jesus, there is no evidence that those who accepted Jesus as the Messiah were barred from the synagogues prior to the test benediction that was introduced in 80 A.D.
4. In fact, the test benediction itself proves that **“there must have been Judeo-Christians still worshipping in the synagogues on the Sabbath even after the fall of Jerusalem.”** Shanks, *Partings* at 257.
5. Many scholars believe that *John* was written in response to **“the ejection of Christ-believing Jews from the synagogue.”** Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism* at 81.
6. As Clark Williamson, Professor Emeritus at Christian Theological Seminary, writes: **“The author of [the Gospel of] John obviously was anguished and angered by this ejection from the synagogue.”** Williamson, *Has God Rejected His People?* at 84.
7. That anger is reflected in *John’s* writings about Jews and their beliefs.

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1. The three earlier Gospels include only a handful of references to **“the Jews,”** almost all of them in the context of the charge before Pontius Pilate that Jesus was the **“king of the Jews,”** who was so identified on his cross.
2. On the other hand, *John* includes about 70 references to **“Jews,”** usually in the phrase **“the Jews.”**
3. One writer says that the **“editors of John, writing last, are unrelenting in their anti-semitism.”** Flannery, *The Anguish of the Jews* at 33.
4. Another claims that the message **“the Gospel of John conveyed is that all Jews are evil, opposing God’s Son, the Christian Jesus.”** Wilson, *How Jesus Became Christian* at 233.
5. These claims are not entirely accurate – *John* did not claim that all Jews are evil.
6. For example, *John* 8:31 states: **“To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, ‘If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.’”**
7. *John’s* anger was directed at those Jews who had rejected Jesus as the Messiah which, by the time of its writing, were most of them.

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1. For example, *John* says that Jesus stayed away from Judea **“because the Jews were seeking to kill him.”** *John* 7:1 (Young’s Literal Translation).

2. In the well-known story of Pilate asking whether to release Jesus, *Mark* reports that **“the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have Pilate release Barabbas instead.”** *Mark* 15:11.
3. *Matthew* also blames the **“the chief priests and elders”** for stirring up the crowd to ask Pilate to free Barabbas instead of Jesus. *Matthew* 27:20.
4. However, in *John’s* version, Pilate goes directly to **“the Jews,”** who demand that Jesus and not Barabbas be executed, with no mention of Jewish authorities. *John* 18:38.

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1. *John* quotes Jesus as calling Jews who had not recognized him as the Messiah children of the devil, a claim not made in the other Gospels. *John* 8:42-44.
2. The Nazis used these verses to justify exterminating Jews and some Christians today use this passage to defend their hatred of Jews.

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1. Christians, believing that the divinity of Jesus was self-evident and predicted by the Hebrew Scriptures, blamed the failure of most Jews to accept Jesus as their Messiah on **“blindness and malice.”** Flannery, *The Anguish of the Jews* 33.
2. After the *Gospel of John* and perhaps in light of it, Christian writers began demonizing Jews who had not accepted Jesus as the Messiah.
3. The *Epistle of Barnabas* was written by an unknown author at the end of the first century and was considered a part of the New Testament as late as the early fourth century.
4. It says that the covenants God made to Abraham have been lost by the Jews, who **“piled up sin upon sin,”** and assumed exclusively by Christians. *Barnabas* 4:6-7; 13:6.
5. As Professor Williamson writes: **“According to Barnabas, God had totally repudiated Judaism as a true faith.”** Williamson, *Has God Rejected His People?* at 92.

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1. Near the beginning of the second century, Ignatius, the Bishop of Antioch, wrote a series of letters to churches.
2. In one letter, Ignatius writes: **“It is utterly absurd to profess Jesus Christ and practice Judaism. For Christianity did not believe in Judaism, but Judaism in Christianity, in which ‘every tongue’ believed and ‘was brought together’ to God.”** Helyer, *Exploring Jewish Literature of the Second Temple Period* at 490.

3. In other words, Jews who did not believe in Jesus were not entitled to the promises of their own Scriptures and **“Jewish ways of interpreting their own Scriptures are invalid.”** Williamson, *Has God Rejected His People?* at 90.

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1. At about the same time Christian writers were unleashing anti-Jewish rhetoric, Tacitus, the Roman historian, articulated his own anti-Jewish views.

2. In 110 A.D. Tacitus, parroting the writings of Manetho and others, said the Jews in Egypt had leprosy and king of Egypt had expelled them **“to cleanse his realm, and to convey into some foreign land this race detested by the gods.”**
<https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/tacitus-on-the-jews-110-ce>

3. Reflecting the Roman resentment of Jewish success, he offered an explanation: **“The most degraded out of other races . . . brought to them their contributions and presents. This augmented the wealth of the Jews, as also did the fact that among themselves they are inflexibly honest and ever ready to show compassion, though they regard the rest of mankind with all the hatred of enemies.”** *Id.*

4. Describing **“the Jewish religion [a]s tasteless and mean,”** Tacitus noted that **“[t]hings sacred with us, with them have no sanctity, while they allow what with us is forbidden.”** *Id.*

5. Rejecting Jewish claims about the origins of their unique religious practices, he said Jews were circumcised **“as a mark of difference from other men”** and adopted the Sabbath day of rest because of the **“charm of indolence.”** *Id.*

6. He claimed Jews **“abstain from swine’s flesh, in consideration of what they suffered when they were infected by the leprosy to which this animal is liable.”** *Id.*

7. He accused Jews of being **“singularly prone to lust,”** although **“they abstain from intercourse with foreign women.”** *Id.*

8. Notwithstanding his criticism of Jews and their religion, Tacitus noted that Jewish **“worship, however introduced, is upheld by its antiquity.”** *Id.*

9. Because of this antiquity, Jews were exempt **“from the normal rule that decent citizens must pray to the gods of their society.”** Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem* at 374.

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1. After Christianity had separated from Judaism, Christians could no longer claim the benefit of the Roman tolerance for Judaism as an ancient religion.

2. **“The Christian congregations, unlike the Jewish communities, were not recognized by the law; they were considered enemies of the law and a danger to the Empire.”** Lazare, *Antisemitism* at 37.

3. As a result, Christians could be killed for their beliefs.

4. In 112 A.D., Pliny the Younger, the Roman governor in what is now Turkey, wrote a letter to Emperor Trajan, saying that if Christians cursed Christ and worshipped both Trajan and the Roman gods, his practice was to release them.

5. If not, they would be executed as atheists.

6. Trajan told Pliny that he was correct in executing unrepentant Christians.

7. There is evidence that second century Jews assisted with the Roman persecution of Christians.

8. **“In 117 [A.D.], under Trajan, Jews participated in the death of St. Simeon, bishop of Jerusalem.”** Flannery, *The Anguish of the Jews* at 36.

9. During the Second Jewish Revolt, beginning in 132 A.D, Bar Kokba, the leader of the revolt, **“massacred Christians who refused to deny Christ.”** *Id.*

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1. Justin was a convert to Christianity who went to Rome in the second century after the Romans had crushed the Second Jewish Revolt in 135 A.D., barring Jews from living in Jerusalem and renaming the city Aeolia Capitolina.

2. Justin said God had destroyed Jerusalem and barred Jews from living there because Jews **“have slain the Just One, and His prophets before Him; and now you reject those who hope in Him, and in Him who sent Him.”** Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* XVI.

3. Jews had become “Christ killers,” cursed by God and deserving whatever misfortune might come their way.

4. Adopting the writings of Tacitus, Justin wrote that God had caused Jews to be circumcised and observe the Sabbath so others could identify and punish them for their sins. *Id.*

5. Centuries later, Christians would use Sabbath worship as a means of identifying and punishing Jews.

6. Justin attempted to convince the Roman authorities that Christianity, like Judaism, should be to be an ancient religion under Roman law a, but failed.

7. He was executed and became known as Justin Martyr.

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1. The non-canonical *Gospel of Peter*, written during the second century A.D., was more popular than the *Gospel of Mark* during the early days of the church. Ehrman, *Lost Christianities* at 17-24.
2. Repeating the claims of Justin that the Jews were responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus and were punished for it, it says that after Jesus had died, **“the Jews, the elders, and the priests realized how much evil they had done to themselves and began beating their breasts, saying ‘Woe to us because of our sins. The judgment and the end of Jerusalem are near.’”** *Gospel of Peter* 25, in Ehrman, *Lost Scriptures* at 33.

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1. Origen of Alexandria was **“the most learned, prolific, and famous theologian of the first three Christian centuries.”** Ehrman, *Lost Christianities* at 154.
2. He wrote more than one thousand books trying to explain Christian beliefs and reject what he thought were false doctrines.
3. In 248 A.D., he wrote: **“And we say with confidence that [the Jews] will never be restored to their former condition. For they committed a crime of the most unhallowed kind, in conspiring against the Saviour of the human race in that city where they offered up to God a worship containing the symbols of mighty mysteries. It accordingly behoved that city where Jesus underwent these sufferings to perish utterly, and the Jewish nation to be overthrown, and the invitation to happiness offered them by God to pass to others, -- the Christians.”** Origen, *Against Celsus* 4:22.

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1. As a result of these and other writings, **“[t]he myth emerged that the Jews, murders of the incarnate God who embodied all that was good, were a cursed people, children of the Devil, who wilfully and maliciously challenged God’s design for humanity. A people who committed deicide was capable of any enormity. Because the Jews’ refusal to embrace the true faith defied all that was sacred, God intended them to suffer.”** Perry, *Antisemitism* at 76.
2. So long as Christianity was illegal, these myths did little more than stir up resentment among Jews who may have taken out their resentment in assisting in the persecution of Christians.
3. There were claims that Jews assisted in the execution of Pionius near 300 A.D.
4. But the situation changed dramatically in 313 A.D., when Emperor Constantine declared in the Edict of Milan that Christianity was legal throughout the Roman Empire and Christians could no longer be punished for their beliefs.

5. Although Christianity was now on an equal legal footing with Judaism, the Christians were more numerous than Jews and Constantine, who was baptized a Christian on his death bed and whose mother Helena was Christian, favored the Christians.
6. The Council of Nicaea, called by Constantine in 325 A.D., is best known for its decision that God and Jesus are of the same substance, effectively declaring that Jesus is God, a conclusion unacceptable to most Jews.
7. The Council also adopted a rule requiring that the date of Easter be disconnected from the date of Passover.
8. Constantine himself explained the reason for this decision: **“[I]t appeared an unworthy thing that the celebration of this most holy feast we should follow the practice of the Jews, who have impiously defiled their hands with enormous sin, and are, therefore, deservedly afflicted with the blindness of soul.”**
<https://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf201.iv.vi.iii.xviii.html>
9. Emperor Constantius II, Constantine’s son, **“banned the rabbis from proclaiming the New Moon and the leap years, so that Jews would not know the dates of their festivals.”** Trepp, *A History of the Jewish Experience* at 92.
10. The Council of Laodicea held in 363 A.D. barred Christians from feasting with Jews or accepting unleavened bread from them.
11. The authority of the Church now stood behind the persecution of Jews.

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1. Theodosius, described as **“a pious and intolerant Christian and heretic-hunter,”** became the eastern Roman Emperor in 379 A.D. Moynahan, *The Faith* at 107.
2. On February 27, 380, Theodosius and Gratian, the emperor in the west, issued an edict that is one of the most important documents in the history of Christianity.
3. They declared that belief in the Christian doctrine of the Trinity was now required throughout the entire Roman Empire
4. Those believing in accordance with the degree were allowed to call themselves “Catholic Christians,” meaning “Universal Christians.”
5. Those that rejected this belief were officially declared to be “foolish madmen” and “heretics,” subject to punishment.
6. In July 381, Emperor Theodosius summoned about 150 bishops to Constantinople.

7. The council affirmed the edict of Theodosius, making belief in the Trinity the required belief for all Christians under control of the emperors.

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1. Soon after the Council at Constantinople, a group of Christians destroyed a synagogue at Callinicus in Mesopotamia.
2. Emperor Theodosius ordered that the synagogue be rebuilt and those responsible for its destruction punished.
3. In response, Ambrose of Milan, an important bishop, sent a letter to Theodosius, defending the destruction of the synagogue and threatening to excommunicate Theodosius if he did not retract his order.
4. Ambrose argued that the synagogue was “**a home of unbelief, a house of impiety, a receptacle of folly which God himself has condemned**” and that it “**is needful that legal censure should yield to religion.**” <http://www.ccjr.us/dialogika-resources/primary-texts-from-the-history-of-the-relationship/248-ambrose-of-milan-qletters-about-a-synagogue-burningq-aug-388>
5. Theodosius withdrew his order.
6. With no threat of punishment, attacks on synagogues “**continued in both provinces of the Empire.**” Flannery, *The Anguish of the Jews* at 60.

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1. Gregory of Nyssa was one of the so-called “Cappadocian Fathers” who had convinced Emperor Theodosius to mandate belief in the Trinity, a view that Jews rejected because of their belief in the oneness of God.
2. Near the end of the fourth century, he wrote: “[**Jews are**] **murderers of the Lord, assassins of the prophets, rebels against God, God haters, . . . advocates of the devil, race of vipers, slanderers, calumniators, dark-minded people, leaven of the Pharisees, Sanhedrin of demons, sinners, wicked men, stoners, and haters of righteousness.**” <https://www.azquotes.com/quote/892859>
3. A white supremacist group recently posted this statement, saying: “**St. Gregory of Nyssa summed up the Jews very well.**” <https://www.stormfront.org/forum/t669569/>

Slide 38

1. John Chrysostom was a popular and oratorically gifted priest in Antioch, “**where Jews were numerous and influential,**” who later became the Archbishop of Constantinople. Flannery, *The Anguish of the Jews* at 50.

2. Beginning in 386 A.D., he preached a series of eight extraordinarily hostile sermons in an effort to convince the Christians to avoid Jews and their customs.
3. As one author writes: **“The virulence of his attack is surprising even in an age in which rhetorical denunciation was often indulged with complete abandon.”** *Id.*
4. This statement from his first sermon is typical of many more: **“Although such beasts [calves] are unfit for work, they are fit for killing. And this is what happened to the Jews: while they were making themselves unfit for work, they grew fit for slaughter. This is why Christ said: ‘But as for these my enemies, who did not want me to be king over them, bring them here and slay them.’”**
http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/chrysostom_adversus_judaeos_01_homily1.htm
5. The Nazis used teachings from Chrysostom to justify literally killing Jews.

Slide 39

1. After Christianity had become the only lawful religion of the Roman Empire, a number of laws were passed adversely affecting the Jews.
2. For example, Jews **“were barred from public functions, like the army, administrative posts, and off and on from the legal profession.”** Flannery, *The Anguish of the Jews* at 58.
3. Jews were also barred from having Christian slaves, an important source of labor for Jews engaged in agriculture and manufacturing.
4. As a result, **“[m]any Jews were forced from agriculture and industry into smaller trades and crafts.”** *Id.*
5. By 400 A.D., Jews in the Roman Empire had become second class citizens, whose refusal to acknowledge Jesus as god was used to justify that status.
6. The stage had been set for their ongoing persecution.

Slide 40

1. Next week, we will look at the Jewish experience during the Middle Ages.
2. We will see how the Crusades dramatically changed the treatment of Jews, leading to their systematic killing for all sorts of claimed crimes.
3. We will also look briefly at the so-called “golden age of Judaism” in Spain after the area came under Islamic control.

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