Life in Palestine under Roman Rule:

Life for the Jewish people at the time was challenging - and the single greatest threat to the way of life of the Jewish people was Roman presence in their land.

The Romans arrived to take over Palestine in 63 BCE (63 years before Jesus was born). It was always Roman policy to appoint native (local) leaders to the new lands that they conquered. Palestine was no different and so King Herod the Great was made the King of the Jews.

Eventually Herod died and each one of his sons was given a piece of the land to rule over.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Leader</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Judea and Samaria:</td>
<td>Ruler: Herod Archelaus. Tyrannical Ruler who caused great fear among his people. His subject pleaded with Rome to remove him and he was removed. Instead the Romans appointed a new Roman leader and this marked the beginning of direct Roman Rule in the area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judea:</td>
<td>This province was ruled by men called Prefects. These Prefects were appointed by the Governor. At the time of Jesus life the Governor of Judea was Pontius Pilate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galilee</td>
<td>Ruler: Another son of King Herod the Great. He was a puppet who took orders directly from Rome and collected taxes. Galilee was known as an area of huge political unrest and turmoil. Large religious groups were frowned upon and though suspicious.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rome threatened the very survival of The Jewish people in a number of ways:

1. Rome was Polytheistic and so this was a direct threat to the monotheistic beliefs of the Jews at the time. Any threat to their monotheism had a profound effect on their political, religious and social life at the time.

2. Rome being Polytheistic – the Emperor was seen as a divine person – almost seen as Godlike. This notion was completely alien to the Jewish people – they only had one allegiance and that was to Yahweh!
3. The ideas of land and religion were very closely linked for the Jewish people. Their land was a sign of their covenant with God. They believed that their land and everything that it produced belonged to God and to give this to the Romans through taxes was seen as being unfaithful to God.

4. They felt that they could not give to Caesar what was rightfully God's. They felt that God was their king and their ruler. Not Caesar.

5. Palestine in the 1st Century was a place of great unrest and turmoil. It had already been invaded by the Persians, then the Greeks and now the Romans had arrived. The place was reeling from years of Occupation. Once again it was under foreign rule and the Jewish people's identity as God's chosen people was once again under attack. At this time different groups began to emerge offering different ways of holding on to what they felt was important.
Hierarchy of Roman Rule:

**HIGH PRIEST:**
(HEAD OF STATE)

He represented the Jewish people before God but really he had very little power. He ruled and presided over the Sanhedrin. The Prefect appointed by Rome could dismiss the High Priest.

**SANHEDRIN**
(HIGH COUNCIL MADE UP OF 71 MEMBERS)

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**
(MOSTLY MADE UP OF PRIESTS AND POWERFUL, WEALTHY LAYMEN - NO WOMEN)

**SCRIBES AND PHARISEES**
(MEN WHO WERE EXPERTS IN LAW)