

# The Fourth Philosophy: (The Zealots)

by Robert Wurtz II

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*The sermon explores the historical and theological significance of the Zealots within the context of first-century Judaism and their impact on early Christian thought.*

**Scripture:** Exodus 20:3, Matthew 16:24, Luke 4:8, Luke 21:16, 1 Peter 4:16

**Topics:** "Jewish History", "Political Theology"

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## Description

Robert Wurtz II delves into the history of the Jewish Freedom Movement during the time of Jesus, focusing on the development of the Zealots and their religious and political ideologies. The Zealots believed in the sole rule of God, had an unwavering love for freedom, emphasized cooperation with God, and harbored resentment towards the Roman census. Their resistance against idolatry and oppressive rulers, such as Herod, culminated in tragic events like mass suicides and murders within their ranks.

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## Transcript

In our first lesson we sketched out some of the characteristics of the JEWISH FREEDOM MOVEMENT in the time of Jesus. They would eventually come to be known as the ZEALOTS, but the movement itself developed greatly from the time of the Galileans (Judas of Galilee) until they fled to MASADA and took their own lives. The philosophies of Judaism most important in the time of Christ were the Pharisees, Saducees, Essenes, and the Zealots (fourth philosophy). Keep in mind that all such movements in the first century were both religious and political; not one or the other. However, there was so much dissention within the Zealots as time went on that it is more accurate to call them a "tendency" than a "party." Before it was over they were at war within themselves. According to Josephus' Antiquities of the Jews 18,3 -18,23 their main doctrine was as follows:

- 1) Only GOD may be called LORD or ruler (sole rule of God)
- 2) They had an 'invincible love of freedom'
- 3) The people must cooperate with God for His intervention and help
- 4) They had a deep and bitter resentment of the Roman census

The history of this sect as we know it began with resentment from the census conducted by Cyrenius in 6-7 CE. It resurfaced again in 48 CE when two of Judas' sons were crucified by Tiberious Alexander and was continued at the beginning of the Jewish war by Manehem (another of Judas' sons. Manehem

claimed to be the Messiah). It ended with the mass suicide of the Zealots at Masada and the mass murder of the deadly "sect within the Zealots" called the Sacarii (assassins) in Egypt in 73 CE. The Sacarii held to the "Sole rule of God" even under extreme torture. Needless to say, when Herod placed a statue (graven image) of an Eagle over the door to the Temple it did not sit well with this movement. The eagle was a divine symbol of the false god Jupiter and of Baal Shamin (sun-god) in Syrian temples (among others, See also Daniel 9:27). This helped keep the fear of the days of Antiochus Epiphanes (a type of the anti-Christ) and his mad behavior in the Temple, ever before their eyes. Judas the Galilean gave this whole struggle a theological implication and that secured in the hearts of many their allegiance to the struggle. Judas the Galilean taught that people could not yield to a ruler who claimed 'divine status' for themselves. To obey the emperor was to break the First Commandment and worship a false idol (or god. See Exodus 22:19).

Josephus was not all too kind to this movement and chose to refer to them most of the time as "robbers" (&#61548;&#61544;&#61555;&#61556;&#61537;&#61545; Gk word? &#61481;&#61472; or as we might call them "pirates." In Rabbinic literature the Hebrew word used lends to the idea that they were to be feared at night. The Babylonian Talmud calls the "rebels" in Jerusalem by the name Barjone (See Gitt 56a,b. the barjonim is plural). The word literally means "out-laws." This has led a few scholars to believe that Simon was a Zealot based on Matthew 16:17, but there are real problems with this view. However, Simon Peter's overall concept of Messiah was obviously very much effected by the Jewish Freedom Movement based upon the fact that he was willing to die for who he thought was the Messiah (another study) and what the average Jew believed the Messiah would do when He appeared. Satan used Jesus' capture to create confusion in Peter's mind about what was going on. This, in my honest opinion, was the "sifting" that took place. The Greek word for "sift" is Strong's NT:4617 *siniazō* (sin-ee-ad'-zo); from *sinion* (a sieve); to riddle (figuratively). Satan used that contradiction of the reality of what was happening to Jesus and Peter's Messianic concepts to "riddle" his mind that he would lose his faith. Jesus cleared it all up in Luke 24:44... as it is written... And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.

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