

The Zealots

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Abstract

The Zealots were a radical patriotic group or sect, the fourth “Jewish philosophy”, according to Josephus Flavius, which opposed Roman rule and possession, using armed guerrilla attacks, usually from the desert. Related to the Pharisees and having certain affinities with the mystic sect of Essenes, this political movement did not gain much ground in the normal, general society of the Jews of Palestine, remaining a form of extreme militancy. It was active for about one hundred years, until the complete destruction of Jerusalem during the Bar-Kochba revolt (132-135). It began during the reign of Herod the Great, as an opposition to the Roman vassalship of Judea. Around 6 AD they organized a rebellion against the Romans, led by Judas the Galilean and the Sicari. Later, in 73 AD, they became famous for their resistance to the Romans in the fortress of Massada in southern Judea (built by Herod in 37 BC), where hundreds of people perished, when they committed suicide so as not to fall into the hands of the Romans. In the New Testament, the Zealots receive all kinds of ambiguous names, because the direct mention of their name could be considered an act of enmity against the Romans. There is no clear evidence of any connection between Jesus Christ and the religious parties of the Zealots. Moreover, the Lord did not share the doctrines or the attitudes of the Zealots at all and did not preach any of their teachings.