

Vicarious Sacrifice: Miracles Were “Calling Cards” Introducing Jesus as Messiah; Isaiah’s Prophecies Regarding the Messiah, Isa 11:1; 7:14, & 9:6–7; Jesus’ Reiteration of the Shepherd-Sheep Parable: False Shepherds Are “Thieves & Robbers,” John 10:8; the Competing Factions for Power in Palestine: Herodians, Zealots, Sadducees, Pharisees, & Essenes

23. These “signs” were calling cards designed to identify Jesus as Messiah thus qualifying Him to enter the door of sheepfold Jerusalem.
24. In the parable, the Shepherd will spend 33-plus years inside the sheepfold, His ministry prophesied by Isaiah: (1) He is in the chart pedigree of David’s:
- Isaiah 11:1** - Then a shoot [**First Advent of Christ**] will spring from the stem of Jesse [**father of David**], and a branch [**a messianic title**] from his roots will bear fruit.
- (2) The Shoot or Branch will be virgin born:
- Isaiah 7:14** - Therefore, the Lord [**God the Father**] Himself shall give you a miraculous sign: Behold the virgin [**Mary**] shall become pregnant consequently bearing a son, and she shall call His name Emmanuel.
- (3) He will acquire hypostatic union at physical birth:
- Isaiah 9:6** - For a child has been born to us [**Isaiah reports prophetically into the future in perfect tense indicating completed action**], a son has been given to us. He shoulders responsibility and is called: Extraordinary Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.
- v. 7** - His dominion will be vast and he will bring immeasurable prosperity. He will rule on David’s throne and over David’s kingdom, establishing it and strengthening it by promoting justice and fairness, from this time forward and forevermore. The Lord’s intense devotion to his people will accomplish this. (NET)
25. He will leave Jerusalem through the door that leads to Golgotha, crucifixion, spiritual death, physical death, and burial.
- John 10:8** - “All who come before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them.”
1. “All that came before” refers to all religious types that have made attempts to lure the sheep into false belief systems.
 2. A current example are the Pharisees and scribes who impose strident and legalistic policies from the oral law upon the people.
 3. The Sanhedrin was the organization that assumed control over the Jews of Palestine and did so with an iron hand. The government over the Jews was further complicated by the presence of two legal systems which included Herod Antipas as King of the Jews and Pontius Pilate as Roman governor over the province of Judaea.
 4. An excellent summary of the conflicts of political and religious interests confronting the Jews as well as Jesus is supplied by these excerpts from an article by Paul Meier:

We have a meticulous source of information on first-century Judaism from one of the most extraordinary of ancient historians, Flavius Josephus.

Josephus tells us why Jews were so disgruntled with the Roman regime, almost regardless of which governor was in charge. The divine directives in Deuteronomy 17:15 specified that in governing the people of Israel, “You shall not put a foreigner over you who is not your brother.” It was, in fact, heresy for any Gentile to be ruling over Jewish subjects.

The various political-religious parties in the land handled this and other problems in various ways, showing that first-century Judaism was not a unified whole but a remarkably disparate collection of sectarian groups, including the following:

The Herodians were those Jews who supported the four generations of Herods who ruled at that time, and therefore supported Rome as well. They tried to prevent the Jewish rebellion against Rome in the year 66. Four other Jewish sects were quintessentially opposed to them.

The Zealots were radically hostile to the Roman government and tried to overthrow it by any means possible, including assassination. They were at the forefront of the Jewish rebellion according to Josephus.

The Sadducees were Jewish conservatives who accepted only the Pentateuch as Scripture, the Torah. They did not believe in angels, spirits or a resurrection of any kind. But they had powerful political connections, and controlled the Temple in Jerusalem and all the commercial transactions that took place there. Annas and Caiaphas, familiar high priests from Jesus’ trial, were leaders in the family that controlled the Jewish ruling council, the Sanhedrin, as well as the Temple.

The Pharisees, on the other hand, accepted all of what is today known as the Hebrew Bible, and believed in resurrection, spirits and angels. Accordingly, the teachings of Jesus were more in accord with the Pharisees than the Sadducees. With far more popular support than their opponents, the Pharisees were meticulous about maintaining the Law of Moses.

Josephus actually tells us more about the “third party” of Jews, the Essenes, than the last two. This group comprised both members living in general society in the Holy Land, and ascetics living in the desert. Despite some contrary opinions, it seems there was indeed an Essene monastery at Qumran, near the northwestern shore of the Dead Sea. This was the group that wrote—and hid in ceramic jars secreted in caves that were discovered in 1947—the famous Dead Sea Scrolls.

Permeating all of Judaism at the time of Jesus, however, was Messianism, the expectation that a heroic Jewish leader, the Messiah, would deliver his people from oppression by the Romans, the very prophet-priest-king predicted by the Hebrew prophets.

But Isaiah, the greatest of the seers, had also portrayed this larger-than-life figure as a suffering servant of God. Which view was true? Even some of Jesus’ disciples were not sure.¹

5. All of the factions in Meier’s article are recipients of the Lord’s accusations; He considers them thieves and robbers which He indicated in John 10:1. They have not paid attention to His teaching so He accuses them a second time.
6. The word “thieves” is the noun κλέπτης (*kléptēs*): “to steal by fraud and in secret.” The application is directed toward these groups possessing an air of religious legitimacy in order to surreptitiously communicate false doctrines.
7. This is not to say that these religious groups knowingly communicated false doctrine; each believed its own theology. The fact remains they used their religious standing to peddle their colportage.

¹ Paul Maier, “The World into which Jesus Was Born: Judaism in Jesus’ Time,” *Jesus of History* (2013): 15–16.
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8. The second indictment is the noun “robbers”: **ληστής (lēstēs)**: “to take another’s property by violence” (when stealth doesn’t do the trick).