



The Pharisees had such a hold on the common people that no governing power could afford to disregard them. 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.

The Law was meant to lead people to love God and their neighbor. Most of all it was meant to lead to Jesus. It is ironic that because the Pharisees came to none of these things, they were the most impure of all. Jesus said that if the people's righteousness did not exceed that of the Pharisees, they could not enter the Kingdom of God. The truth is that the Pharisees did hate Jesus, and He rightly isn't known for showing them a great deal of grace. He called them out for their hypocrisy. He exposed their inner tombs. But the hatred they felt for Him wasn't mere sour grapes at His approval rating, nor was it as principled as mere evil versus good. It was rather more cowardly. They hated Jesus not because He called them names, but because He threatened their security, prestige and income. He was going to ruin everything they had worked so hard for, and getting everybody killed.

"THE 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

strongest opponents of Jesus because He refused to be bound by the letter of the law (John 5:10; Mark 7:7-13). They kept close watch over whatever Jesus said and did (Mark 2:16; Luke 5:30; 15:2).

"THE SADDUCEES"

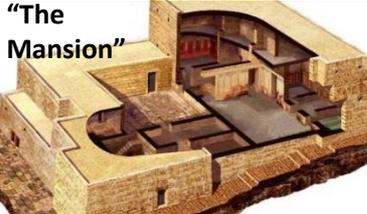
Unlike the scribes and Pharisees, the Sadducees were a political party favorable to the Roman government. They were priests of Jewish aristocratic class. All Sadducees were priests, but not all priests were Sadducees. They accepted only the written law and rejected the traditions of the Pharisees. They denied bodily resurrection (Mark 12:18; Luke 20:27), 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. 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 (Matthew 16:6) "Jesus said to them, "Watch out, and beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees." "Yeast is in reference to sin."



**"THE PRIESTHOOD"**  
In first century Palestine there was no separation between church and state. The priests at the temple in Jerusalem not only officiated over the religious life of the Jews, they were also rulers and judges. Herod, who was himself a pawn of Rome, had his own pawns installed in the Jewish priesthood. By

the first century the election of the High Priest was more political than religious. The Romans wanted the priesthood to support their occupation, and the Priesthood who made sure their desire was carried out. However, it would be unfair to categorize all of the priesthood as sympathetic to Rome. Some did support rebellion against Rome, but those at the highest levels were undoubtedly in Rome's back pocket. We see evidence of this loyalty to and fear of Rome in the Gospels: "Then many of the Jews who had come to Mary, and had seen the things Jesus did, believed in Him. But some of them went away to the Pharisees and told them the things Jesus did. Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, 'What shall we do? For this Man works many signs. If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation.'"(John 11:45-48) "But they cried out, 'Away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him!' Pilate said to them, 'Shall I crucify your King?' The chief priests answered, 'We have no king but Caesar!' Then he delivered Him to them to be crucified. Then they took Jesus and led Him away." (John 19:15-16)

"THE WEALTH OF ANNAS THE PRIEST"



**"The Mansion"**  
Model of a house excavated from the ruins of 1st century Jerusalem. It may have belonged to Priest Annas. If so, Jesus was questioned in one of the small side-rooms or in a corner of the courtyard. One residence, dubbed "**The Mansion**" covered an area of 6,500 square

feet. The number of its ritual baths led to the theory that it was the dwelling of a high priest. 'Annas was a person of enormous power and influence, and many people probably considered him to be the 'real' high priest even though relatives like Caiaphas held the title. The evangelist John called Annas the **'High Priest'** in John 18:19 in the same way that journalists refer to former presidents and governors without using the word 'former'.

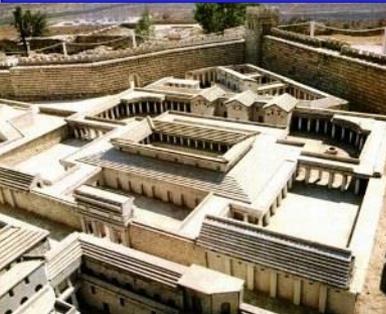
**"The Burden of The Taxation"**



The priesthood lived in luxury well beyond that of the average man. They supported their lavish lifestyles with a temple tax which every Jew was required to pay. The priests lived lavish lifestyles while the average Jewish peasant struggled to survive. The temple taxes combined with taxes imposed by Herod

and Rome were literally threatening the existence of the Jewish people. The people of the land were carrying a burden they could scarcely bear or tolerate. Palestine had become a powder keg waiting to ignite.

**"Palace of the High Priest, Caiaphas And His Authority"**



Caiaphas's palace which was a much larger building than the house of Annas. This picture is the modern reconstruction of this building. If Jesus was to be sentenced to death by Pilate, as seems to have been the plan, a legal accusation had to be made by the reigning High Priest, Caiaphas, as chairman of the Sanhedrin. An accusation by Annas, however influential he was, was not enough.

Jesus was given two trials, one Jewish, one Roman. First he was questioned by Annas, father-in-law of the High Priest in Jerusalem, a powerful man. Then he faced Caiaphas and the Jewish Sanhedrin, quickly assembled for this dawn emergency.

**"Why the Priest Feared Jesus"**

The priesthood was undoubtedly jealous of Jesus' popularity, but their main motivation for seeking to kill Jesus was fear. When a new king came to power, he would set his version of the priesthood in place. All this talk of Jesus becoming the new king undoubtedly unnerved the priests in Jerusalem. If Jesus came to power, they thought they would be out of a job or killed. And the Romans did not take too kindly to unauthorized kings. In their opinion, Jesus was inviting the wrath of Rome. They did not understand that Jesus' kingdom was not of this world and his priesthood was not according to flesh and blood.

**"The Pharisees"**

The Pharisees rose to prominence in what scholars call the second temple period. The Babylonians destroyed the temple in Jerusalem in 587 BC. The time after the Jew's return from exile is known as the second temple period.



It was a time when the gentiles were constantly encroaching upon the Jewish people, their customs, and religion. The Pharisees were a group that set out to preserve the Jews from this perceived threat. The very name "**Pharisee**" is derived from the Hebrew word that means "**To Separate.**" The Pharisees were very zealous for

the Law of Moses, but they also considered themselves the guardians of the oral traditions that scholars developed over generations. The oral traditions interpreted the Law of Moses. For example, the Law said to keep the Sabbath. They were not to work on God's Holy day. Yet, what was work and what was not? The oral traditions filled in the details that Moses left out. For instance, how far could a person walk on the Sabbath without it being work? The interpreters decided that the distance was 2000 cubits which is about 2/3 of a mile. This was known as a Sabbath's day journey. Where did they get that number? When the Hebrews carried the Ark of the Covenant in the wilderness, God commanded them to walk 2000 cubits behind the ark. They decided that was God's way of telling them how far one could walk on the Sabbath. It is interesting that Jesus deliberately broke the Pharisee's oral traditions every chance He got. In John chapter nine Jesus healed a blind man by spitting on the ground, making mud, and then rubbing it in the man's eyes. He then told the fellow to go and wash in the pool of Siloam. According to the Pharisees, Jesus broke the Sabbath not once but three times in healing this man. First, it was considered unlawful to heal on the Sabbath. Jesus broke this tradition often. In fact, if we read the gospels, we will see that His favorite day to heal was the Sabbath. Second, making the little bit of clay that Jesus put in the man's eyes would have been considered work. (No, I am not joking.) Third, making the man walk to the pool of Siloam and back would be considered illegal as well. If we read John chapter eight, we see that Jesus was probably in the vicinity of the temple when he performed this miracle. A quick look at a map shows that the journey to the pool and back was well over 2000 cubits. In this we see one of the great ironies of the scriptures. The Pharisees had great zeal for God. The average Pharisee fasted two days a week and paid his tithes to the penny. Yet, their zeal for God did not lead them to God but away from God. They examined the Law to the smallest detail, but they entirely missed what the Law was saying. John tells us that Jesus was God's Word made manifest. In other words He was Torah in the flesh. Yet, the Pharisees stood in the presence of the perfect revelation of Torah, and they did not know Him. In fact, they wanted to kill Him. (To be fair, we cannot say this is true of all the Pharisees. In fact, some later became Jesus' followers.)

"He Came To Bring A New Message"



This message announced that there was a kingdom greater than Rome, that God would provide and that the poorest members of society would find relief and hope. It was a completely new message – one which excited His audiences. Although his message was proving popular, the claim of His disciples

that Jesus was the Son of God offended many people. What's more, His ideas were revolutionary and threatened to undermine thousands of years of social tradition. With the weak He was gentle; with the arrogant He was firm; with the foolish He was patient; with the cunning He was wise. But He Himself was never proud, demanding, merciless, or disagreeable.

"Jesus Showed That Scarcity Is An Illusion"



In His life and teaching, Jesus showed that scarcity is an illusion. He showed that abundance is real, that we may, like the birds of the air and the lilies of the field, trust God for our needs in life. Jesus rejects the scarcity assumption and assumes abundance. Most conflicts accept the assumptions of scarcity. We fight to protect our scarce resources. We justify all sorts of violence in the name of protecting something we are afraid to lose—prestige, wealth, purity, God's acceptance. But when we rely on force, on winners and losers, we end up with a series of battles, an eye taken for an eye until every eye is blind.



When We Assume Scarcity, We Simply Won't Know The Generosity Of God

For Jesus, conflict is different. It arises when those assuming scarcity cannot accept abundance. Jesus' way of abundance threatened those who thought in terms of scarcity. When we assume scarcity, we simply won't know the generosity of God for what it is. Jesus proclaimed that love is abundant in the very nature of things. That is how God has made and sustains the universe. We need only accept God's love and trust in God's abundant mercy. This simple trust, though, requires a radical change in our consciousness, a conversion—from the fearful, clenched-hand world of scarcity to the courageous, open-handed world of abundance. This is the Kingdom Jesus came to preach.

"TWO KINDS OF KING"



King Jesus taught that abundance means rejecting dividing people into insiders and outsiders or limiting God's mercy and love. God's kingdom is for all people. Jesus ate with tax collectors and other "sinners," forgave the woman caught in adultery and promised paradise to the criminal on the cross next to him. Jesus received all who wanted to come. Jesus was a genuine threat to King Herod, to the religious leaders, and to the Roman empire. He approached life with an entirely different script from that of scarcity and grasping and fearfulness. Jesus wrote a



revolutionary script of trust, acceptance, openness, and mercy. Anyone who genuinely hears Jesus' Word will no longer find it possible to accept Herod's definition of reality but will give homage to an altogether different kind of king: the peaceable King, Jesus.

"Christ's Gospel Was Not Just About Himself"

Jesus had a central message that formed the basis for His entire ministry and teachings. He pinpointed this central message in the heart of His most famous sermon—the Sermon on the Mount. He made a statement about what should be the highest priority for His followers: "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33). Jesus Christ's words are clear—the Kingdom of God is to be the No. 1 focus and emphasis in the lives of His followers. In fact, it was the core of His gospel message. Christ's Gospel Was Not Just About Himself. A study of the Gospel accounts of Christ's life pinpoints exactly what His message—His gospel—was all about! Notice Mark 1:14: "Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God." That statement is pretty plain—Jesus preached the gospel about the Kingdom of God! At one point in His ministry, Jesus was about to leave an area where He had been preaching for some time. The people of that area tried to persuade Him not to go (Luke 4:42). Jesus' response was, "I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent" (verse 43). Let that sink in. Jesus Christ said that one of His primary purposes for coming to earth was to preach about the Kingdom of God! That was His gospel. That was His message. That was His purpose. That is what drove Him. It was this preaching of the New Kingdom of God with Jesus as King that drove the religious leaders to kill Him.