

Sects: Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Samaritans and others



*The New Testament World - Week 7
Adult Education*

Pharisees –

History:

- First activity is connected to historical events of the reign of John Hyrcanus
- Perush, to separate
- Comes to be after the split of Zadokite priesthood under Simeon
- Priests made an alliance with the Samaritans and the Pharisees separated themselves
- Totally established by the time of Alexander Janneus
- Emerged out of Hasidim during the Maccabean Revolt
 - Rejected Hyrcanus' right to be king and priest
 - He gave his allegiance to the Sadducees
 - Continued persecution under Alexander Jannaeus
 - Came to power under Alexander's widow, Alexandra
 - Lost some power again under Aristobulus
- Josephus says there are 6,000
- After 70CE, Pharisees led Judaism
- Scholars at Yavneh and Usha were given recognition by Rome after the Bar Kochba revolt, became a political party
- Regarded as an offshoot of the Hasideans (Antiquities 18:12-15)

Program:

- “Torah and Tradition”
- Differed from Sadducees in divine authority to the interpretation and application of the law
- Believe Torah was given to all Israel
- Interpretation was open to the competent
- Scribes were official scholars of Torah
 - Most scribes accepted the principles of the Pharisees
 - Pharisees followed teachings derived from scribal interpretation
- Mostly non-priests
- Small land owners, shopkeepers, artisans, etc.
- Interpretation and application – “traditions of the elders” Knowledge of Torah should be shared throughout Israel
- Nehemiah 10:33 – making of ordinances
- Spirit, not the letter (Neh. 13)
- Piety should not be limited to the Temple Mount
- Saw Torah as a developing, dynamic social force (Neh. 8:1)
 - Sought to keep the law of Moses from becoming a dead ritual
 - Open to doctrinal developments – resurrection, judgment, eternal reward/punishment
- Fate & Free Will –
 - Essenes – fate only
 - Sadducees – free will only
 - Pharisees – both

Beliefs:

- Respected the elders
- Believed souls survived death
- Bodily resurrection

- Rewards and punishment after death
- Halakha on the Temple
 - Water libation ceremony (Sukkot)
- Torah Observance by “Tradition of the Elders”
 - Shabbat
 - Tithing
 - Application of purity laws (ordinary food)
 - NT & Rabbinic info line-up
 - Lived daily life in priestly holiness (enforced Temple purity on daily life, centered around table fellowship)
 - Felt called to a higher holiness than the Temple

Jesus and the Pharisees:

- Had many friendly contacts – Luke 7:36ff; 11:37; 13:31-33; 14:1; Mark 12:28-34; Matt. 23:1-2
- Four major differences:
 - Association with sinners illustrates a different concept of separation from the world – Mark 2:15-17; Matt. 9:9-13; Luke 5:27-32
 - Ritual purity illustrates differences on the authority of tradition – Mark 7:1-23; Matt. 15:1-20
 - Sabbath keeping illustrates different priorities – Mark 2:23-3:6; Matt. 12:1-13; Luke 6:1-11
 - Divorce illustrates a difference in interpretation – Matt. 19:3-12; Mark 10:2-9)
 - Hillel allowed divorce for any cause
 - Shamai allowed divorce for sexual immorality and immodest behavior
- Sadducees were correct in exegesis, but wrong in relegating Scripture to the place of an archaic relic with less and less relevance to the present.
- Pharisees were right in keeping Scripture applicable, but wrong in their method of making tradition superior or equal to the written word.

Descriptions/References:

- Doctrines and Roles – Antiquities 18:12-15
- View of Fate – Jewish War 2:162-163
- Pharisees & Sadducees – 13:297-298
- Alexander Jannius crucifies Pharisees – Nahum Commentary on 2:2
- Rule and False Teachings of the Pharisees – Nahum Commentary on 3:1-4
- People will Abandon the Pharisees – Nahum Commentary on 3:6-7
- Sadducees – Nahum Commentary on 3:8
- Further History of Pharisees and Sadducees – Nahum Commentary on 3:9b-11

Sadducees –

- Hippolytes said Sadducees only accepted the Torah (236CE) which is repeated by the Church Fathers, also confuses Samaritans and Sadducees (earliest reference)
- Simeon was established as king and priest until the Prophet arrived
 - Made council of people that represented the people

- Priests, people, patriarch, prince
- Pharisees come out of this council
- Called up for national religious, judicial and military issues
- Establish Beit Din
- Party of wealthy priests and friends in the aristocracy
- Combined conservative religious attitudes with power politics
- Stricter interpretation than the Pharisees
- Controlled Temple ritual
- Openness toward certain Hellenistic cultural influences
- Encouraged collaboration with ruling power, maintained the status quo to preserve peace and their power and influence
- Accepted only written law of Moses as authoritative and rejected oral tradition of the Pharisees
- Had their own traditions of interpretation relative to Temple ritual and legal matters, but these were not Torah and were not binding
- Prophets and writings were not a source of doctrine
- No bodily resurrection (Paul's arrest), predestination, eternal reward, angels
- There is no fate – only human responsibility
- Temporal concern that gave inadequate attention to the spiritual side of human existence

Descriptions/References:

- Character of the Sadducees – Antiquities 18:16-17
- Sadducean Doctrines – Jewish War 2:164-166
- Angels and Resurrection – Acts 23:6-10

Qumran Community and Essenes –

- On time, in order and pure of heart
- Strong predestinationists
- Rejected aesthetics
- Single and married communities
- More strict than other sects
- 4000 Essene men, 6000 Pharisees (Josephus)
- Influence of Zoroastrianism

History of Essenes:

- Last two centuries of the Second Temple Period
 - 1-Paleography (ancient handwriting)
 - 2-Carbon 14 testing of linen cloths which some scrolls were wrapped
 - 3-Linguistic studies
 - 4-Historical allusions
 - 5-Archeology
 - Coin found beside jar dated to 10CE
- Excavations yielded:
 - Complete community
 - Slept in tents or caves

- Farming activities at Ain Feshka to the south
- Elaborate water system
- Workshops for pottery making
- Kitchen, storerooms, assembly hall, library
- Prehistory – Hasidim initially supported the Hasmonean revolt. After Judas restored Jerusalem worship, some withdrew from political affairs
- Four Phases:
 - Founding → John Hyrcanus. Date depends on the identification of the Wicked Priest who persecuted the Teacher of Righteousness. One branch withdrew to the wilderness, advocated the Zadokite priesthood against Hasmoneans
 - John Hyrcanus → Herod. Influx of new recruits. Hyrcanus' reign (134-104BCE) settlement flourished
 - Reign of Herod. 31BCE earthquake destroyed Qumran. Essenes supported Herod.
 - Archelaus → Jewish Revolt. Monastic life at Qumran was attractive. Settlement was destroyed by Romans in 68CE, but library hidden in caves. Some may have gone to Massada.

Identity of the Essenes:

- Previously known from Latin and Greek sources
- One year waiting period
- Two years probation
- Purification ritual
- Communal meal
- Community goods
- Studying of scripture
- Philo-banned marriage
- Josephus-mentions married and non-married

Organization, Beliefs and Practices at Qumran:

- Annual examination assigned rank
- Sat and spoke in the assembly according to rank
- Supreme council – three priests and twelve laymen
- Overseer
 - Examined candidates
 - In charge of the finances
 - Directed labor
- Discipline – minor infractions could result in exclusion from communal life
- After probation, went through water purification and turned resources over to the group
- Strong Eschatological expectation
- Prophet and Two Messiahs (Aaron and Israel)
- Dualism between “sons of light” and “sons of darkness”
- When 10 members were together, someone had to study the law
- No fixed text (canon)
- Lived by Solar Calendar
 - Identical to Jubilees and 1 Enoch
 - 364 days, 52 weeks, 12 months

- Meant different religious calendars

Qumran and the NT:

- John the Baptist
 - Priestly family
 - Parents were old, Essenes adopted
 - Activity in the Judean wilderness
 - Asceticism was stronger than Essenes
- Baptisms were different
 - John baptized once for repentance, public
 - Essenes mikva'ed daily, non-initiatory, sectarian
- Jesus
 - Did not forsake the Temple
 - Different practice of the Sabbath
- Strongest NT tie – Melchizedek in Hebrews
- Essenes saw themselves as redeemed, elect, with a new covenant
- Three best represented books were most quoted in the NT (Isaiah, Psalms and Deuteronomy)

Descriptions/References:

- Doctrines and life of the Essenes – Antiquities 18:18-22
- Daily Order of Life – Jewish War 2:119-161
 - Immortality of the Soul
 - Essene Fortunetellers
 - Other Essene
- Teaching on the Two Spirits – Rule of the Community 3:13-4:23
- History of the Sect – Damascus Document 1:1-13
 - Exhortation
 - The Babylonian Exile
 - The Teacher of Righteousness

Samaritans –

- Origins traced to 2 Kings 17 (descendants of forced converts)
- Not inclined to syncretism or paganism
- Jews viewed as foreigners
- 4th and 3rd centuries there was documented contact between Jerusalem aristocracy and Shechem (Josephus' Antiquities 11:306-312)
- Beliefs were Jewish
 - One God
 - No images
 - Loyal to the written Torah (like the Sadducees)
 - Shabbat
 - Circumcision
 - Mo'edim (Biblical holidays)
- Emerged in the postexilic period
- Second deportation took people from Samaritan region

- Other people brought in and intermarried
- Babylonian Jews returned with Babylonian wives
- When Jews came back, Samaritans didn't have a right to build temple
- Alexander gave the right to build a temple
- Samaritan and Jerusalem priesthood intermarried (Ezra & Nehemiah)
- John Hyrcanus destroyed the Samaritan temple
- Separation of Samaritans and Jews was more a process than an event
 - Some say it started in the 5th century BCE during Nehemiah and Ezra's time
 - 128BCE John Hyrcanus' dynasty could have also caused split according to other scholars
- Rival Worship site
 - Temple on Mount Gerizim
 - Built in the days of Alexander the Great
 - John Hyrcanus destroyed their temple 200 years later
 - Had their own priesthood traced to Aaronic line through Eleazar
- Samaritan Pentateuch
- Rejection of the resurrection
- Expectation of a prophetic figure (fulfillment of Deut 18:18)

Therapeutae –

- Jewish community living near Lake Mareotis in lower Egypt
- Parallel lifestyle to Essenes
- Extremely prophetic
- Lived alone and came together for study, eating
- May have been a branch of Essenes
- Renounced private property
- Both men and women
- No family life
- Prayed at sunrise and sunset
- Allegorical interpretation of Scripture
- Fasted until sunset
- Men and women were separated by barrier and sat by age
- Every 50th day was a festal assembly

Descriptions/References:

- Dwellings, Daily Routine, Sabbath Observance and Ceremony, Sabbath Sanctuary – Philo, On the Contemplative Life 24-33
- The Dance and the Chorus – Philo, On the Contemplative Life 83-85, 88-89

Zealots –

- Revolted in 6CE against Roman census
- Josephus opposed them
- Started in Galilee
- Came to the Temple Mount

- Split between three factions of Zealots
- Destroyed each other
- Complete political motivation Thought it was unlawful to pay taxes to Rome
- Extremists among the revolutionaries; took the lead in the revolt
- Sicarii – “Knife-men”
 - Sicarii would kill people on all sides
 - Mingled into crowds with knives
 - Seized and held Masada

Descriptions/References:

- Antiquities 18:4-6, 9-10
- Courage of the Zealots – Jewish War 7:418-419
- Fourth Philosophy – Antiquities 18:23-24
- Zealot Retribution – Mishnah Sanhedrin 9:6

Herodians –

- Only mentioned in the Gospels
- Supporters of Herodian dynasty, especially Antipas
- May have been Essenes

Hasideans (Hasidim) –

- No one knows the origins
- Mentioned in Talmud
- 1 and 2 Maccabees speak of the Hasideans joining the revolt (1 Macc 2)
- Abandoned the revolt after Alcimus’ priesthood (1 Macc 7)
- Possibly took their name from Psalm 149:1 (the pious ones)
- Apocryphal Psalm from Qumran might also mention them
- Early rabbinic writings speak of the former Hasidim
- Splinter group / Priestly family that pulled away from Sadducees
- Some think they are the root of the Essenes
- Prominent in the Hasmonean (Maccabean) Revolt
- Started revolt against Seleucid
- Accepted Alcimus as a Zadokite priest

Pairs (Zugot) –

- At the time of the Hasmoneans
- Simon the Just (Zadokite, son of Onias)
 - Alexander the Great called him “the Just”
- Men of the Great Assembly → Simon → Antigonus of Sokho
- Nasi and Av Beit Din
- Yosse ben Joezer & Yosse ben Yohanan
 - Responsible for chain of transmission

- 174-164 BCE, disciples of Antigonos
- Dispute over laying on of hands at festival sacrifice
- Joshua ben Perahyah & Nittai the Arbelite
 - 150-100BCE
 - Laying on of hands continues
- Judah b. Tabbai & Simeon b. Shetah
 - 1st century BCE, Alexandra
- Semaiah & Avtalyon
 - Herod the Great
 - Known for their cooperation
- Hillel & Menahem/Shamai
 - Yeshua's time
 - Greatest sages of the 2nd Temple
 - Hillel was Babylonian
 - Early days in Jerusalem
 - Hillel was appointed Nasi around 10BCE-10CE
 - Hillel made ideological revolution – Torah must be taught publically, regardless to family background and wealth
 - Last of the Pairs
 - Hillel's dynasty lasts 400 years
 - Hermeneutical laws for exegesis (7 Midot)
- Descended from Moses, but not traceable to Moses, rabbinics traces to Moses