

“Selected Studies in the Gospels”
Growing Up in the First Century, Pt. 1

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A. Jewish Towns—

1. Surrounded by fortified walls.
2. One would enter through a massive gate.
3. Above the gate rose the watchtower.
4. “Within the gate” was the shady retreat where “the elders” sat.
 - a. They discussed public affairs.
 - b. Genesis 23:17-18
 - c. Genesis 34:24
 - d. Job 29:7
5. The gates opened upon large squares—streets converged.
6. The country-people ... sold the produce of their fields or orchards.
7. Foreign merchants or peddlers also sold their goods.
8. The crowd of shoppers, peddlers, merchants and beggars.
9. The streets were named after the trades (cf., Acts 18:2-3).
10. Rabbis sometimes taught their disciples in some shady retreat.
11. At night, a watchmen was on duty in the watchtower.
12. People kept a light burning all night in their homes.

B. Jewish Townships—

1. “Great” if it had its own synagogue—“small” if it didn’t.
2. This depended upon the residence of at least 10 men.

C. Jewish Villages—

1. Were unwalled and without defenses (Lev. 25:29)
2. Were often grouped together around the city (Num. 21:25)
3. Their inhabitants would retreat within the city in time of war.
4. Had no synagogue.

D. The rule of these towns and villages was exceedingly strict.

1. The representatives of Rome.
2. Every town had a Sanhedrin.

E. Sanitary rules were strictly attended to.

F. Looking up and down one of the streets.

1. As a rule, a stairway led from the outside straight up to a flat roof.
2. The roof was paved and surrounded by a balustrade.
3. The roof had to be strong enough to support a person’s weight.
4. It was quite common for the roofs of the houses to be connected
 - a. Matthew 24:17 (Mk. 13:15; Lk. 17:31)
5. Neighbors were not allowed to have windows looking into the courts or rooms of others.

G. The Greek City—

1. The Greek *polis* was a politically and economically independent community.
2. The citizen body of a *polis* was smaller or larger depending on whether the city had an oligarchic¹ or democratic constitution.²
3. The citizens met in an assembly.
4. The *agora* was the center of public life.
5. Essential political buildings were located next to the *agora*.
6. Sanctuary—
7. Gymnasium—
8. Stadium—
9. Theater—

H. In the Jewish home—

1. Circumcision separated the Jews from the other nations.
2. Private prayer, morning and evening, hallowed daily life.
3. Before every meal they washed their hands and prayed.
4. The Sabbath sanctified the week of labor.
5. The most striking difference between Judaism and paganism is seen in the relations between God and his people, a man and his wife, parents and their children and the young and the aged.
 - a. God as the “Father” of his people.
 - 1) Exodus 4:22
 - 2) Deuteronomy 32:6
 - 3) Psalms 100:3
 - 4) Isaiah 64:8-9
 - 5) Malachi 1:6-8
 - b. A man and his wife
 - 1) אִשָּׁה (*isha*) < אִשׁ (*ish*)
 - 2) עֵזֶר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ (*ezer k'neg-doe*)—a helper corresponding to him.
 - c. Parents and their children.
 - 1) Kiddushin 29a
 - 2) Kiddushin 31b
 - 3) A son was ... independent ... he could gain his own living.
 - 4) A daughter was under ... authority ... until marriage.
 - 5) A father might chastise his child, but only while young.
 - 6) A grown son could not be beaten.
 - a) Ephesians 6:4
 - d. The young and the aged.
 - 1) Berakoth 8b