

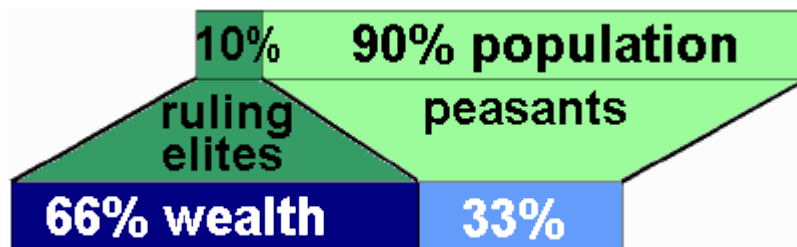
Peasant Society in First Century Palestine

Peasant society refers to a pre-industrial agrarian society where:

- Peasant agricultural production is the only real source of wealth
- There is no manufacturing
- There is no industry except small scale handcrafts



Peasant societies are marked by an **enormous gulf** between rural peasants and urban ruling elites.



The **urban ruling elites** (king, aristocratic families, high government officials) and retainers (servants, army, lower government officials, religious officials):

- Comprise 10% of population
- Extract 66% of the value of rural production through:
 - Taxation: civil and religious (tithes are taxes on agricultural produce to be paid to the temple authorities)
 - Land rent: direct payment or sharecropping
- Are enormously wealthy in the standards of the day
- Don't produce anything and hardly provide any services except an army for warfare

Peasant society was politically oppressive, economically exploitative, and religiously legitimated.

<http://www.aportraitofjesus.org/social.shtml> accessed Jan 2014