

# Our Points of Focus

## The Jewish World of the New Testament

Ian W. Scott

As we read through a wide swath of Early Jewish literature this term, we will focus on understanding the central pillars of their common Jewish faith. With these basic convictions in common, how did Second Temple Jews differ in the details of their beliefs and lifestyles? These same basic convictions and practices can then serve as a starting point for thinking about how the New Testament is shaped by its Jewish context.

### One God

- **one creator of all the earth**
  - if God created the world, how can it have gone so badly wrong?
- **one creator of human beings in his image**
  - what is human nature like?
  - What is God's attitude toward (and expectation of) the gentiles?

### One covenant people

- **one faithful response**
  - how do Jews define covenant faithfulness?
  - what defines the boundary of God's tolerance? When is someone categorized as a "sinner"?
  - do Jews place the emphasis on individual faithfulness or corporate faithfulness?
- **one law**
  - what attitudes do Jews adopt toward Torah? What is the goal of obedience?
  - what solution is offered for sin?
  - which observances do they emphasize most? Why?
  - how is Torah to be interpreted and by whom?
- **one worship**
  - how do faithful Jews relate to God?
  - what practices are seen as crucial to a healthy relationship?
  - what role does the temple cult in Jerusalem play?
  - what role do local village and town gatherings play? (i.e., the synagogues)
- **one just lord**
  - do Jews see themselves as experiencing covenant blessing or covenant curse?
  - how do Jews reconcile times of intense suffering with God's covenant faithfulness?
  - how do they understand the suffering of righteous people?
- **one promised land**
  - do Jews see themselves as experiencing the promised life in the land?
  - how do they understand the reality of diaspora?
  - how do they understand the periods of foreign rule over Judea and Galilee?

## One future hope

- **one Kingdom of God**
  - to what extent do Jews emphasize an eschatological future? Are they content with the present order of things?
  - what do Jews emphasize about God's restoration of things?
  - what events do they envision leading up to that end?
- **one deliverer**
  - do Jews expect God himself to set things right directly, or do they expect an intermediary?
  - if they expect an intermediary, what is this figure like? What is he expected to do?
- **one faithful remnant**
  - how large a proportion of Israel will inherit this future blessing?
  - what do they need to do in order to prepare for (or trigger) the eschaton?
  - what do Jews believe will happen to the righteous dead?
- **one King over the earth**
  - what will be the fate of Gentiles? Of unfaithful Israelites?