

The Assassins (Sacarii)

by Robert Wurtz II

The sermon explores the history of the Zealots and the Sacarii, highlighting their violent and destructive behavior, and contrasting it with the peaceful and persecuted Church in Jerusalem.

Scripture: Proverbs 1:16, Matthew 10:28, Matthew 24:2, Acts 23:12

Topics: "Early Church", "Religious Extremism"

Description

Robert Wurtz II delves into the historical context of the Zealots and the Sacarii, highlighting their brutal actions and motivations driven by greed and desire for spoils rather than true religion. These groups, known for their senseless thirst for blood, were seen as common criminals by Josephus, engaging in robbery, murder, and plunder. The Zealots and Sacarii used threats of death to force people to join their uprisings, instilling fear in those who opposed them. Their violent and ruthless behavior painted a stark contrast to the spreading of the Gospel by the early Church amidst intense persecution.

Transcript

In Matthew 24:2 Jesus asked... "Do you see all these things?" he asked. "I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down." (NIV) Jesus knew what was coming and it was total devastation. After the death and resurrection of Christ- the Zealots and the Pharisees were still at work. The Church in Jerusalem was headed (the president) by James the half brother of our Lord and then it was headed by various family members of His after that. The Christians were a new sect called the Notzrim (Nazarenes). According to Dr. Ron Moseley there were around 20 other mini sects that were likewise out of step with the Pharisees and Zealots and were given the harsh name "the Minim" (All the while the Church is spreading the Gospel and coming under intense persecution-- the Zealots and the other sects were doing their agenda.) The "Minim" is sort of like saying "the heretics." Remember this fact, it will be important in our future studies.

To cut through a lot of details it happens that Felix lied to the leader of the Zealots and lured him into being taken prisoner to Rome. This upset them greatly. They retaliated by forming a group called the SACARII. These men were brutal killers. They carried a short dagger under their clothing and would wade through crowds to assassinate people. Some scholars believe that there was a connection between the sacarii and the Temple leaders in those days and refer to the incident with Paul in Acts 23:12. Their actions are typical of the Sacarii. The fact that Roman guards were taken to protect is good indication that this may have been the case. The Zealots and especially the Sacarii would threaten people with DEATH who would

not follow them in their uprising. They had a very believable reputation and track record for doing it, as they were not mere idle threats. FROM these facts we begin to see why Josephus so resented the Zealots and referred to them as "robbers." He saw them as common criminals. Josephus reports that they were scattered around in bands of rebels that would rob and steal and kill like outlaws. They took the property of the rich, killed the owners, and plundered their possessions (Antiquities 20, 185).

Josephus says that the Sacarii (and Zealots) in many cases had a "senseless thirst for blood." They were motivated by greed and desire for spoils and not merely religion. Most of their behavior was cloaked in religion- but had nothing to do with it. This was not true for all, but for many. This is the character of the Zealots.... what will come of them?

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