

Money Power Relationship
Is Christian Morality Unique ? Part 1

The Emergence of

Christian Morality

No 2 of 10

Michelle Nailon CSB

No. 43

Money, Power, Relationship

► Is Christian Morality Unique? Part 1

The Emergence of Christian Morality

No. 2 of 10

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This brings us to a 2nd set of questions about - The Emergence of Christian Morality

What do you know about the social situation in Palestine in the first Century CE?

Can you think of something about Palestine at that time that was unique?

As a clue, Palestine was Jewish but it was also dominated by the Roman Empire?

Anything unique about that? (Unlike elsewhere the Jews retained their own religion)

The following workshops explores how, in Palestine, two very different world views existed side by side - that is, Judaism and Greek philosophy (which had been adopted by the Roman Empire)

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Jesus Christ lived from roughly 0 to 33 CE in the Common Era.



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He was born and lived in Palestine. Palestine had been a Jewish country but at that time it was dominated by the Roman Empire.



Palestine

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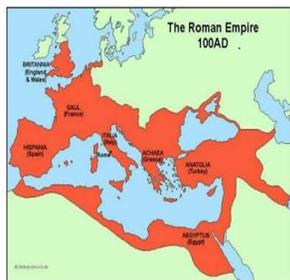
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The world view and value system of the Roman Empire was heavily based upon

Greek philosophy.



▶ Palestine

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- ▶ The Jews of C1st CE adjusted to their situation by adopting much of Greco/Roman culture such as its architecture, clothing, customs, economic system etc.
- ▶ For instance their Jerusalem Temple was based upon Greek architecture

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At the same time, the Jews continued to see themselves as God's chosen people.

They remained faithful to the moral law as set out in the ten commandments, that were given to them by Moses in about 1300 BCE.

No. 50

Jesus grew up in a Jewish family in Nazareth



No. 51

Like other Jews at the time, his family would have carefully observed the Commandments.

Commandments - Designed to protect	Needs/Rights
"Thou shalt not kill"	Right to Life
"Thou shalt not commit adultery"	Right to Basic Social Group
"Thou shalt not steal"	Right to ownership

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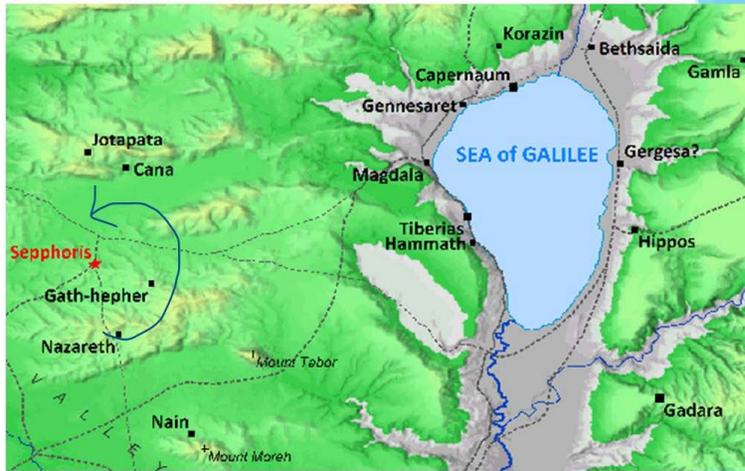
Jesus would have been quite aware of the Roman presence. At the time, near Nazareth, there was a Greek style of city being built by the Romans. This was Sepphoris.

We know that as a child, he was intensely curious. For instance at the age of 12 he had stayed on at the Temple in Jerusalem to ask questions of the scholars there.

Jesus might even have worked there as a tradesman. If so, he would have come into contact with Greek thinking.



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Ancient scroll



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Also, as a regular visitor to the Jerusalem Temple, (cf. Luke 2:41) it is likely Jesus had some access to the manuscripts of Greek philosophy there.

The Jerusalem Temple was a building acclaimed throughout the known world. It would have incorporated some sort of library.

In fact, the builder of the Temple, the Jewish King Herod, had been very interested in Greek philosophy and culture.

No. 55

Quote re Greeks looking for Jesus

- ▶ In any case, in his teaching and lifestyle, Jesus did more than adjust to the dominance of the Roman Empire and its philosophy.
- ▶ He incorporated aspects of Greek philosophy into his teaching, especially its elements of common sense.
- ▶ It seems some Greeks recognized this
- ▶ The gospel says some of them came looking for Jesus.
- ▶ But it was not yet time for his message to spread throughout the world.

(cf. John 12:20-50)



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In the years to come the implications of the incorporation of Greek philosophy into the teaching of Jesus gradually became more apparent.

His teaching was based upon, but distinct from Judaism.



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Jesus introduced
IDEALISM
Into the practice
of the Commandments

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In the years after Jesus had died people re-told stories about what he had done and what he taught.



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Jewish symbol



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The stories and the teaching were written up in the gospels.

These were to provide a foundation for both a Jewish-style of community and a Greek-style of society.

Greek symbol



No. 60

After Jesus had died his message and morality spread quickly around the world.
As he had said, "The harvest is plentiful"

(Mt. 9:38)



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Jesus said the society of his day was "ripe for the harvest"

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What did Jesus mean by this?

A reading of the gospels tells us about his complaints about the Jewish leaders of the day. Their society was based on "the law", that is, the Commandments. However, as Jesus pointed out. They would place great stress on details of the law but fail to observe its main points. Jesus often called them hypocrites.

On the other hand what was faulty about the ethics of the Roman Empire? History books and videos tell us there was a lot of cruelty, promiscuity and theft (e.g. when a people were conquered).

Could you agree that in general people would have been looking for a better morality (ethics) system?