

The Partings
Christianity Separates from Judaism
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Slide 1

1. As we ended last week in about 55 A.D., the followers of Jesus were divided into two groups with fundamentally different beliefs.
2. One group consisted almost entirely of Jews and looked to James, the brother of Jesus, for its leadership
3. This group, which some people today call “Jewish Christians,” obeyed the laws of Moses and saw Jesus as born human, but adopted by God as the promised Messiah at the time of his baptism to usher in the Kingdom of God on earth.
4. Here is how one author describes this group: “[It] was a **Torah-observant group, 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.
5. The other group consisted almost entirely of Gentiles and looked to Paul for its leadership.
6. This group did not obey the laws of Moses, saw Jesus as having been divine at least since birth and capable of saving them from the eternal consequences of sin merely by believing in him.
7. In the middle of the first century, these groups, which one author describes as “**two separate, parallel religions,**” co-existed. Wilson, *How Jesus Became Christian* at 238.
8. The co-existence of these two Christian groups did not last.
9. Most Christians today, successors to the Gentile Christians, reject the views of the early Jewish Christians.
10. Most Jews today reject the views of the early Jewish Christians that Jesus is the Messiah and many even reject the idea of Jewish Christians.
11. I call this presentation “The Partings” because there is no single time or event that defines when the views of Christians and Jews about Jesus became irreconcilable and Christianity and Judaism became separate religions.

12. Instead, the separation was the result of a series of events that began with the teachings of Paul and had essentially ended sometime near the beginning of the second century.

Slide 2

1. Let's look first at the teachings of Paul and how they affected the eventual separation between Jews and Christians.
2. *Acts* reports on various efforts of **“the Jews”** to interfere with Paul's missions. *E.g., Acts 14:19.*
3. For example, *Acts 13:45* reports that **“the Jews” “talked abusively against what Paul was saying.”**
4. Taken in isolation, this verse suggests that first century Jews rejected the idea that Jesus was the Messiah.
5. But just a few verses later, *Acts* reports that Paul and Barnabas were so effective in their teaching that **“a great number of Jews and Gentiles believed.”** *Acts 14:1.*
6. It is therefore clear that when the New Testament talks about **“the Jews”** in the context of them rejecting Jesus as the Messiah, it is not talking about all Jews but only those *Acts* says **“refused to believe.”** *Acts 14:2.*
7. As one author writes: **“The Jews who knew of Jesus were not unanimous in rejecting him – neither in his lifetime nor immediately after his death.”** Klinghoffer, *Why the Jews Rejected Jesus* at 90.

Slide 3

1. Many Christians today assume that the antagonism of first century Jews toward the teachings of Paul was his claim that Jesus was the promised Jewish Messiah.
2. It is certainly true that virtually all Jewish people today reject the idea that Jesus was the Messiah and most Jews consider the so-called “Messianic Jews,” who do accept Jesus as the Messiah, to be Christians and not Jews.
3. But accepting Jesus as the promised Messiah was not inconsistent with Jewish beliefs in the first century.
4. The *Epistle of James*, written to a Jewish audience, refers to Jesus as **“Christ,”** a characterization that meant the same as “Messiah.” *James 2:1.*
5. The *Gospel of Matthew*, also directed to Jewish followers of Jesus, repeatedly refers to Jesus as **“Christ”** or **“the Messiah”** depending upon the translation. *E.g., Matthew 1:1.*

6. As one author writes, first centuries Jews who did not believe Jesus was the Messiah may have **“ridicule[d]”** those Jews who did, but did not believe they were no longer Jewish. Klinghoffer, *Why the Jews Rejected Jesus* at 103.
7. Another says that Jews who believed Jesus was the Messiah would be seen as **“oddball enthusiasts to be tolerated rather than rooted out.”** Shanks, *Partings* at 30.

Slide 4

1. As we saw last week, at some point near the middle of the first century, James, as head of the early church, gave Paul permission to recruit followers of Jesus without requiring that they be circumcised as required by Jewish law.
2. After receiving that permission, Paul’s articulated views about the nature of Jesus began to change.
3. Before getting permission from James to recruit Gentile followers, Paul wrote: **“You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourself with Christ.”** *Galatians* 3:26-27.
4. Nothing in this statement implied any divine meaning for the term “son of God.”

Slide 5

1. After becoming free to seek followers from non-Jews, Paul’s letters more and more focused on Jesus as the incarnation of God, which some scholars claim drew upon teachings of **“the Roman mystery religions familiar from his youth growing up in the Diaspora.”** Wilson, *How Jesus Became Christian* at 111.
2. For example, in his letter to the Romans, written in about 55 A.D., Paul writes: **“For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering.”** *Romans* 8:3.
3. An explicit statement that Jesus is the incarnation of God is found in Paul’s letter to the Philippians, likely written in about 62 A.D., in which he quotes from an early hymn describing Jesus as **“being in very nature God . . . [a]nd being found in appearance as a man.”** *Philippians* 2:6, 8.
4. As one author writes, Paul’s later teachings **“made Jesus into a god who was heir to a heavenly kingdom, not an earthly one.”** Wade, *The Faith Instinct* at 165.

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1. Today, Paul’s claim that **“God took the form of a human being in Christ is contrary to Jewish beliefs. To the Jew, God has no human form and no human being has been or ever can be the incarnation of God.”** Trepp, *A History of the Jewish Experience* at 100.

2. Because of that, one recent author wrote: **“Paul’s teaching spelled the end of any Jesus-based religion that could still claim to be ‘Jewish.’”** Klinghoffser, *Why the Jews Rejected Jesus* at 93.

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1. But first century Jews did not all reject the idea that the promised Messiah could be the divine son of God.

2. An Orthodox Jewish author recently wrote that, in addition to Jewish Christians, **“there were other Palestinian Jews who expected a Redeemer known as the Son of Man, who would be a divine figure embodied in an exalted human.”** Boyarin, *The Jewish Gospels* at 73.

3. As a result, Paul’s claim that Jesus was divine was not by itself sufficient **“to have driven our [first century] Jew into a fit of indignation.”** Klinghoffer, *Why the Jews Rejected Jesus* at 104.

Slide 8

1. What did drive first century Jews into a fit of indignation was Paul’s teaching about the lack of importance of following Jewish law, a teaching that led to his death.

2. As we discussed last week, in connection with efforts to bring the message of Jesus to Gentiles who refused to be circumcised, Paul taught that following the laws of Moses was irrelevant to salvation.

3. As he said in his letter to the Galatians: **“Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.”** *Galatians* 3:25.

4. It is possible that Paul intended these words to apply only to Gentile Christians who did not want to be circumcised.

5. In a cryptic passage in his letter to the Romans, Paul writes: **“What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision? Much in every way!”** *Romans* 3:1-2.

6. But the logic of Paul’s conclusion that following Jewish law was irrelevant to salvation applied to Jews and Gentiles alike.

7. As one author writes: **“Paul taught the dissolution of the terms of every Jew’s relationship with God: the commandments.”** Klinghoffer, *Why the Jews Rejected Jesus* at 109.

8. For most Jews, the idea that following the laws of Moses had become irrelevant was unacceptable because it threatened the very basis of their understanding of salvation.

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1. Even more unacceptable to most first century Jews was Paul's reasoning about *why* Jewish law had become irrelevant to salvation.
2. Paul based his arguments about the law on his characterization of God's promise in *Genesis 12:7* to give the land of Israel to Abraham's "**seed.**"
3. This promise was and is the basis of the Jews' belief that they, as descendants of Abraham, are God's chosen people and Israel is their promised land.
4. Paul expressly rejected this interpretation.
5. Interestingly, although Paul presented himself as a Jewish scholar, he based his interpretation of *Genesis 12:7* on the Septuagint, a translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek that was used by other New Testament writers.
6. Noting that the Greek word "*spermati*" that is translated into English as "**seed**" is singular, Paul said that "**seed**" could not refer to the Jews as descendants of Abraham but instead could refer only to Jesus. *Galatians 3:16*.
7. And because God had made this promise to Abraham 430 years before Moses had delivered his laws, following those laws could not be required to receive God's promise. *Galatians 3:17-18*.
8. People therefore could be considered the children of Abraham and entitled to God's blessing whether or not they were Jewish and whether or not they followed the laws of Moses so long as they believed in Jesus as their savior.
9. As Paul said in his letter to the Galatians: "**If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.**" *Galatians 3:29*.
10. According to Paul, God's promises to "Israel" were directed to those who followed Jesus, no matter where he or she was born and to whom.
11. Paul made this claim explicit in his letter to the Romans: "**In other words, it is not the natural children who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring.**" *Romans 9:8*.

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1. Paul's interpretation of the promise to Abraham's "seed" as meaning Jesus was at best curious, not the least because he relied on a Greek Septuagint translation of *Genesis 12:7* and not the original Hebrew, which makes clear that God's promise was to Abraham's descendants.

2. For many first century Jews, Paul's interpretation was a deliberate distortion of the Hebrew Scriptures they knew well and a repudiation of their special relationship with God and the land of Israel.
3. Many scholars agree it was Paul's teachings about the law and God's promise to Abraham, not whether Jesus was the Messiah or was divine, which started the process by which Christianity separated from Judaism.
4. That view also led to Paul's death.

Slide 11

1. After spending several years preaching among the Gentiles, Paul went to Jerusalem.
2. He met there with James, the leader of the early Jewish followers of Jesus in Jerusalem, and **“reported in detail what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.”** *Acts* 21:18-19.
3. The leaders in Jerusalem reported to Paul that **“many thousands of Jews have believed and all of them are zealous for the law.”** *Acts* 21:20
4. While in Jerusalem, Paul was accused of telling the Jews who lived among the Gentiles **“not to circumcise their children or live according to our customs.”** *Acts* 21:21.
5. Based on at the least the logic of Paul's teaching, **“[t]he rumors were perfectly true.”** Klinghoffer, *Why the Jews Rejected Jesus* at 107.
6. Although Paul denied the charges against him, a riot broke out when he was at the Temple and he was arrested. *Acts* 21:27, 39.
7. Apparently for his own protection, the Romans took Paul to Caesarea Maritima, on the Mediterranean Coast.
8. After two years languishing there, Paul was sent to Rome for trial after demanding this right as a Roman citizen.

Slide 12

1. Paul was held in Rome under house arrest. *Acts* 28:16; 30.
2. From his rented house, he apparently preached mainly to Jews in Rome and **“declared to them the kingdom of God and tried to convince them about Jesus from the Laws of Moses and from the Prophets.”** *Acts* 28:17 – 31.

3. It is ironic that Paul was sent to Rome because of apparently truthful claims that he had taught Jews to ignore the laws of Moses and spent his time in Rome basing his teachings on those very laws.

Slide 13

1. Eusebius, a church historian writing in the early fourth century, says that Paul was beheaded by Roman Emperor Nero in Rome in about 64 A.D. Eusebius, *The History of the Church* at 62.

2. This painting of that event is in a church in Spain.

3. Following his death, Paul's views about the irrelevance of following Jewish law more and more came to be seen as Christian orthodoxy.

4. Jews who saw Jesus as the Messiah began having to choose between being considered Jews, following the laws of Moses, or Christians, who did not, something they had not previously been required to do.

5. But that process was not immediate and Jewish Christians continued long after the death of Paul.

Slide 14

1. Josephus reports that James, the brother of Jesus, was stoned by the Jewish Sanhedrin in about 62 A.D. for not having followed Jewish law. Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 20.9.1.

2. It may well be that the basis for James' execution was his decision to allow Paul to teach that circumcision was not necessary for salvation, which had led to Paul's death.

3. By 65 A.D., about 35 years after the death of Jesus, the two most important leaders of the early church were both dead – each killed by the group from which he had found believers and each killed for allowing people to be taught that following Jewish law was not essential for salvation.

4. One author says that the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem were “**leaderless and demoralized**” after the execution of James. Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language* at 22.

5. But Eusebius reports that James was succeeded by Jesus' cousin Symeon as the leader of the church in Jerusalem and names additional Jerusalem bishops after him. Eusebius, *The History of the Church* at 79.

6. Despite the deaths of James and Paul, it would still have been possible to imagine that followers of Jesus could continue to exist among both Jews and Gentiles.

7. Both groups would believe Jesus was a resurrected Messiah, but would have different views on the importance of following Jewish law and in the divinity of Jesus.
8. And both groups could legitimately be called “Christians,” which means only that they believed Jesus was *Christos*, the Messiah.
9. But the continued possibility of two independent Christian groups soon became unlikely.

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1. In 66 AD, 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 AD, 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.

Slide 17

1. The Temple was completely destroyed.
2. These blocks still on the street below the Temple Mount are from that Temple.

Slide 18

1. This relief on Rome’s Arch of Titus, the commanding general, shows the soldiers parading through Rome with the golden menorah and other treasures from the Temple.
2. The fall of Jerusalem was another “**early signal of distinction of one [Jewish] entity from the other.**” Shanks, *Partings* at 73.

Slide 19

1. The *Gospel of Mark* quotes Jesus as predicting the destruction of the Temple and encouraging his followers to “**flee to the mountains**” when they see impending destruction of the city. *Mark* 13:2, 14.

2. Many scholars believe *Mark* was written during the siege of Jerusalem as a signal to the Jewish followers of Jesus to leave Jerusalem before it was destroyed.

Slide 20

1. Eusebius reports that **“those who believed in Christ migrated from Jerusalem”** to Pella across the Jordan River **“before the war began.”** Eusebius, *The History of the Church* at 68.
2. Some scholars doubt that this event really occurred, but persistent reports of it became part of the narrative dividing those Jews who followed Jesus from those who did not.
3. Eusebius claimed that the escape of the Christians allowed God to destroy the non-believing Jews remaining in Jerusalem **“for their abominable crimes against Christ and His apostles, completely blotting out that wicked generation from among men.”** *Id.*
4. Some scholars believe that the Jewish Christians who reportedly fled to Pella were the Ebionites we talked about last week – Jews who followed the laws of Moses and believed Jesus was adopted by God as the Messiah at his baptism.
5. As one author writes: **“The Ebionites appear to represent a considerable segment of the Christians who found refuge in the Transjordan.”** Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* at 615.
6. Those Jews who did not recognize Jesus as the Messiah had a totally different view of this so-called “Christian flight to Pella.”
7. One author says the Jews who did not believe in Jesus as the Messiah **“considered the Christian flight an act of treason, and it sealed the fate of the church in the Jewish world.”** Shelly, *Church History in Plain Language* at 23.
8. This claim is overblown.
9. Although the flight to Pella, or at least rumors about it, was an important event in the separation of Christianity from Judaism, it was not the only or even last such event.

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1. Jews who believed in Jesus as the Messiah and those who did not also had wildly divergent views about why God had allowed Jerusalem to be destroyed, further widening the gulf between them.
2. For their part, some Jewish Christians claimed that God had destroyed Jerusalem because the Jewish establishment had killed James, their first leader. Eusebius, *The History of the Church* at 61.

3. Other Christians claimed that God had destroyed Jerusalem because not all its Jewish residents had accepted Jesus as the Messiah. *Id.* at 69.
4. That idea is attributed to Jesus in a unique and often-overlooked passage in *Luke*, in which Jesus weeps during his triumphal journey while contemplating the destruction of Jerusalem because **“you did not recognize the time of God’s coming to you.”** *Luke* 19:44.
5. The church of Dominus Flevit memorializes that event.

Slide 22

1. On the other hand, those Jews who did not believe Jesus was the Messiah attributed the destruction of Jerusalem to the city’s failure to remain true to the laws of Moses. See Josephus, *The Jewish War* 4.5.2.
2. For at least some of them, the Christians and their rejection of the need to follow the law had led to the city’s destruction.
3. As one author writes: **“For this disaster, some Jews 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.

Slide 23

1. The loss of the Temple had another major impact on the relationship between those Jews who accepted Jesus as the Messiah and those who did not.
2. When the Temple stood in Jerusalem, it was center of Jewish religious life and kept Jews united despite their differences.
3. For example, despite the huge theological differences between Sadducees and Pharisees, both saw their Temple worship and Temple sacrifices as essential to being Jewish – if they worshipped and sacrificed at the Temple, they were Jewish despite their different beliefs.
4. 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.
5. Each synagogue was now the center of Jewish life in a particular community, competing with churches for members and financial support.
6. As one author writes, by the end of the first century **“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.

7. A primary area of competition between the church and the synagogue was for the loyalty of the so-called “God-fearers” that we talked about last week.
8. The God-fearers were Gentiles who worshipped in the synagogues with the Jews but refused to be circumcised and **“were a fruitful hunting ground for Christianity.”** Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* at 610.
9. After the fall of the Temple, many of these followers of Jesus were still worshipping in those synagogues and recruiting others to believe as they did.
10. Because of the increased competition between synagogues and churches, it became necessary for the leaders of synagogues to make sure that the persons worshipping in them were completely on their side.
11. As a result, ten or fifteen years after the destruction of the Temple, the rabbis’ need to unite the Jews without the unifying force of the Temple contributed to the ultimate separation of Christianity from Judaism.

Slide 24

1. In about 80 A.D., an important rabbi named Gamaliel II introduced a so-called “test benediction” to be recited in synagogues: **“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.
2. The word “**Nazarenes**” was a common description for followers of Jesus. *Acts* 24:5.
3. The word “***minim***” also **“include[d] Jewish Christians.”** Barrett, *The New Testament Background* at 210 – 211.
4. A recent author explains the purpose of this benediction: **“Who utters this prayer asks for Jewish heretics a destiny wholly unthinkable for any member of the people of Israel. The Benediction is intended, therefore, to weld the whole of Judaism into a monolithic structure by *culling out* those elements which do not conform to the Pharisaic image of orthodoxy.”** Martyn, J. Louis, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* at 63.
5. The benediction had its intended effect.
6. **“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.

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. The ability to both practice Judaism and accept Jesus as the Messiah had become impossible.

Slide 25

1. The introduction of the test benediction may well have been the impetus for the uniquely harsh words the *Gospel of John* has for Jews, in many places drawing a distinction between Jews on the one hand and followers of Jesus on the other.

2. There is general agreement that *John* was the fourth Gospel, written in about 90-100 A.D., shortly after the introduction of the test benediction.

3. *John* 9:22 includes the following statement: **“His parents said this because they 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.”**

4. Although *John* places this statement in the context of 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.

5. In fact, the adoption of the test benediction 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.

6. Most, although not all, scholars believe that *John* was writing about the test benediction when he spoke repeatedly about Jews who believed in Jesus as the Messiah being barred from synagogues. *John* 12:42; 16:2.

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1. Some scholars claim 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.

2. This is not entirely accurate.

3. 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.’”**

4. *John* also reports that after Jesus had raised Mary’s brother Lazarus from the dead, **“many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.”** *John* 11:45.

Slide 27

1. But there is no doubt that the *Gospel of John*, much more than the other Gospels, draws distinctions between the followers of Jesus and “the Jews,” perhaps in response to the test benediction that separated Jewish followers of Jesus from other Jews.
2. The other 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.
3. On the other hand, *John* includes 66 references to “**Jews,**” usually in the phrase “**the Jews.**”
4. While most of the criticism of Jewish people in the other Gospels is directed at the Pharisees and Jewish leaders, *John* directs its accusations directly at the Jewish people.
5. For example, *John* says that Jesus stayed away from Judea “**because the Jews [Loudaioi] were seeking to kill him.**” *John* 7:1 (Young’s Literal Translation).
6. Some modern translations translate the Greek “*Loudaioi*” as “Jewish leaders,” but the original Greek does not have that connotation and “*Loudaioi*” is used for anyone from Judea.

Slide 28

1. In the famous story of Pilate asking whether to release Jesus, the *Gospel of Mark* reports that “**the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have Pilate release Barabbas instead.**” *Mark* 15:11.
2. *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.
3. 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.

Slide 29

1. *John* quotes Jesus as calling the descendants of Abraham children of the devil because they had not recognized him as the Messiah, a claim not made in the other Gospels. *John* 8:42-44.
2. The Nazis used these verses as their justification for exterminating Jews regardless of their status.
3. Christians today use this passage to defend their anti-Semitism.

Slide 30

1. The *Gospel of John* also puts in the mouth of Jesus the teachings of Paul that faith in Jesus is the only requirement of salvation, making irrelevant not only the laws of Moses but any of the teachings of Jesus about following God's commands.
2. Even the fundamental teaching of Jesus to **"love your neighbor as yourself,"** found in the other three Gospels, is entirely missing from *John*.
3. In addition to being probably the most famous statement attributed to Jesus, *John* 3:16 can also be seen as a summary of the teachings of Paul that so offended many first century Jews – only belief in Jesus is relevant to salvation, regardless of how a person might act.
4. The *Gospel of John*, the last of the canonical Gospels to have been written, signals the end of any real chance that Jews could believe in Jesus and continue to be considered Jewish.
5. The Jews and followers of Jesus had become two separate groups, with enmity for each other.
6. The term "Jewish Christian" had gone from being a description to being an oxymoron.
7. The *Gospel of John* and the test benediction are very near the end of the process by which Christianity and Judaism came to be seen as separate religions.
8. Another event, also tied to the destruction of the Temple, marks the official end point of the process of separation.

Slide 31

1. Soon after the destruction of the Temple, Roman Emperor Vespasian imposed a tax called "*fiscus Judaicus*" ("Jewish basket") to help rebuild the Temple to Jupiter in Rome.
2. The two-denarius tax was expressly levied on all "Jews" -- men, women and children -- in the Roman Empire as punishment for the First Jewish Revolt.
3. The determination of who had to pay the tax was based on whether or not the man at the head of the family was circumcised.
4. There is one account of a 90-year old man being **"inspected by the procurator in a very crowded court to see if he was circumcised."** Shank, *Partings* at 164.
5. This definition of Jewishness led to some decisions people at the time saw as grossly unfair.

6. In the first place, not everyone in the Empire who was circumcised was Jewish, which meant that non-Jews could be forced to pay the *fiscus Judaicus*.
7. Gentile Christians, not being circumcised, did not have to pay the tax.
8. On the other hand, men of Jewish ancestry, circumcised as children, were considered Jewish even if they accepted Jesus as the Messiah and could no longer worship in the synagogues because of the test benediction.
9. Christians of Jewish heritage, seeing this as unfair, apparently attempted to avoid paying the tax even though they were circumcised.
10. During the reign of Emperor Domitian the tax was vigorously enforced, with people losing their possessions if they met the definition of “Jew” and had not paid the tax.

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1. In 96 A.D., Emperor Nerva modified the *fiscus Judaicus* to make it applicable only to Jews who **“continued to observe their ancestral customs.”** Shank, *Partings* at 165.
2. Nerva issued a coin memorializing the elimination of the unfairness and false accusations of Domitian in the collection of the tax.
3. Emperor Nerva’s decision to collect the tax only on Jews observing their ancestral customs meant that people of Jewish heritage who accepted Jesus as the Messiah were now officially considered Christians and not Jews.
4. The divide between Christians and Jews was now the law of Rome.
5. By 100 A.D., “[i]t was no longer acceptable to be a Jewish Christian.” Klinghoffer, *Why the Jews Rejected Jesus* at 116.
6. Christianity had become a separate religion in the eyes of the Roman Empire.

Slide 33

1. With official recognition that Christianity was now a separate religion from Judaism, Christian writers began trying to demonstrate that **“Christians ha[d] displaced Jews as the true Israel.”** Helyer, *Exploring Jewish Literature of the Second Temple Period* at 489.
2. One example is the *Epistle of Barnabas*, written by an unknown author at the end of the first century and considered a part of the New Testament as late as the early fourth century.

3. It states that the covenants God made to Abraham have been assumed exclusively by Christians. *Barnabas* 13:6.
4. As a result, the author “**denies any continuing covenantal relationship between God and Israel.**” Helyer, *Exploring Jewish Literature of the Second Temple Period* at 489.

Slide 34

1. Near the beginning of the second century, Ignatius, the Bishop of Antioch, wrote a series of letters to churches.
2. In one of the letters, 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. This claim was obviously written in total ignorance or denial of the early Jewish Christians, who did see Jesus as the Messiah but continued to follow Jewish law.

Slide 35

1. Christian writers were not the only ones exploiting religious differences between Christians and Jews near the end of the first century.
2. “**From the beginning of the anathema against the *minim* about the year 80, the history of Jewish counter-Christian polemic begins.**” Klinghoffer, *Why the Jews Rejected Jesus* at 129.
3. For example, a Jewish sage named Abbahu countered Christian teaching that Jesus is the “son of man” by quoting from *Numbers* 23:19: “**God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent.**” (KJV).

Slide 36

1. The recognition by the Roman Empire that Christians and Jews were different religions had an adverse effect on Christians.
2. Under Roman law, it was a crime, punishable by death, to refuse to worship the gods of the Empire.
3. Because of the long history of Judaism and its ancient belief in a single God, Jews were exempt from prosecution.
4. But Christians, now seen as separate from Jews, no longer received the benefit of being Jews and were subject to death if they did not worship Roman gods.

5. We know this from the writings of Pliny the Younger, the Roman governor in what is now Turkey.

Slide 37

1. In about 112 A.D., Pliny wrote to Trajan, who became the Roman emperor in 98 A.D.
2. This magnificent fountain in Ephesus was built in Trajan's honor.
3. In his letter, Pliny told Trajan how he had been treating a group of people he identified as "Christians," the earliest known use of this term outside the New Testament.
4. Pliny said the Christians told him "**it was their habit on a fixed day to assemble before daylight and recite by turns a form of words to Christ as a god.**" Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* at 594-95.
5. Pliny told Trajan that if these accused Christians cursed Christ and worshipped both Trajan and the Roman gods, his practice was to release them.
6. If not, they would be executed as atheists because they did not worship a recognized Roman god.
7. Trajan told Pliny that he was correct in executing unrepentant Christians.
8. Trajan also told Pliny not to seek out Christians and not to accept oral accusations.

Slide 38

1. Second century Jews, now separated from Christians, including those of Jewish heritage, continued looking for their Messiah.
2. In 132 A.D., a Jewish soldier named Simon bar Koseba led an armed rebellion against Rome that became known as the Second Jewish Revolt.
3. This image of him is on the Knesset menorah.
4. After initial successes, Rabbi Akiba, the most influential rabbi of the time, proclaimed him the Messiah and gave him the name Simon bar Kokhba, "Son of the Star," based on the prediction in *Numbers* that "**[a] star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel.**" *Numbers* 24:17.
5. Bar Kokhba was so confident of his success that he began building the third Temple on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

Slide 39

1. Roman Emperor Hadrian sent his best generals to Jerusalem, brutally crushing the rebellion and executing bar Koseba.
2. “[T]he Romans paid no attention to the Christians in this war. In the eyes of the Romans, Jews and Christians constituted separate communities.” Shank, *Partings* at 211.
3. Jerusalem and 985 surrounding villages were destroyed and Jews were barred from entering all of Judea.
4. Christians were allowed to remain and Jerusalem ceased being a Jewish city.
5. The Romans rebuilt the city and named it Aelia Capitolina, a name it retained until being captured by the Muslims in 638.
6. The disaster of the Second Jewish Revolt made Jewish leaders “wary of messianism.” Armstrong, *The Bible* at 92.

Slide 40

1. As time went by, Christians more and more denied the Jewish origins of their faith.
2. As one author writes: “To the Christian disciples of the first century, the conception of Jesus as a rabbi was self-evident, to the Christian disciples of the second century it was embarrassing, to the Christian disciples of the third century and beyond it was obscure.” Pelikan, *Jesus Through the Centuries* at 17.

Slide 41

1. The Christians’ embarrassment about their Jewish roots led to an interesting decision in translating the *Epistle of James*.
2. The Greek word “*synag g n*” appears 69 times in the New Testament.
3. On 68 of those occasions, all English language Bibles translate “*synag g n*” as “synagogue.”
4. For example, in *Acts* 13:14, Paul and his companions went into the synagogue on the Sabbath seeking Jewish converts.
5. As we saw last week, the *Epistle of James* is directed to Jews who already believed in Jesus as the Messiah. *James* 2:1.
6. Its readers were “the twelve tribes scattered among the nations.” *James* 1:1.

7. When Christians began to see themselves as the “twelve tribes,” this reference was not troubling.
8. On the other hand, in the original Greek, the letter asks believers to assume that a man has come into their *synag g n*. *James 2:2*.
9. As you can see, *Young’s Literal Translation* translates this as “synagogue.”
10. But later Christians became uncomfortable with the idea that James would be writing to followers of Jesus who worshipped in a synagogue – they believed Christians would have been worshipping in a church.
11. As a result, beginning with Jerome, who translated the original Greek into Latin, the word “*synag g n*” of *James 2:2* has been translated as “meeting,” “assembly” or even “church” in virtually all translations, obscuring the fact that James was directing his letter to Jewish Christians who did, in fact, worship in synagogues.

Slide 42

1. By the beginning of the second century A.D., Christianity had become a separate religion, making efforts not only to obscure but to denounce its Jewish origins.
2. But there was no agreement on exactly what Christians should or did believe or which of many documents in circulation claiming to be written by followers of Jesus were authentic.
3. Next week, we will look at some of those documents and some of the beliefs of early Christian leaders that eventually came to be regarded as heresies.
4. We will pay particular attention to the writings of the so-called “Gnostics” and their interpretation of the teachings of Jesus and of his resurrection.

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