

The Complex World Jesus Encountered in Jerusalem

While the bulk of Jesus' ministry took place in the region around the Sea of Galilee, He did go to Jerusalem on several occasions to celebrate the great feasts of Israel. We know He attended the Feast of Tabernacles, Hanukkah and Passover along with tens of thousands of other religious Jews from around the country.

While there He encountered a complex arena of differing religious factions, as well as heightened expectations during the various feasts. It was no coincidence that during Hanukkah—the celebration of the defeat of the Greek Seleucids—men came to Jesus hoping He was the one to free them from Roman rule. During the Feast of Tabernacles, He used the water libation ceremony to point people to Himself. He also ended up in a heated debate with some of the religious leaders.

A common mistake we make when reading the Gospels and Jesus' interactions with the various factions is to lump all of the Jews into one homogeneous group. Jesus was navigating a complex arena of Jewish theologies and ideologies. In addition, most questions posed to Jesus were not with ill intent but reflected a religious culture of probing, questioning and debating. Nevertheless, the more Jesus answered, the more argumentative conversations became.

To understand Jesus' interactions with these various religious groups, join me for this week's *Out of Zion* podcast titled *Jesus Goes to Jerusalem*. You will understand much better the words of Jesus when you understand the context He was speaking into. {eoa}

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