

EFFECTIVE RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Section B The life and teaching of Christ

Section C The life and teaching of the Early Church

Brother Patrick Tierney

EFFECTIVE RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Section B The life and teaching of Christ

Section C The life and teaching of the Early Church

© Educational Publishing House, Ltd. 1990

© Pilot Publishing Company Ltd. 1 AUG. 1997

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior written permission of the publisher.

Reprinted August 1997

ISBN 962-397-380-2

PILOT PUBLISHING COMPANY LTD.

G/F., 86, To Kwa Wan Road,
Kowloon, Hong Kong.

Solely distributed by

PILOT PUBLISHERS SERVICES LTD.

G/F., 86, To Kwa Wan Road,
Kowloon, Hong Kong.
Tel. : 2363 1898 Fax : 2766 0857

Printed in Hong Kong by

Elegance Printing & Book Binding Co., Ltd.

To teachers and students

If you want a Religious Studies book that:

- i) follows exactly and in detail the Syllabus for the HKCEE Religious Studies subject, Sections B and C;
- ii) explains clearly the text of the Bible;
- iii) poses numerous short questions to help you understand the text more thoroughly;
- iv) guides you to the answers by providing you with relevant Bible references;
- v) contains a set of review questions and suggested answers, similar to those set in the HKCEE;
- vi) provides a handy reference resource for successful revision exercises;

then, "Effective Religious Studies For The HKCEE" will meet your needs.

How to use this book

Before each lesson:

- Step 1. Study the relevant parts of the Bible text.
- Step 2. Study the relevant notes in this book.
- Step 3. Answer the questions following each part/section of the notes.
- Step 4. Check the Review Questions and Answers at the end of each unit for further information and approaches.

Preface

For many years I have felt the need of both teachers and students in Forms 3, 4 and 5 for more resource material to help them prepare for the HKCEE in Religious Studies, Sections B & C. This need has been more keenly felt since the introduction of the "open-book" format. "Effective Religious Studies"(For HKCEE) will, I trust, meet this need.

This book follows closely the suggested outline for Religious Studies in the Hong Kong Examinations Authority's Handbook of Regulations and Syllabuses for subjects to be examined from 1990 onwards.

I hope students who use this book will be stimulated to approach the subject of Religious Studies with enthusiasm and confidence.

Furthermore, I am very grateful to Brother Hermann Urban, F.M.S., without whose help this book would not have been written.

Brother Patrick Tierney

SECTION B

THE LIFE AND TEACHING OF CHRIST



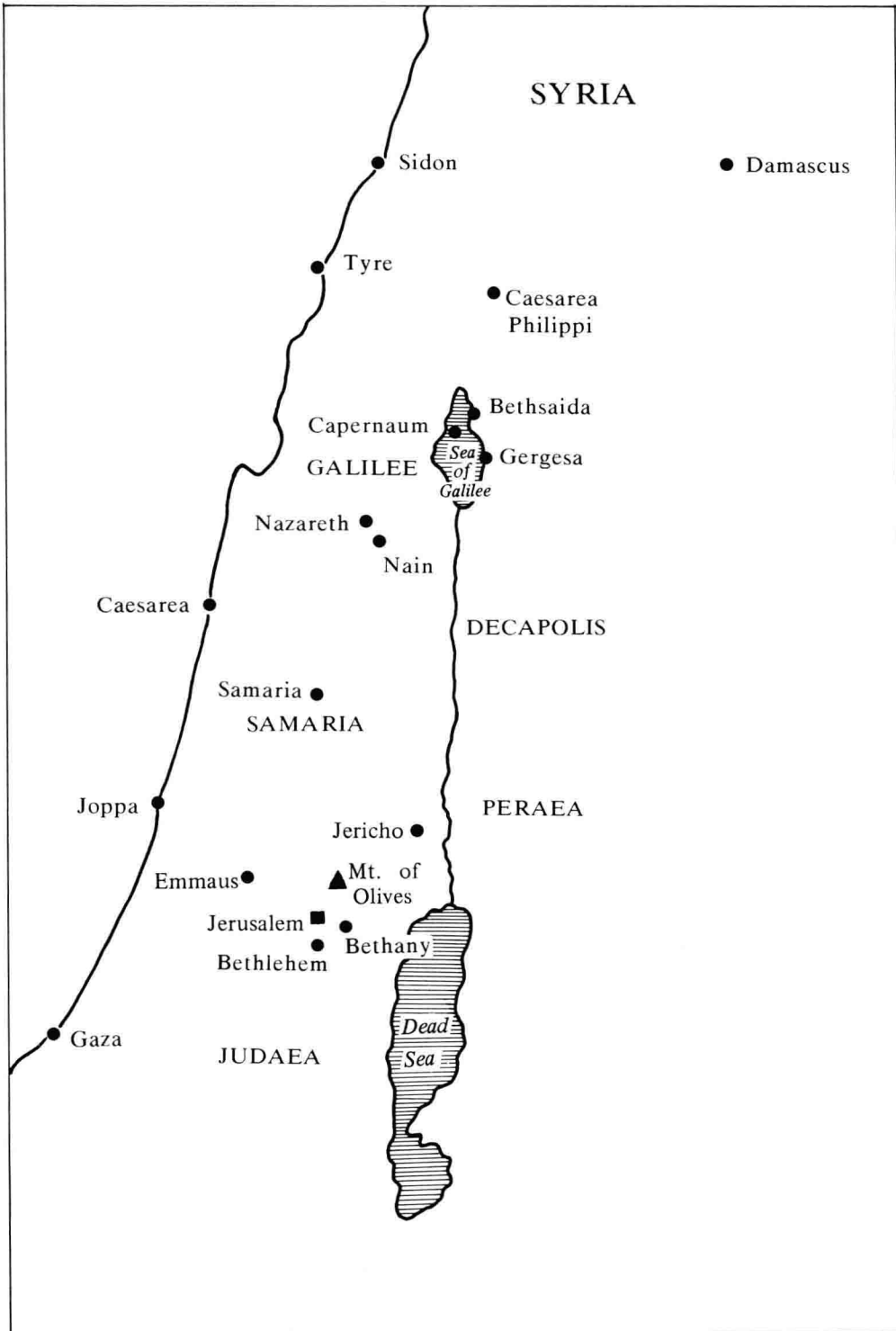


Figure 1.1 Palestine in Jesus' time

Contents

SECTION B – THE LIFE AND TEACHING OF CHRIST

UNIT I BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Palestine in the First Century A.D. 1
- 1.2 The Gospels as Literature 10

UNIT II THE BEGINNINGS

- 2.1 Heading (Mk 1:1) 17
- 2.2 Birth and childhood (Mt 1:18-25; Mt 2:1-23; Lk 2:1-52) 17
- 2.3 John the Baptist (Mk 1:2-8; Mk 6:14-29) 24
- 2.4 The Baptism of Jesus (Mk 1:9-11) 26
- 2.5 Temptation (Mk 1:12-13; Lk 4:1-13) 26

UNIT III JESUS THE MESSIAH

- 3.1 The Son of Man has to suffer (Mk 8:31-33; 9:9-13; 9:30-32; 10:32-45) 32
- 3.2 Jesus' identity is hidden (Mk 1:32-34; 1:40-45; 3:7-12; 5:21-43; 7:24-37; 8:22-30; 9:1-10) 36
- 3.3 Conflicts (Mk 2:1-12; 2:15-28; 3:1-6; 7:1-13; 8:11-13; 10:1-12; 11:15-19; 11:27-33; 12:1-40) 41

UNIT IV JESUS THE TEACHER

- 4.1 The Kingdom of God (Mk 1:14-15; 4:1-20; 4:26-33; 9:1; 9:42-50; 10:13-16; 12:28-34) 51
- 4.2 The disciples (Mk 1:16-20; 2:13-14; 3:13-19; 6:7-13) 56
- 4.3 The Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:1-7:12) 58
- 4.4 Parables (Mk 4:1-34; 12:1-12; Lk 10:25-37; Lk 15) 67
- 4.5 Other teachings (Mk 3:20-35; 7:14-23; 8:14-21; 8:34-38; 9:33-41; 10:17-31; 11:12-14; 11:20-26; 12:41-44) 74

UNIT V JESUS' POWER

5.1 Healing (Mk 1:23-26; 1:29-42; 2:1-12; 3:1-5; 3:7-12; 5:1-20; 5:22-43; 6:1-6; 6:53-56; 7:24-37; 8:22-26; 9:14-29; 10:46-52)	81
5.2 Authority (Mk 1:21-28; 2:6-12; 11:15-19; 11:27-33)	90
5.3 Glory (Mk 9:2-8)	92
5.4 Power of God the Creator (Mk 4:35-41; 6:30-52; 8:1-10)	93

UNIT VI JESUS' PASSION

6.1 Entrance into Jerusalem (Mk 11:1-10)	97
6.2 The Anointing at Bethany (Mk 14:1-11)	97
6.3 The Last Supper (Mk 14:12-31)	99
6.4 Gethsemane (Mk 14:32-42)	101
6.5 Arrest (Mk 14:43-52)	101
6.6 Before the Council (Mk 14:53-65)	102
6.7 Peter's denial (Mk 14:66-72)	103
6.8 Before Pilate (Mk 15:1-15)	103
6.9 Crucifixion and death (Mk 15:16-41; Mt 27:32-56; Lk 23:26-49)	104
6.10 Burial (Mk 15:42-47)	107

UNIT VII JESUS LIVES

7.1 The Resurrection (Mk 16:1-8; Mt 28:1-10; Lk 24:1-12)	109
7.2 Mary Magdalene (Mk 16:9-11; Mt 28:9-10)	111
7.3 The disciples (Mk 16:12-18; Mt 28:16-20; Lk 24:13-49)	111
7.4 Jesus' Ascension (Mk 16:19-20; Lk 24:50-53)	114

SUMMARY

Mt 1:18-2:23; Mt 5:1-7:12; Mt 27:32-56; Mt 28:1-10; Mt 28:16-20
Mk 1-12; 14-16
Lk 2; Lk 4:1-13; Lk 10:25-37; Lk 15:1-32; Lk 23:26-49; Lk 24:1-53

SECTION C – THE LIFE AND TEACHING OF THE EARLY CHURCH (ACTS)

UNIT I THE EARLY CHURCH IN JERUSALEM

1.1 The Purpose of Acts (1:1–5)	120
1.2 Jesus' Ascension (1:6–11)	121
1.3 The choice of a new apostle (1:12–26)	122
1.4 Pentecost – the equipping of the Church (2:1–24; 2:32–41)	122
1.5 The life style of the Early Church (2:42–47)	125
1.6 Healing of the lame man and its consequences (3:1–20; 4:1–22)	127
1.7 Prayer and sharing (4:23–37)	129
1.8 The fellowship is broken (5:1–16)	129
1.9 The apostles are persecuted (5:17–42)	130
1.10 Seven helpers are chosen (6:1–7)	132
1.11 Stephen, the first martyr (6:8–15; 7:44–60; 8:1–3)	134

UNIT II THE GOSPEL IS SPREAD TO JUDEA, SAMARIA AND SYRIA

2.1 Philip preaches in Samaria (8:4–25)	137
2.2 The Ethiopian eunuch meets Christ (8:26–40)	138
2.3 The conversion of Saul (9:1–31)	139
2.4 Saul's background (Philippians 3:5–8a)	141
2.5 Peter's work in Judea (9:32–43)	142
2.6 Cornelius, the first Roman Christian (10:1–48; 11:1–18)	142
2.7 Sharing between the Churches in Antioch and Jerusalem (11:19–30)	145
2.8 Peter is saved from prison (12:1–25)	145

UNIT III THE GOSPEL SPREADS TO ASIA MINOR – FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY

3.1 Choosing and sending the missionaries (13:1–3)	148
3.2 A Roman governor believes (13:4–12)	149
3.3 Paul in Antioch in Pisidia (13:13–14; 13:42–52)	149
3.4 Preaching to Gentiles in Lystra and Derbe (14:8–20)	150
3.5 The return journey (14:21–28)	151

UNIT IV OPENING THE CHURCH TO ALL NATIONS

- 4.1 The Council at Jerusalem – issues and solution (15:1–35) 153

UNIT V THE GOSPEL SPREADS TO EUROPE – SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY

- 5.1 Plans for the journey (15:36–41) 156
5.2 A new helper – Timothy (16:1–5) 157
5.3 The call to Europe (16:6–10) 158
5.4 Ministry at Philippi (16:11–40) 158
5.5 Paul at Athens, the centre of culture (17:16–34) 160
5.6 Paul at Corinth, commercial centre of Europe (18:1–11) 162
5.7 Return to Jerusalem (18:18–22) 163

UNIT VI STRENGTHENING THE NEW CHURCHES– THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY

- 6.1 Purpose of the journey (18:23) 165
6.2 Revolution in Ephesus (19:1–41; 20:1–2) 166
6.3 Fellowship with the Church at Troas (20:6–12) 169
6.4 Farewell to Ephesus (20:13–38) 169
6.5 Return to Jerusalem (21:1–15) 170

UNIT VII CONFLICT AT JERUSALEM

- 7.1 Paul tries to placate the Jewish believers (21:17–26) 173
7.2 Paul's arrest (21:27–40) 175
7.3 Paul's trial before the Jewish Council (22:30–23:11) 176
7.4 Paul's trial before the Roman governor, Festus – the appeal to Rome (25:6b–12) 177

UNIT VIII LIFE AT ROME

- 8.1 Life at Rome (28:16–31) 179
8.2 The story of Onesimus, the escaped slave (Philemon 1–25) 181
8.3 A letter from prison (Philippians 1:1–4:23) 183

Unit I BACKGROUND

1.1 PALESTINE IN THE FIRST CENTURY AD

1.1.1 Roman Occupation

(A) THE POLITICAL SITUATION

The Romans occupied Palestine in 63 BC. When they conquered the country, however, they allowed it to a great extent to continue its religion, language, and normal ways of living, so long as there were no rebellions and disorders. Thus, the **Herods** were allowed to rule in Palestine under the power of Rome, and the *High Priest* had *religious* and *civil control* over the Jews in Jerusalem and Judea.

(B) THE HERODS

- (1) **Herod the Great** was made *king of Palestine* by the Romans in 37 BC. Although he liked to be regarded as a *true Jew*, he had more interest in *non-Jewish culture* and *literature*. A power-hungry and suspicious man, he killed all children of two years old and under in Bethlehem (*Mt 2:16-18*). Herod was *hated* by the Jews, especially as he came from a non-Jewish family.

Also, his *pagan practices* and his *cruel, bloodthirsty rule* lost him the sympathy of his Jewish subjects. Herod, however, was one of the great *builders* of the ancient world. He rebuilt Caesarea. In addition, partly to win favour with the Jews, he undertook to rebuild the Jerusalem Temple. This massive project began in 20 BC and was not completed until AD 66, only four years before the Romans destroyed it.

Herod the Great died in 4 BC. His will divided his kingdom among three of his sons: Archelaus, Herod Antipas, and Philip.

- (2) **Archelaus** inherited *Idumea, Judea* and *Samaria* which he ruled for 10 years until, because of his *cruelty*, the Romans removed him from power. At that time Rome decided that Samaria, Judea and Idumea should be under the *direct control of Rome* and not delegated to a king. Thus in AD 6 a *Roman governor* was appointed.
- (3) **Herod Antipas** ruled *Galilee* and *Perea* throughout the life and ministry of Jesus. He arrested and killed John the Baptist but made no serious attempt to arrest Jesus. He had spies who reported Jesus' activities. Jesus warned his disciples against the "*yeast of Herod*" (*Mk 8:15*). As a Galilean, Jesus was under Herod's jurisdiction.

Herod fell into disfavour with the Jews when he divorced his wife and married Herodias, his niece and the wife of his brother Herod Philip (*Mk 6:14-29*). In AD 39 he was removed from power by the Romans.

EMPERORS	DATE	CIVIL RULERS					EVENTS	
		Idumea	Judea	Samaria	Galilee	Perea		Iturea etc.
Agustus divided Palestine	4 BC		Archelaus 4 BC - 6 AD		Herod Antipas 4BC - 39AD		Philip son of Cleopatra 4BC - 34AD	5 BC Jesus' Birth
Agustus deposes Archelaus	6 AD		ROMAN PROCURATORS Caponius 6-9 AD Ambibulus 9-12 AD Annius R. 12-15 AD Velarius 15-26 AD					Jesus' Hidden Life
Tiberius	14-37 AD		Pontius Pilate 26-36 AD					27 AD John The Baptist 27-30 AD Jesus' Public Ministry
Caligula	37-41 AD		Marcellus 36-37 AD Marullus 37-41 AD					
Claudius	41-54 AD					Herod Agrippa I (34) 39-44 AD		
Claudius puts Galilee and Perea under the procurators	44 AD		Cuspius Fodus 44-46 AD Tiberius Alex 46-48 AD Ventidius Cumanus 48-52 AD				Iturea, etc. Herod of Calx 44-48 AD Agrippa II	
Nero	54-68 AD		Antonius Felix 52-60 AD Porcus Festus 60-62 AD Albinus 62-64 AD Gessius Florus 64-66 AD					50 AD Council of Jerusalem
Vespasian	68-78 AD		<u>JEWISH REVOLT</u> War with the Romans 68-70 AD Palestine becomes a Roman Province					68 AD Martyrdom of Peter and Paul

Figure 1.2 Roman Occupation

(C) PONTIUS PILATE

He was the *fifth Roman governor* of *Judea, Samaria, and Idumea*, governing from the year 26 to 36. He is held officially responsible for the *condemnation and crucifixion of Jesus* on a charge of rebellion against Rome, in about the year 30. He was a proud, hot-tempered young man of about the same age as Jesus. His official residence was at the Roman port and colonial city of Caesarea.

At Jewish festivals the governor, however, went with his troops to Jerusalem in order to prevent riots. His power was absolute. Pilate's conduct during Jesus' trial and execution well illustrates his character and capabilities. Besides keeping *peace* the Governor collected *taxes*, made periodic *reports* to Rome, and handled *court cases* involving capital offences.

The Jews *despised* Pilate. When they turned Jesus over to Pilate and asked that he be executed, Pilate tried to evade responsibility. Eventually, however, Pilate did sentence Jesus to death.

(D) THE JEWS AND ROMAN RULE

Rome was relatively tolerant of the Jews. Military troops guarded the large cities. This brought peace and enabled the country to prosper. Roman forms of government were introduced, with courts of law and justice, and the Jews ruled themselves by these. Each area in Palestine had its own *council*. For Judea there was the *Sanhedrin*. It had the freedom to make numerous laws and to hold trials.

- (1) Most Jews, however, hated Roman occupation even though, in practice, Rome seldom interfered in Jewish affairs. They were convinced that only God had the right to rule the Chosen People. The Roman army brought back to Rome thousands of *slaves*; these were bought and sold like cattle, and put to work on building sites. Taxation was intensely disliked by the Jews. Following Roman laws brought them into contact with Gentiles, which was forbidden by their laws. Roman soldiers could force any Jewish male to carry a burden for a mile.
- (2) Roman officials, according to the Gospels, had control over *military, financial, and judicial* matters.
 - (i) **Military Matters:** *Barabbas* and other *rebels* were arrested and kept in prison by the Romans because they had committed murder in a riot.
 - (ii) **Financial Matters:** The Roman Emperor ordered a *census* to be taken in Palestine for the purpose of gathering information so that people could be taxed. Each person had to go back to his home town for the census (*Lk 2:1-5*). The Jews had to pay *taxes* to the Romans, and the money in general use was Roman. The Pharisees tried to trap Jesus by asking him whether they should pay taxes. The coin they showed Jesus had Caesar's face on it (*Mk 12:13-17*).
 - (iii) **Judicial Matters:** Jesus was *crucified* by the *Romans*. When Jesus was *tried* by the *Jewish authorities* who wanted to put him to death, they had to turn him over to the Romans (Pilate) because Roman law did not allow them to put a prisoner to death.

Questions 1.1.1

1. What was the attitude of the Jews toward Herod the Great? Explain your answer.
2. Describe the work and character of Pontius Pilate.
3. Why were the Romans in Palestine? Give THREE examples to show their role.
4. Name THREE political rulers associated with the life of Jesus. How did they affect Jesus' life? [See Lk 2:1-7; Mt 2:13-15; Mt 2:19-23.]

1.1.2 Jewish Factions

(A) Sadducees:

(1) The Sadducees were *powerful political leaders*, most of whom served as *priests* in the Temple in Jerusalem. They were the *dominant party* in the *Sanhedrin*, also called the *Jewish Council*. As members of the wealthy class, the Sadducees were *mediators* between Rome and the Jews, and accepted Roman rule as a means of gaining privileges for the nation.

(2) The Sadducees thought only the *Law of Moses* was revealed by God. They rejected the Oral Traditions. They also rejected belief in the resurrection of the body, belief in a Last Judgement, and the existence of angels and devils.

(3) The Sadducees opposed Jesus for political reasons. They considered Jesus a *threat* to law and order. They did not want a messiah because they already had all they wanted to make them happy:

wealth, power, and prestige. They were frightened that if Jesus started rousing the crowds, as he had done by triumphally entering Jerusalem and by driving the businessmen out of the Temple, the Romans would take ruthless action and destroy the *Temple* which would directly affect the livelihood of the Sadducees.

(4) Jesus criticized the Sadducees – those who were priests – over the way they administered the *purity laws* (Mk 1:40-45) when he touched a *leper* and declared him ritually clean. By declaring the leper clean, Jesus challenged the right of the priests to declare certain people outcasts. Jesus also criticized the priestly Sadducees for allowing the *Temple* to be used as a *market place* and a den for thieves (Mk 11:15-18).

He also shocked them by claiming that his authority came from God (Mk 11:27-33). In the parable of the *Tenants in the Vineyard* (Mk 12:1-12) Jesus told the Sadducees that he knew about their plan to kill him. He told them that if they did, God would punish them.

Finally, Jesus criticized them for not knowing Scripture, and for their lack of faith in the resurrection of the dead (Mk 12:18-27).

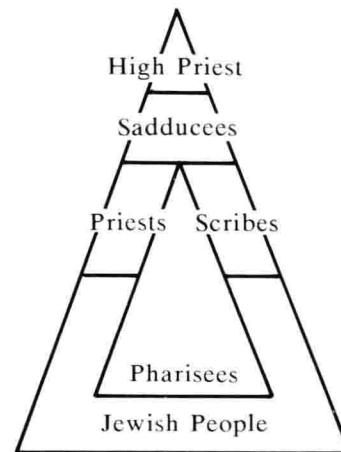


Figure 1.3 Jewish factions

(B) Pharisees:

- (1) The Pharisees were a religious party who had great power and influence over the common people. Chiefly *middle-class laymen*, ie, not priests, they were associated with the *Synagogues*. Many of the **teachers of the Law** were Pharisees. As teachers of the Law the Pharisees were trained in the law. They added to the Law of Moses through their *Oral Traditions*, also called *Oral Law* or *Tradition of the Ancestors*. These traditions gave detailed regulations about *eating, ritual cleanness, Sabbath observance, and religious taxes*. They believed in *angels, the resurrection of the dead, and a Last Judgement*. Finally, they were against paying taxes to the Romans (*Mk 12:13-17*).
- (2) The Pharisees criticized Jesus for *associating* with social outcasts and sinners, for *ignoring* the *rituals* connected with eating, and for *working* on the *Sabbath* by publicly healing people on the Sabbath and by allowing his disciples to *gather food* on that day.
- (3) Jesus criticized the Pharisees for their *attitudes* and *regulations* concerning the eating of food, carrying out religious duties and observing the Sabbath. He also criticized their *greed*.
 - (i) Concerning the *eating of food*, Jesus criticized the Pharisees for *not* allowing people to eat certain foods, for insisting on being *ritually clean* when eating, and for *not* eating with people other than those in their own class.
 - (ii) Concerning carrying out *religious duties*, Jesus criticized the Pharisees for their *hypocrisy* when praying, fasting, and giving money to the poor.
 - (iii) Concerning *observing the Sabbath*, Jesus criticized the Pharisees for *forbidding* the gathering of food on the Sabbath and for *not* helping people in need just because it was the Sabbath.
 - (iv) Jesus also criticized them for their *greed*. In fact, they had invented the custom of *CORBAN* to make sure that all Jews, even the poorest, paid their *synagogue taxes*. The Pharisees considered these taxes more important than God's commandments.

(C) Zealots:

- (1) The Zealots belonged to a society that had vowed to **liberate** the Jewish people from Roman domination, and they attempted to do so by *force*. They were more *political* than religious. *Galilee* served as their centre of operations. They believed God would come to their aid if they took the initiative in throwing out the Roman oppressors. They believed that the coming messiah would be a great military leader who would throw off the yoke of the Romans. They would have looked on Jesus as a **political messiah**.
- (2) One of the twelve apostles, *Simon the Patriot*, was a member of this party. No doubt he believed that Jesus was the Messiah who was going to remove all trace of Roman occupation from the land of Israel. Jesus had to teach him that his plan was very different from what he had been led to expect.
- (3) Jesus did not agree with the belief of the Zealots that:
 - (i) the best way to save the country was to take up the *sword*. Jesus told his disciples to take up the *cross* (*Mk 8:34-38*). Jesus believed in *nonviolent resistance*.
 - (ii) Jesus believed in *equality* and *compassion* within the family and community (*Mk 10:15*), *economic justice* (*Mk 10:19*), and *sharing* (*Mk 10:29-31*).

Questions 1.1.2

5. The Sadducees were powerful political leaders. Give details of their power.
6. Why did the Sadducees oppose Jesus?
7. Explain some of the beliefs of the Pharisees.
8. Why did Jesus criticize the Pharisees?
9. What was the attitude of the Zealots towards the Romans?

1.1.3 People

In first-century Palestine there was a hierarchy of professions, but the *rank* was different from ours. A person's position in society depended on whether his occupation was "pure" or "impure".

We can see from **Mark's prologue** to his Gospel (*Mk 1:1-4*) that **Jesus' Good News** would shake the foundations of this life style. Jesus started his public life by calling the common people to join him in challenging the social order which divided people into two groups: good people and sinners (*Mk 1:15-28*). In Jesus' Kingdom, everyone would be given a chance to become a believer.

(A) Peasants:

The peasants tilled the soil of wealthy landowners. They had to pay *rent* to the landowners, *taxes* to the government, a *Temple tax*, and a *Synagogue tax*. Because of their *enforced poverty*, many peasants became ill or disabled.

Jesus gave special attention to the peasants – called "crowd" in the Gospels – and *Mark* mentions them 38 times. In *Mark's Gospel*, Jesus had great sympathy for these poor (*Mk 1:29-34*), and he worked many miracles for them.

(B) Fishermen:

They had a flourishing industry on the *Sea of Galilee*. Fishermen were working in family groups, and often used hired helpers. They mended nets and sails, repaired boats, and often fished by night. Fishermen were considered to have an *honourable status*.

Jesus considered fishermen as ideally suitable for **discipleship**, and the first four of his disciples were fishermen.

(C) Landowners:

In Palestine, great landowners systematically cheated the poor (peasants). The Jews, who considered **wealth as a sign of God's favour**, highly respected landowners.

Jesus did not agree that God had a special love for the rich, teaching that the rich could only be saved by redistributing their fraudulent wealth (*Mk 10:19*). Jesus taught that economic justice consisted in *economic sharing*. The rich can obtain eternal life only if they are willing to share their wealth with the poor (*Mk 10:21-31*).

In the parable of the *Lost Son* (*Lk 15:11-32*), a rich landowner is used as an example of God's *love* and *compassion* for sinners. In the parable of the *Tenants in the Vineyard* (*Mk 12:1-12*), a rich landowner represents *God the just judge*. In the story of the rich man (*Mk 10:17-31*), a rich landowner *rejects discipleship* because he is *not* willing to accept Jesus' demand that he sell his assets and give them to the poor.