



RELIGIOUS LEADERS

1. Definition

- There were 4 leadership groups in Jesus' day
 - Pharisees
 - Scribes
 - Sadducees
 - Herodians

2. Pharisees

- The most known of the religious leaders were the Pharisees. They were a religious party.
- The word "Pharisee" literally means "Separatist," the name given to them by their opponents because of their "holier than thou" haughty attitude.
- Their supreme aim was to strictly follow both the written and oral law.
- They looked down upon the common people who did not have the slightest chance of fulfilling the complex requirements of the Law.
- However, the common people admired the Pharisees as representing the ideal followers of Judaism. The Pharisees had such a hold on the common people that no governing power could afford to disregard them.
- However, not all Pharisees were bad. Many of them actually tried to promote true spirituality. Some of the well known men of the New Testament :
 - Nicodemus - Jhn 3
 - Gamaliel - Acts 5:34
 - Paul himself- Phil 3:5
 - Some of them became members in the early church - Acts 6:7
 - Paul used the title of Pharisee with great respect and as a title of honor - Phil 3:5
- What Jesus condemned was their hypocrisy, as evidenced by their pride in their outward observance of the law but inward spiritual void, and their arrogant belief that they were more religious than the rest.
- They in return accused Jesus of:
 - blasphemy -Lk 5:21
 - in league with the devil - Mat 9:34
 - breaking the law – Mat 12:2
 - Which prompted them to seek to destroy Him -Mat 12:14.

3. Scribes

- Their job was to study and expound the law. The Pharisees were a religious party, whereas the scribes held religious office. Most of the scribes belonged to the Pharisaic party, whereas not all Pharisees were scribes.
- Scribes claimed positions of first rank, sought public acclaim of the people and wore long and expensive robes.
- They were the strongest opponents of Jesus because He refused to be bound by the letter of the law -Jhn 5:10; Mk 7:7-13.
- They kept close watch over whatever He said and did -Mk 2:16; Lk 5:30; 15:2.

4. Sadducees

- Unlike the scribes and Pharisees, the Sadducees were a political party favorable to the Roman government. They were priests of Jewish aristocratic class. All Sadducees were priests, but not all priests were Sadducees. They accepted only the written law and rejected the traditions of the Pharisees.
- They denied bodily resurrection - Mk 12:18; Lk 20:27; Acts 4:1-2; 23:8
- The existence of the angels - Acts 23:8
- And the sovereignty of God over human affairs, and believed that man is the master of his own destiny.
- Because of these theological differences, they did not have a cordial relationship with the Pharisees. However, they joined with the Pharisees in confronting Jesus to show them a sign from heaven -Mat 16:1
- They also raised a question to Jesus about the resurrection - Mat 22:23
- Most of the criticism of Jesus was directed against the Pharisees, except on one occasion when He warned the disciples of the leaven of the Sadducees – Mat 16:6,11

5. Herodians

- The Herodians were neither a religious sect nor a political party. They were Jews who supported the Herodian dynasty. They also joined with the Pharisees to oppose Jesus and attempted to trap Him by asking Him whether it was proper to pay tribute to Caesar - Mat 22:15-22 and Mk 12:13-17; 3:6 are the only mention of them in the New Testament.).

6. Conclusion

- Although there were many theological and political differences among these four groups and they hated each other strongly, they united in a common cause against Jesus. However, Jesus' most scathing rebuke was reserved for the scribes and the Pharisees who joined together as a group in hatred and strong opposition of Him.
- Jesus' major encounter with the Sadducees was only on one occasion when they raised the question about the resurrection and marriage -Mat 22:23-33; Mk 12:18-27; Lk 20:27-38).
- Similarly, His only encounter with the Herodians was when they were incited by the Pharisees to raise the question about paying taxes to Caesar - Mat 22:15-22; Mk 12:13-17). There is no mention of the Herodians acting by themselves to oppose Jesus. But as mentioned above.
- His most scathing rebuke was reserved for the scribes and Pharisees.

7. Summary

These 4 opposed Christ until the cross