

SECTS OF THE JEWS

Josephus, Ant. XIII 5.9; 10.5-6; XVIII 1.3-4

Josephus, War b II 8.14

By Mark Moore

I. PHARISEES--Right-Wing Formalists

A. Origin

1. Name--From the Aramaic "Perishim," meaning "separated." In the Mishna this name was given by the Sadducees, thus may not be complimentary or the name chosen by the Pharisees.
2. Probably evolved from the Chasidim ("godly men"), first mentioned in *Maccabees*, during the days of John Hyrcanus (134-104 B.C.).
3. About 6,000 at the time of Jesus.

B. Character

1. Jesus denounced them severely (Mt. 12:34-39; 15:7-8; 23:2-33; Mark 7:5-13; Luke 11:39-49; John 5:39-40; 12:48-50).
2. They were extremely influential with the general populus. So much so that the Sadducees, even though they controlled the synagogue, would not dare reach a decision without them. (See Jos. Ant. XIII 15.5; XVIII 1.4).
3. They were prejudice against tax-collectors and sinners (Luke 15:1-2; 18:9-13).
4. The more learned of the Pharisees were often Scribes.
 - a. Originally secretaries of the kings.
 - b. Became the learned class and thus the interpreters of the law.
 - c. Intimately connected with the Pharisees.
 - d. They were the copiers and preservers of the written documents of the law.
5. Scribal Training
 - a. Began at age 13 where a boy would be sent to Jerusalem and apply to the school of a famous Rabbi.
 - b. Hierarchy of titles: Rab, Rabbi, Rabban.
 - c. Positions available--transcriber or copier, judge, head of a school, member of the Sanhedrin.
 - d. Forms of honor: Kiss in market; Greeting, "Abba"; chief seats; blue fringed garments; best places at feasts.

C. Reverence for the Law--Extreme Legalists

1. In addition to the Torah, they followed the Oral law which was later recorded in the Mishna. Some of these laws they believed were:
 - a. Given by God to Moses on Mt. Sinai and thus inspired.
 - b. Opinions settled by majority vote.
 - c. Decrees by prophets and wise men at various times which was a "fence for the law": Abot 1,1, "Be deliberate in giving judgment and raise up many disciples, and *make a hedge about the law.*"
 - d. Legal decisions with the power of the court.
2. Josephus compares their austerity and rationalism to that of the Stoics.

D. Two major parties; the Talmud records 316 controversies between the two schools.

1. Hillel--Liberal

- a. Regard for the poor

- b. More Hellenistic.
 - i. Born c. 112 B.C.; tradition says that he lived 120 years. If that is true he would have been among the teachers of the law when Jesus was 12.
 - ii. His grandson and successor, Gamaliel, was a leader throughout Jesus' ministry and the early development of the church.
 - iii. Because they were advocates of toleration, Jesus could be recognized by the scribes as a "teacher of the law."
- 2. Shammai
 - a. Strict interpretation
 - b. Opposed to the Romans.
- E. Other Beliefs
 - 1. Resurrection
 - 2. Proselytizing, Mt. 23:15
 - 3. Predestination
- F. Their ideas dominate Orthodox Judaism even today.

II. SADDUCEES--Left-Wing Aristocrats

- A. Origin
 - 1. Unsure. Best guess is from the Hebrew word *Tsadik*, meaning "righteous." However, there is not adequate explanation for the shift from the "i" to a "u".
 - 2. Jewish tradition says they descended from Zadok, "a disciples of that Antigonus of Socho, who is mentioned in the Mishna as having received the oral law from Simon the Just, the last of the men of the Great Synagogue" (Fields, p. 234). This is a dubious statement, however.
 - 3. A more likely possibility is that they are descendants and adherents to the sons of Zadok (1 K. 1:32-45; Ez. 40:46), who were in charge of keeping the Temple. They were sort of a sacerdotal aristocracy.
- B. Characteristics
 - 1. "Their aristocratic status notwithstanding, Josephus describes Sadducees as lacking in social graces (BJ ii.8.14[166]). Essentially rural land owners, they were characterized by crudity, coarseness, loudness, quarrelsomeness, vulgarity, and violence (cf. Mt. 26:67f.; Acts 23:2f)" (Moulder, "Sadducees," ISBN, 4:279).
 - 2. They actively accommodated Rome (John 19:12; Luke 23:2).
- C. Doctrines
 - 1. Denial of the Oral law (Jos. Ant. XIII 10.6).
 - 2. Denial of the resurrection (since Moses did not assert it). However, Jesus used Ex. 3:6, 16 (Mk. 12:26-27), to demonstrate the reality of the Resurrection. [Note Acts 23:8--The Pentateuch is full of references to angels, thus the Sadducees likely only denied the future of the human soul in the form of angels or other kinds of spirits.]
 - 3. Freewill
 - 4. Early Christian writers also said that they denied all the O.T. except the Pentateuch.

- a. Likely this is a misconception and/or a confusion with the Sadducees and the Samaritans.
 - b. Undoubtedly, they held the Pentateuch in higher esteem than the rest of the O.T.
5. They demanded rigid literal application of Mosaic law.
- D. Disappearance
- 1. They quickly declined after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.
 - 2. This was caused by:
 - a. Loss of power due to the loss of the Temple edifice.
 - b. People naturally turn to hope in a future life during times of deep distress.
 - c. The rise of Christianity was better countered by the Pharisees than the Sadducees.

III. ESSENES--Ultra Right-Wing Puritans

- A. Origin
- 1. A semi monastic community of approximately 4,000 spread in small eccentric communities throughout Palestine, the most famous of which is on the N.W. shore of the Dead Sea.
 - 2. Although the Qumran community differed somewhat from the major doctrines of the Essenes (e.g. Qumranites did not repudiate slavery, they did use oaths, and did not condemn marriage), they were certainly at least a splinter group.
 - 3. They evolved out of a reaction to the Hellenization during the time of the Maccabees. "Righteousness movements" got stricter and stricter until they Essenes simply had to get away from the evil influences of society.
 - 4. It is likely that the Qumranites were either destroyed or fled in the face of Titus before marching to Jerusalem, A.D. 67.
- B. Practices and Doctrines
- 1. They practiced communal living.
 - 2. It took a year's initiation rights to get in.
 - 3. 1/3 of the day was given to study, 1/3 to prayer, and 1/3 to manual labor.
 - 4. They had a strong eschatological expectation.
 - 5. Slavery, war and commerce were forbidden.
- C. Writings--Dead Sea Scrolls
- 1. 10s of thousands of fragments. The most important being the scrolls of Isaiah (for a further list see Fields, N.T. Backgrounds, p. 243-244).
 - 2. Found in 1947 by a Arab Shepherd boy.
 - 3. Prior to these scrolls, dated c. B.C. 100, our earliest Hebrew manuscript of the O.T. was A.D. 900.
- D. Differences of Jesus and the Essenes--Some say that John the Baptist, Jesus and the Church is Essene in nature, partly (oddly enough), because the N.T. does not mention the Essene community; but then, neither does the Jewish Talmud! However, these major differences seem to indicate otherwise:
- 1. Jesus ate with tax collectors and sinners (Mt. 11:9; Lk. 7:34).
 - 2. Sabbath was made for man, not man for Sabbath (Mt. 12:1-12; Mk. 2:23-36; Lk. 6:6-11; 14:1-6).

3. Jesus approved of marriage (John 2:1).
4. Jesus was for the common people (Mk. 12:37; Luke 7:34).

III. ZEALOTS

A. Development

1. A radical, militant response to Hellenization. This really began as early as the Maccabees. Josephus (Ant. XVIII 1.1) calls them the "4th philosophy." But there was really no single discernable group called the Zealots until A.D. 67-68.
2. Judas Gamala (A.D. 6-7), popularized and disseminated much anti-Roman sentiment against the enrollment of Quirinius. Thus, he is sometimes identified as a "founder" of Zealots.
3. During Jesus day there were:
 - a. Brigands--Robbers (BJ. iv. 3.3ff), which were common in such economic and social conditions.
 - b. Sicarii--Urban terrorists (BJ ii. 17.6-9). Named after the short daggers they used for assassination.
 - c. Politically fervent anti-Romans. This is likely the category that Simon, the Apostle fell into (Mt. 10:4; Mark 3:18).
4. They were the impetus behind the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. But probably not a single identifiable group until 67-68.
5. They were most prominent in Galilee.

B. Practices--Rally Cry = "No tribute to Caesar; No king but Jehovah; no tax but temple tax."

1. Refused to pay taxes
2. Guerilla Warfare
3. Considered it sin to recognized Caesar as king.

IV. Herodians

A. Identification

1. Likely it only indicates those who supported the Herodian family and their policies.
2. Some would consider them:
 - a. identical with the Sadducees.
 - b. envoys of or servants to the Herodian family.

B. Character

1. When Archelaus was deposed by Caesar Augustus (A.D. 6), and a Roman procurator was put in his place, many Jews saw that as a "step back-ward" and desired to see the Herodians regain power.
2. They aligned with the Pharisees and Sadducees to eliminate Jesus (Mk 3:6; Mt. 22:16 [compare Mark 12:13]).

3. See Josephus, Ant. XIV 15.10; BJ. i 16.6).