

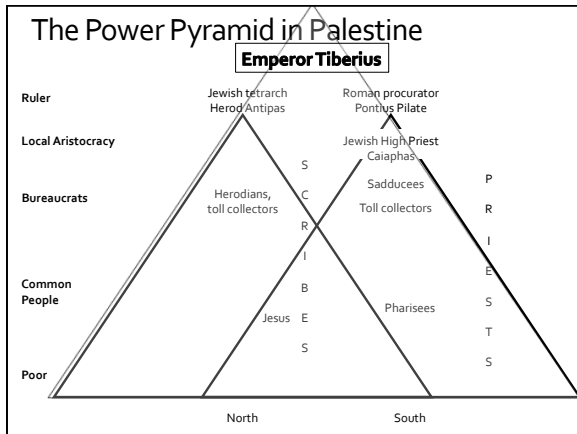
Class 8b

WHY WAS JESUS EXECUTED?

Outline

- The Power Pyramid in Roman Palestine
- Jesus' Opponents in the Gospels
- Was Jesus a Political Threat?
 - The Evidence
 - Why and how the gospel authors answer "no"
 - The most historically plausible answer
 - *Why* was Jesus a political threat?

THE POWER PYRAMID IN ROMAN PALESTINE



JESUS' OPPONENTS IN THE GOSPELS

Who Were Jesus' Opponents?

	What the Gospels say	What is historically plausible
Roman authorities		<input type="checkbox"/>
Sadducees, Jewish aristocracy, elders	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
scribes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pharisees	<input type="checkbox"/>	
"Jews" (the crowds)	<input type="checkbox"/>	
his family		
his followers	Judas	

The Historical Pharisees

How their "yoke" stacks up against Jesus'

The Pharisees get bad press in the gospels for being too legalistic and rigid in their interpretation of Jewish law. But who, really, was more strict?

	Jesus	Pharisees
Purity		
• which foods to eat, and with whom		<input type="checkbox"/>
• washing hands and handling things		<input type="checkbox"/>
Voluntary fasting		<input type="checkbox"/>
Other commands		
• tithing		<input type="checkbox"/>
• observance of fasts and holy days		<input type="checkbox"/>
• marriage and divorce	<input type="checkbox"/>	
• murder and anger	<input type="checkbox"/>	
• adultery and lust	<input type="checkbox"/>	
• love of neighbor and enemy	<input type="checkbox"/>	

WAS JESUS A POLITICAL THREAT?

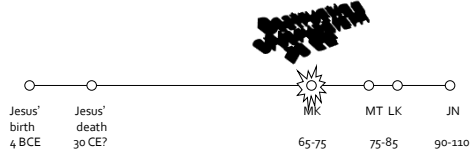
Was Jesus a Political Threat?

The Evidence

Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rome executed him • Rome <i>crucified</i> him • but Jerusalem, especially during Passover, was more populous and volatile • his central message was a "reign of God" that challenged Rome's rule 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the gospels say Pilate didn't want to • the gospels say Jesus Barabbas was the violent criminal, the one Rome <i>should</i> have crucified • Herod Antipas never "took him out" up in the Galilee • but was that reign of God a direct threat? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Jesus supported Roman taxes ◦ he healed a centurion's slave ◦ at trial, he said kingdom is not of this world

Was Jesus a Political Threat?

Why the Gospel authors answer "no"



- ✓ Jews had just revolted against Rome and been crushed
- ✓ Jews around the empire were paying the price
- ✓ The Romans didn't differentiate between Jews and Christians
- ✓ Except they knew Christians were following a man they crucified

Christians needed to protect selves and differentiate selves from "rebellious Jews"

Was Jesus a Political Threat?

How the Gospel authors answer "no"



- The Synoptics create a Jewish "trial"
- All four exonerate Pilate, having Pilate say Jesus is innocent
- All four increasingly blame Jewish figures instead
 - especially chief priests, elders, scribes, first men
 - Matthew makes the Jewish crowd indict itself (27:25)
 - John makes "the Jews" the culprits
- All four use the Barabbas scene to paint Jesus as non-violent
- All four make his "kingdom" less "of this world"

Eusebius & Augustine

Was Jesus a Political Threat?

The Most Historically Plausible Answer

Yes No

- Rome executed him
- Rome *crucified* him
- but Jerusalem, especially during Passover, was more populous and volatile
- Herod Antipas never "took him out" up in the Galilee
- his central message was a "reign of God" that challenged Rome's rule

Why Was Jesus a Political Threat?

- Because of his message, perhaps
 - ◻ "kingdom of God" challenges kingdoms of this world, and their allies
 - ◻ criteria of historicity establish that message as historical
- But even more likely, because of the CROWD
 - ◻ The gospels make it sound like the crowd WANTED Jesus dead
 - ◻ But this isn't plausible
 - Crucifixion's target is that crowd
 - The message is for THEM
 - You don't need to crucify someone the crowd already despises
 - ◻ So why would the gospel authors MAKE the crowd guilty?
 - to align selves with Rome as victims of Jews
 - to explain why Jerusalem had been destroyed
 - to explain why the Jews hadn't embraced Jesus since his death
