

# *Resurrection Life of Jesus Church*

## THE ORIGIN STORY OF JESUS

RLJ-1896

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### PART 95: FREE, BUT STILL SLAVES

#### **THE RULE OF SIMON**

It left a great void among the Jews when Jonathan Maccabee was murdered. Simon was the only one son of Mattathias that remained and he was old. There was no way he could lead a Jewish army.

Simon called together a council that became known as the Great Assembly. The aristocrats who in times past held power in Jerusalem and Judah were not invited since most of them were Hellenized. The majority of the leaders at this assembly were from the Hassidic party.

The Hassidim faced a legal problem. According to the Old Testament, the family of the former high priest, Onias, were the only legitimate successors and Onias' son should automatically be selected as the next high priest. But he fled to Egypt when Mattathias and his sons started their revolt against the Seleucid kingdom. No self-respecting Jew wanted a coward ruling Judah.

The Great Assembly elected Simon to become the high priest and the ruler of Judah. Simon had one of his sons, Johanan Hyrcanus, lead the army. Life was mostly peaceful in Judah until Simon's death in 135 B.C.

#### **THE RULE OF JOHANAN HYRCANUS**

Johanan Hyrcanus became the next ruler of Judah. King Demetrius II of Seleucia was challenged by the Ptolemies in Egypt. He sent a delegation to Jerusalem to gain the support of the Jews. The Seleucid king offered the following terms:

1. To stop supporting the Hellenized Jews, which led to the gradual demise of the Hellenists in Judah.
2. To recognize Hyrcanus as the ruler of Jerusalem and Judah.
3. Hyrcanus had to give up all the annexed pagan cities with the exception of Jaffa, the only seaport of Judah.

Demetrius II required military support from Hyrcanus if he agreed to the terms. Thus, a treaty was signed between the Seleucids and Judah.

Hyrcanus was not pleased with the treaty, and in 127 B.C., he sent a number of diplomats to Rome. They received a senatorial decree that forced the Seleucid kingdom to give up a number of cities along the coastline of what is today Lebanon and northern Israel.

Hyrcanus took advantage of the violent struggles within the Seleucid kingdom and eventually recaptured all the cities along the coast from Lebanon to Gaza. Demetrius II was embroiled in a civil war with Alexander II, and in 126 B.C., he lost a battle in



Damascus. He was eventually captured and killed and Alexander II became the next Seleucid king.

Alexander II maintained a cordial relationship with Hyrcanus, who by this time had created a strong semi-independent state and ruled as a vassal king of the Seleucid kingdom.

Some of the taxes Hyrcanus collected were sent to the Seleucid kingdom. Alexander II only ruled for three years until he was killed in 123 B.C.

## **SELEUCID CIVIL WAR**

The civil wars continued in the Seleucid kingdom and Cleopatra Thea became the next ruler with her son Antiochus VIII Grypus. They did not get along and she tried to poison her son in 121 B.C. but he vengefully forced his mother to drink the poison instead.

Antiochus VIII married Tryphaena in 124 B.C., the daughter of Egyptian King Ptolemy VIII and Queen Cleopatra III. Antiochus VIII fought a civil war from 116 B.C. against his half-brother, Antiochus IX Cyzicenus, who was married to Cleopatra IV of Egypt. Her sister, Tryphaena, had her murdered in 112 B.C. at a temple in Antioch where she had fled for refuge. Antiochus IX was enraged and had Tryphaena executed and sacrificed to the deceased soul of Cleopatra IV in revenge after he won the civil war a year later.

With two of her daughters dead, Cleopatra III of Egypt arranged for her daughter Cleopatra Selene to marry Antiochus VIII. Antiochus VIII was murdered in 96 B.C. by Heracleon, a minister in his government.

Antiochus VIII Grypus was succeeded by his son, Seleucus VI Epiphanes, who reigned from 96-94 B.C. His uncle, Antiochus IX Cyzicenus, renewed the civil war against his nephew but was killed in battle in 96 B.C. Antiochus X Eusebes Philopator, the son of Antiochus IX, continued the battle and Seleucus VI was forced to flee to the Cilician city of Mopsuestia, located on the modern day southern coast of Turkey next to Lebanon. When he tried to raise taxes in the city to continue the war, the people burned him alive in 94 B.C.

Antiochus VIII and Tryphaena had several children, Antiochus XI Epiphanes Philadelphus and Philip I Philadelphus were twins. Antiochus XI ruled from Antioch, while his twin brother ruled in Cilicia. Antiochus X had rebuilt his base by 93 B.C. and successfully attacked and killed Antiochus XI, but still suffered from an unstable government since he was warring with the three remaining brothers – Philip I Philadelphus, Demetrius III Theos Philopator Soter Philometor Euergetes Callinicus, and Antiochus XII Dionysus Epiphanes Philopator Callinicus.

Antiochus X fought against Antiochus XI and killed a second brother in 93 B.C. The civil war continued as Philip I and Demetrius III continued to resist. To shore up his power, Antiochus X married his stepmother, Cleopatra Selene, and she bore him several children until Antiochus X died in battle in 88 B.C.

Philip I was unable to control the Seleucid kingdom during his reign from 93-75 B.C. He was challenged by his brother, Demetrius III, and the two warred until the latter was exiled to Parthia in 87 B.C. Antiochus XII took over the vacuum left by Demetrius III and there was an uneasy peace between him and Philip I. Antiochus XII died in battle with

the Nabateans in 82 B.C. Philip I was succeeded by Antiochus XIII, the son of Antiochus X and Cleopatra Selene.

In the meantime, an Armenian king named Tigranes the Great invaded the Seleucid kingdom in 83 B.C. Cleopatra Selene was captured by Tigranes and executed. Rome was not happy with the advances of the Armenians and sent an army under the command of Consul Lucius Licinius Lucullus to deal with the advances of Tigranes in 69 B.C.

Under the approval of Lucullus, Antiochus XIII became king of what was left of the Seleucid kingdom in 69 B.C., but five years later General Pompey deposed the vassal king and executed him, effectively ending the Seleucid dynasty.

## **BACK TO HYRCANUS**

The many battles with the Seleucids had decimated the male population in Judah. Hyrcanus was a skilled politician and a good military leader. He decided that the army needed to be augmented by mercenaries and taxes were levied to cover this expenditure.

With the ongoing civil war in the Seleucid kingdom, Hyrcanus decided to capture Samaria because it had been part of the old northern kingdom of Israel. Hyrcanus assigned his sons, Antigonus and Aristobulos, with capturing the city in 113 B.C.

The Samaritans requested help from the King Antiochus IX, who sent 6,000 soldiers in response, but the city still fell to the Jews a year later. Hyrcanus ignored the teaching of the Torah and the people who survived the siege of Samaria were forced into slavery, ignoring the slavery their ancestors had endured. As Hyrcanus' army "liberated" more territories from the Seleucid kingdom, he forced the Gentile population to adopt Jewish customs, forgetting the Hellenization imposed by the Seleucids. "Might makes right" is truism that the Jews perpetuated on these people.

It is obvious that Johanan Hyrcanus was slowly but surely trying to retake the lands that once made up the nation of Israel prior to King Solomon's death. Hyrcanus' mercenary army invaded Transjordan – land east of the Jordan River – in 110 B.C. which was the inheritance of the tribes of Gad and Reuben. They besieged the city of Medeba, which fell after six months. Hyrcanus then led his army north to the cities of Shechem and Mount Gerizim that were populated by Samaritans. Shechem was destroyed and the temple on Mount Gerizim was demolished even though the Samaritans also worshiped the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This action boosted Hyrcanus' status among the religious elite and conservative Jews who refused to accept any temple dedicated to God outside of Jerusalem.

Hyrcanus turned south to Edom (Idumea) after placing garrisons in the newly conquered areas. Part of this area was once the possession of the tribe of Simeon.

He decided to convert the Edomites to Judaism with forced conversion so they wouldn't rebel in the future. The same kind of wrong perpetrated by King Antiochus IV some 57 years earlier was put into practice again. Three generations later, Idumeans were fully assimilated into Judaism even though they did not follow the Torah and the prophets.

Hyrchanus did not realize the consequences of this religious rape performed on the Idumean people.

Herod was an Idumean boy born in 72 B.C. As an adult, he would become known as Herod the Great and jealously order the wholesale slaughter of all boys under the age of two in Bethlehem to ensure that Jesus did not survive.

Mattathias had revolted against the tyranny of Antiochus IV and fought for religious freedom. His grandson, Johanan Hyrcanus, was possessed by demons who wanted to pollute the Jewish people and destroy their faith in God.

## **LIFE IN JUDAH**

Once Antiochus VII died, the economy started to recover in Judah. Hyrcanus' government no longer paid taxes to the Seleucid kingdom and looting of the newly taken territories increased the wealth of Judeans. Hyrcanus opened a mint in Jerusalem to manufacture coins. Cheap slave labor made it easier to increase the agriculture business. Trading with other nations increased and suddenly older rich aristocrats had to compete with newly rich businessmen of Judah. Agricultural trade and manufacturing developed a middle class with plenty of work for laborers. Life was good for the rich as Judah prospered and no foreign armies invaded. Hyrcanus was a popular ruler of Judah. He began a public building project; the walls of Jerusalem were repaired, he built a fortress north of the temple called the Baris, and a fortress in the Judean desert called Hyrcania.

Johanan Hyrcanus avoided wars with stronger nations. He sent diplomats to Rome on several occasions and its senate passed a treaty of friendship between the two nations. Hyrcanus also maintained good relationship with Ptolemaic Egypt with a large Jewish population. The powerful cities of Athens and Pergamon maintained a good relationship with Hyrcanus.

## **TROUBLE IN PARADISE**

Not everyone in Judah was happy with the expansion wars led by Hyrcanus. Even though he used mercenaries, young Judean men were still drafted and many were killed or wounded. The shopkeepers, artisans, and farmers did not understand how taking land from the surrounding nations benefitted them. The status quo for the poor remained unchanged as the economic boom had done nothing for them.

The synagogue system covered all of Judah and the scribes educated the common people about the Old Testament. There was no pagan worship among the Jews as they served the Lord to the best of their ability.

The common people saw the aristocrats and politicians gain significant wealth and the priests became more worldly. Vocal leaders complained to the council that they wanted peace. They demanded studious concentration of the Torah and application to their lives. This internal conflict led to the establishment of three political parties.

1. The scribes formed a political party that came to be known as the Pharisees (One who is separated), standing for religious education and opposing military expansion.

2. The other party was the Sadducees and its members were priests, political leaders, aristocrats and those who wanted to restore Israel to its former glory. They denied the resurrection of the dead, the existence of spirits, and emphasized the acceptance of the written Mosaic Law alone, excluding oral tradition.
3. The Essenes were more of a religious party. They were much smaller than the Sadducees and Pharisees and taught that poverty was a virtue. Some of them lived in communes in wilderness areas and it is from one of these communes that the Dead Sea Scrolls were found in 1949. They practiced a daily ritual bath through immersion to stay pure and abstained from sensual pleasures for the purpose of pursuing spiritual goals.

The Pharisees and Sadducees wanted pagans converted to Judaism. The Pharisees thought it should be through teaching whereas the Sadducees wanted it accomplished by force.

The strange thing is that the Pharisees initially had a liberal interpretation of the Mosaic Law and felt it should be followed in principle. They did not want to be dogmatic, but deemed the principles of the Torah should be applied to the current time. By the time of Jesus, this trend had been reversed. In contrast, the Sadducees wanted the Torah strictly observed and believed every word should be observed.

Hyrchanus was able to control the two parties and keep them from openly fighting, but that changed when he died in 104 B.C.

## **THE NEXT GENERATION**

Johanan Hyrcanus had five sons, Judah Aristobulus I, Alexander Jannaeus, Antigonus I, Absalom, and Hezekiah. The sons were raised in a palace and never experienced hardship or poverty. Judah was strong and foreign armies never invaded during their lifetime. According to historical records, they were pampered and arrogant. They received a Greek education despite being great-grandchildren of Mattathias and his resistance to Hellenization.

Hyrchanus stressed that education should include military science. His sons despised the different political parties of Judah and considered themselves above the Jewish people.

## **ARISTOBULUS I**

Judah Aristobulus I was the oldest son of Hyrcanus and he became the next ruler of Judah. He was not satisfied with simply being the high priest and added “king” to his title.

His first order of business was to arrest three of his brothers and imprison them to safeguard his position. He starved two of them to death, presumably Absalom and Hezekiah. Alexander Jannaeus would succeed him and a few months later he had Antigonus I murdered in the palace. Aristobulus I was an alcoholic and pursued a life of pleasure. He immediately started to increase the territory of Judah by attacking people groups outside the region. He only reigned for a year from 104-103 B.C. when he died of alcohol abuse and different diseases. The common people were relieved at his death.

## **KING ALEXANDER JANNAEUS**

Alexander Jannaeus became king and ruled for 15 years and continued the wars to increase Judah's territory. His army was mostly destroyed when he waged war against the Arabs to the south in 89 B.C.

The Pharisees organized an uprising against him when he returned home weakened. Alexander was officiating as high priest in the temple with thousands of Jews on the temple grounds. The Pharisees began pelting him with lemons to embarrass their wayward king and Alexander furiously ordered soldiers to attack the crowd and hundreds were killed.

The Pharisee leadership played dirty politics and requested for King Demetrius III for help in deposing Alexander. Thousands of soldiers from the Pharisaic party joined the Seleucids and King Alexander was defeated and forced to flee into the hillside.

Some of the Pharisee soldiers realized that the Seleucids had come to stay and thousands of them joined with Jannai's army and their combined force defeated the Seleucids and the remaining Pharisee soldiers who were still with them.

King Alexander revenged himself during a palace banquet for the Sadducees when he had 800 Pharisees crucified while his guests ate and drank and watched their enemies slowly die.

## **QUEEN SALOME ALEXANDRA**

King Alexander appointed his wife, Salome Alexandra, to be the next ruler of Judea just before he died in 76 B.C. She would go on to rule as Queen until her death in 67 B.C. Their oldest son, Hyrcanus II, became the high priest. Salome dismissed all political leaders from the Sadducee party and replaced them with Pharisees. During her nine-year rule, the Pharisees took revenge upon the Sadducees and the hate between these two groups grew in intensity. Having this knowledge will help you understand the times during which Jesus lived in Israel.

The council that had been ruling Judah since the time of Nehemiah was completely purged of Sadducees and replaced with Pharisees. The name of the council was now changed to the Sanhedrin.

Once the Pharisees were in charge of the legislative branch, they passed a law that prohibited Judah to wage war in an effort to increase its territory.

They also passed laws against superstition, pagan fables that plagued the Jewish people at this time.

The biggest achievement by the Pharisees was achieving universal school. Up to this time, children were educated at home with an elementary education. The new law required every boy (girls were not included) in Judah to be educated and schools were set up around the nation. However, this system only worked in Jerusalem, other large cities and bigger villages. It did have the effect of raising the literacy rate of the male population.

## **SUMMARY**

In this sermon we have covered the years 143-67 B.C., a time period of 76 years. We have examined the remaining years of the Seleucid kingdom and its demise. This was a time of betrayal, murder, and infighting among family members. There was no love or grace, only war and hate. The actions of the different kings showed they were demon possessed and possibly ruled by Lucifer himself. **John 8:44; James 3:14-16**

Judah warred with the weakening Seleucid kingdom and more or less became an independent state with the Jews governing themselves. One would think that they would be filled with joy and love for their countrymen, but that was not the case. The Satanic archon over Judah and Jerusalem ensured there was no peace or harmony in Jerusalem and Judah. Murder, betrayal, and for the first time in recorded history, 800 Jews were crucified by other Jews at a banquet, who enjoyed their screaming while they ate and drank. The Jews failed to understand that they could not serve two masters. **Matthew 6:24**

None of them were led by the Holy Spirit. **John 16:7-13**

***Remember, it's not so important how you begin your life after salvation, but how you finish it!***

***Do you have an ear to hear with?***