

Jesus' Social Class

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Recent discussions of Jesus' social class try to locate him within the social structures of Mediterranean society generally, or Galilean society, in the first century. And there seems to be a debate among many contemporary scholars of Jesus as to whether he was really a peasant or... somewhat higher in the socio-economic strata. We know in general he was low class, by the standards of the Roman imperial aristocracy or even of the ruling class of Palestine, the Herodian client kings. But he may have been an artisan. He doesn't seem to have been a peasant in the strict sense, someone who was working the land for a living. He was close, however, to peasant society; all of the images in his parables and his aphorisms are firmly rooted in peasant society and call upon everyday things like a sower, or sowing seed. But they also call upon images of land owners and relationships between slave owners and slaves, masters and servants. So Jesus seems to have been aware of that level of the socio-economic mix. And he may well have stood in some relationship to it. So an artisan of some sort is probably the best way of describing him.

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/jesus/socialclass.html> accessed Jan 2014