

Zodiac from the Beit Alpha Synagogue

Faith in a *(sometimes)* Hostile World

A Pure Faith: The Dead
Sea Scrolls Community

February 10, 2019



Schedule

- Coming Home: The Return to Judea
- Leading “Citizens”: Egyptian Judaism
- (Beware) Getting What You Want: The Hasmonean Dynasty
- A Pure Faith: The Dead Sea Scrolls Community
- Protecting God’s People: The Sadducees
- Personal Everyday Faith: The Pharisees
- Foolishness & Stumbling Blocks: The Early Church
- End of an Era: The Destruction of Jerusalem



What's in It For Me?

Build

Build a better understanding of the Bible

- Influences on the New Testament
- Characters, groups, and ideas of the period

Learn

Learn how various groups dealt with their challenges

- Values – similarities/ differences from us
- Strategies – successful and not

Examine

Examine our own attitudes/ideas

- Are we choosing well or simply re-hashing bad choices?
- How can we best further the Gospel?

Last Week's Takeaways

The attempt to defend the Jewish faith ended up in a much different place than it started

The use of religion became corrupted by the needs of the political rulers

Our model for engagement is Christ who gave up his power to serve as our sacrifice

Are we engaging people via service or via power?

Reading from Last Week

Mark 1:1 - 8

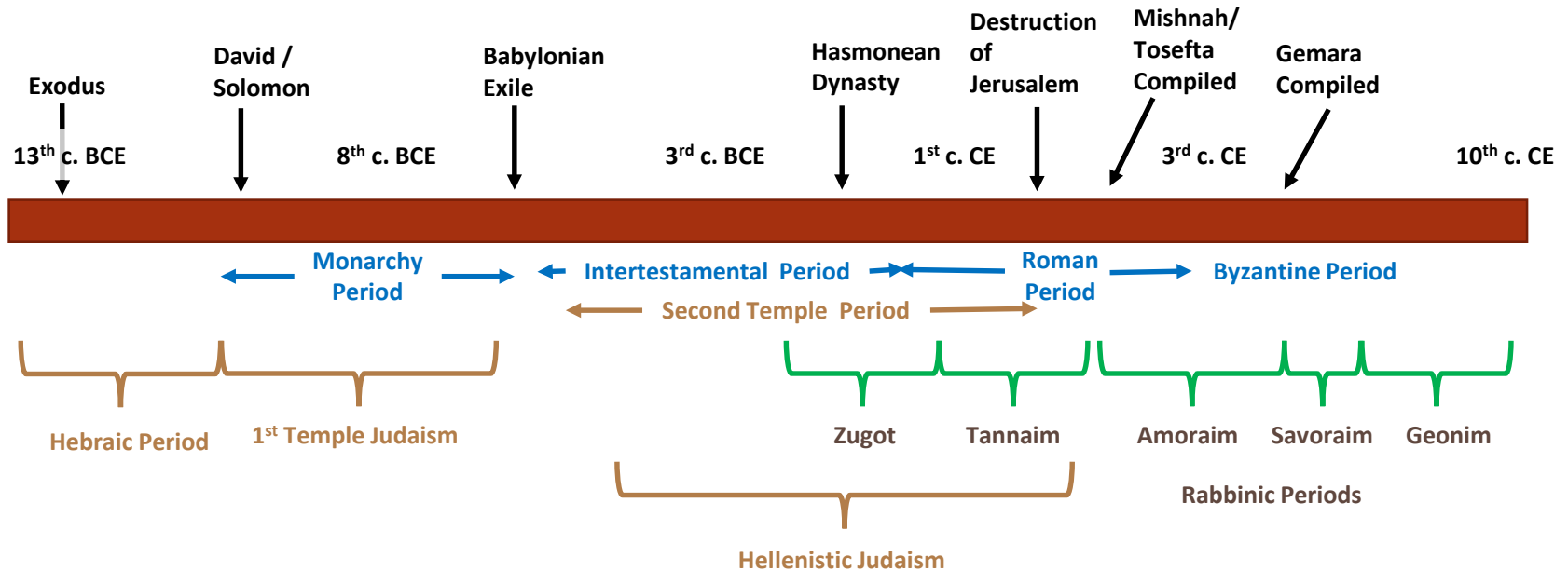
- Where does John live?
- What does he wear?

What does it mean to live as a religious outsider in 1st c. Judaism?



A Timeline of Judaism

We often present Judaism as a monolithic religion with only one viewpoint but it is actually very diverse



Introductory Reading

The War of the Sons of Light & the Sons of Darkness 12 (1st c. BCE) -

**“Arise, O warrior!
Take your captives, you man of glory;
And reap your spoil, O valiant!
Set your hand upon the neck of your foemen,
And your foot upon the mounds of the slain.
Smite the nations that assail you,
And let your sword devour guilty flesh.
Fill your land with glory and your inheritance with
blessing.**

**Be a multitude of possessions in your fields,
Silver and gold and precious stones in your palaces.
Zion, rejoice exceedingly,
And shine forth, O Jerusalem, with songs of joy,
And let all the cities of Judah exult!
Let your gates be continually open,
That the wealth of the nations may be brought to you;
And let their kings minister to you,**

**And all that oppressed you make
obeisance to you,
And lick the dust of your feet!
O daughter of my people,
Ring out your songs of joy!
Put on your finery,
Step forth []
[] Israel, to rule for evermore!
[] the warriors, O Jerusalem!
Be exalted, O Lord, above the
heavens!”**



Group Discussion – 3 Minutes

- Have you ever know someone in a “non-mainstream” religious group, cult, or sect?
- How would you describe their relationships with those outside the group?

The group we are studying today, the Essenes, would be considered an apocalyptic sect today.

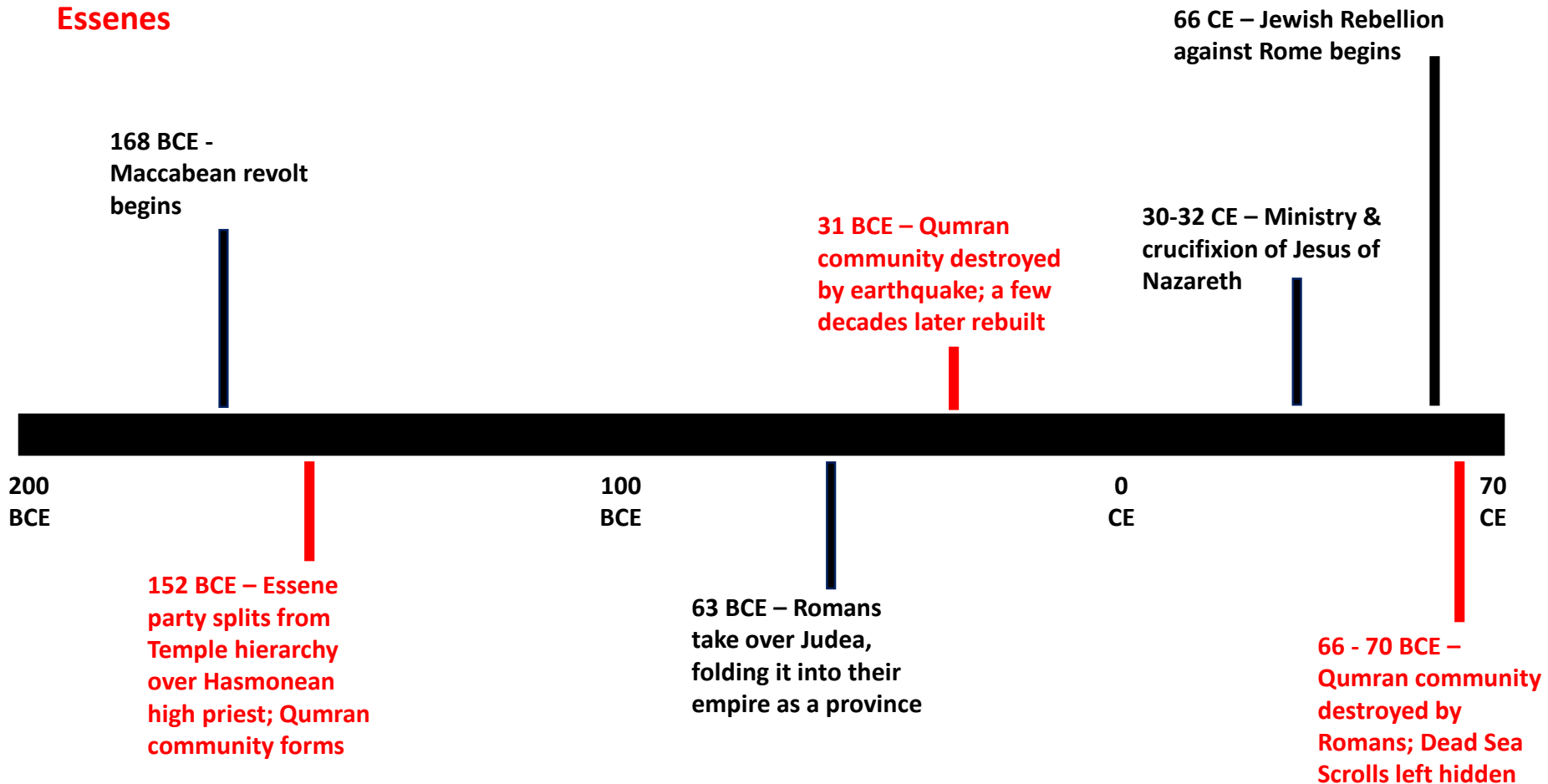
Who Were the Essenes?

- Founded in the mid-2nd c. BCE as a protest group
- Had a settlement near the Dead Sea
- Authors of the Dead Sea Scrolls
- Separatist, apocalyptic, literary, purity-obsessive
- Apparently killed by Romans after sacking of Jerusalem



A History of Intertestamental Groups

Essenes



Josephus' Description

The Jewish Antiquities 18.1.5 (1st c. CE)

“They teach **the immortality of souls**, and esteem that the rewards of righteousness are to be earnestly striven for...they do not offer sacrifices because they have **more pure lustrations** of their own; on which account they are **excluded from the common court of the temple**, but offer their sacrifices themselves.”

Josephus' Description

The Jewish Antiquities 18.1.5 (1st c. CE)

It also deserves our admiration, how much **they exceed all other men** that addict themselves to virtue, and **this in righteousness**; and indeed to such a degree, that as it has never appeared among any other men, neither Greeks nor barbarians, no, not for a little time, so has it endured a long while among them. This is demonstrated by that institution of theirs, which will not suffer any thing to hinder them from **having all things in common**; so that a rich man enjoys no more of his own wealth than he who has nothing at all.

Josephus' Description

The Jewish Antiquities 18.1.5 (1st c. CE)

There are about **four thousand men** that live in this way, and **neither marry wives**, nor are desirous **to keep servants**; as thinking the latter **tempts men to be unjust**, and the former **gives the handle to domestic quarrels**; but as they live by themselves, they minister one to another.”

What do you think of the Essenes? Interested in signing up?

Key Beliefs

**The
Covenant &
Faithfulness**



**End
Times**

**2
Messiahs**

**The
Afterlife**

**Purity
before
God**

In the Bible?

The Essenes do have a couple possible appearances in the Bible:

John the Baptist

Luke 14:5 – “If one of you has a son or an ox that falls into a well on the Sabbath day, will you not immediately pull him out?’ And they had nothing to say.”

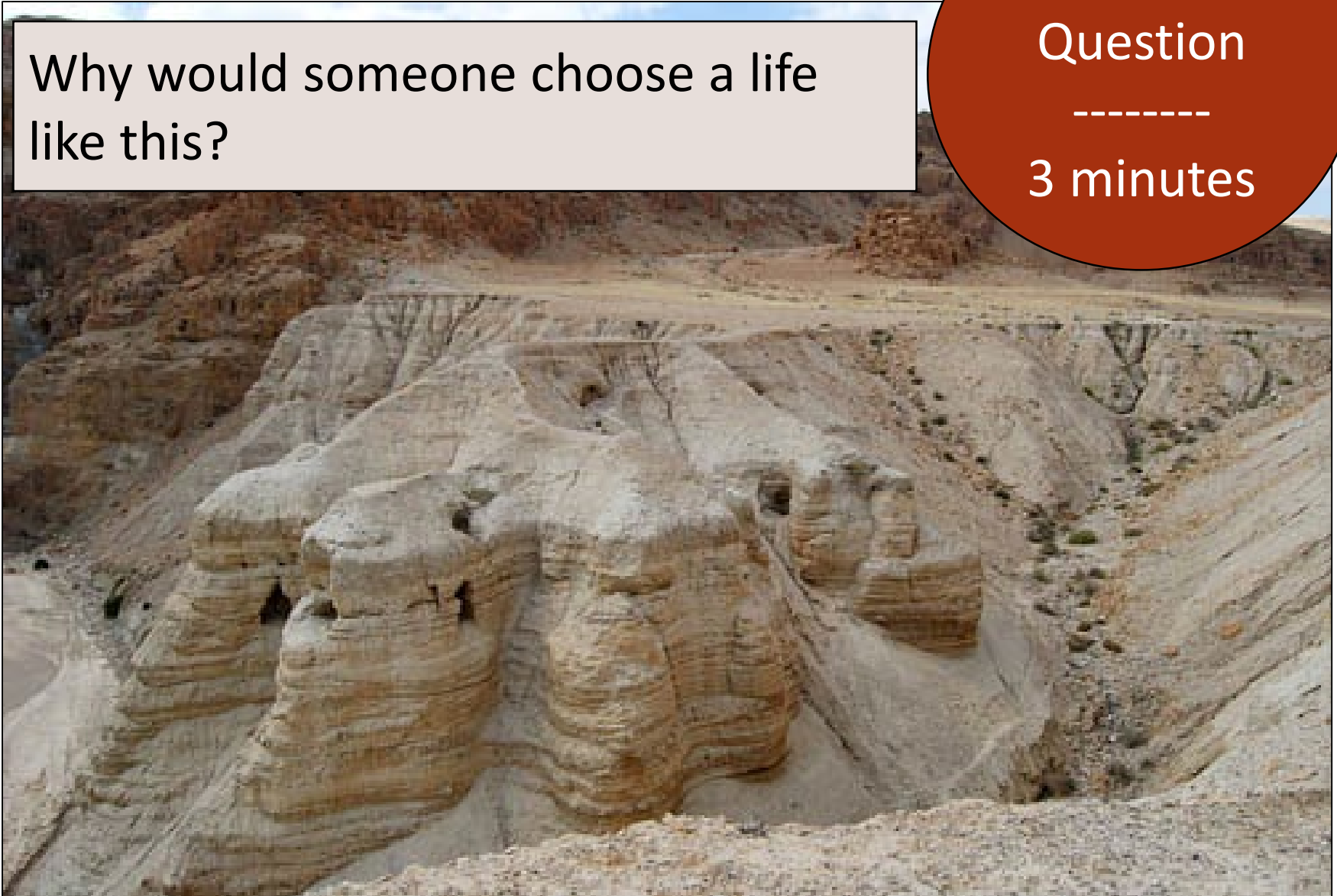
Christians were originally seen in the same way as them – another protest group within Judaism

Group Discussion

Why would someone choose a life like this?

Discussion
Question

3 minutes



A Biblical Perspective

We are called to be holy but not separate

1 Pet. 1:15 – “But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do”

Matt. 26:40 – “The King will reply, “I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.”

At what point does our desire for holiness become separatism?

A Few Implications for Us...

1. We ARE called to be holy in how we live

2. If that is manifested in arrogance, we have failed.

3. Being holy doesn't mean not serving/building relationships.

What are the worst stereotypes of Christians you have experienced? How do we overcome that?

Today's Takeaways

Judaism was not a monolithic religion – real differences between groups

Devotion to their uniqueness was rooted in covenant desire

Devotion to being the “remnant” doesn't mean isolation

Are we choosing the easy way out by isolating rather than engaging?

Reading for Next Week

John 11:45 - 57

- What justification does Caiaphas give for killing Jesus?
- Why is this a good reason in his mind and the others?



Caiaphas' ossuary (bone box)

Have you ever supported a "less-than-ideal" leader?