



Zodiac from the Beit Alpha Synagogue

# Faith in a (*sometimes*) Hostile World

## Protecting God's People: The Sadducees

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# Last Week's Takeaways

Judaism was not a monolithic religion – there were real differences between groups

Devotion to their uniqueness was rooted in covenant desire

Devotion to being the “remnant” doesn’t mean isolation

Are we choosing the easy way out by isolating rather than engaging?

# Reading from Last Week

**John 11:45 - 57**

- What justification does Caiaphas give for killing Jesus?
- Why is this a good reason in his mind and the others?



**Caiaphas' ossuary (bone box)**

***How much  
responsibility do  
leaders have for society  
at large?***

# Introductory Reading

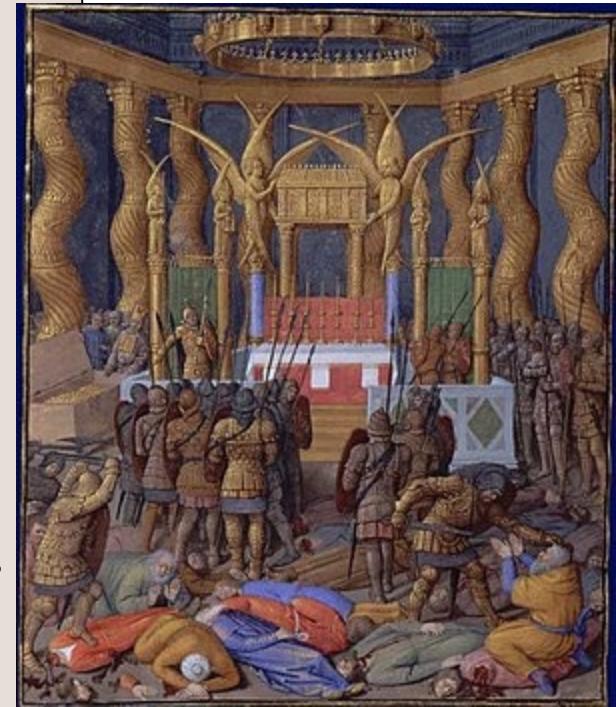
## *Psalms of Solomon (1<sup>st</sup> c. BCE) -*

Because the sons of Jerusalem defiled the sanctuary of the Lord,  
they were profaning the offerings of God with lawless acts;  
Because of these things he said, "Remove them far from me;  
they are not sweet-smelling."

The beauty of his glory was despised before God;  
it was completely disgraced...

Why are you sitting in the council of the devout, you profaner?  
And your heart is far from the Lord,  
provoking the God of Israel by lawbreaking;  
Excessive in words, excessive in appearance above everyone,  
he who is harsh in words in condemning sinners at judgment...

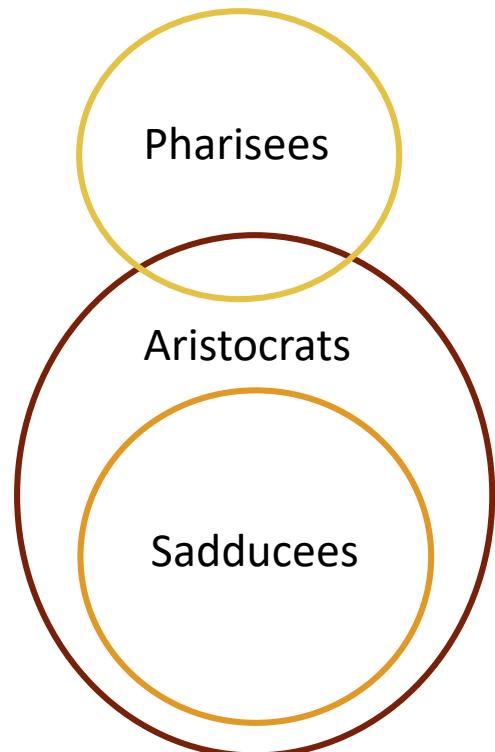
May God remove from the devout those who live in hypocrisy;  
may his flesh decay and his life be impoverished.  
May God expose the deeds of those who try to impress people;  
and expose their deeds with ridicule and contempt.  
And the devout will prove their God's judgment to be right  
when sinners are driven out from the presence of the righteous,  
those who please men, who deceitfully quote the Law.



Roman General  
Pompey in the Temple

# Who Were the Sadducees?

- Generally includes “aristocrats”
- Roots back to Ptolemaic period via Oniad family
- Small group – possibly 2,000 people
- Include the “high priest” hierarchy
- Several different terms – “chief priests,” “elders,” or “rulers”
- Keepers of the “Great Tradition”



# Group Discussion

- Do we have a “Great Tradition” here in America?
- What is a part of that?
- How do we treat people who are in control of those ideas, who pass it on or mediate it to others?

***Who do we give greater or lesser deference to in our society?***

# *A History of Intertestamental Groups*

Sadducees

Essenes

66 CE – Sadducees lose rebellion leadership to Zealots; many executed

130 BCE – Hyrcanus I sides with Sadducees against Pharisees over high priesthood; revolt between them breaks out

31 BCE – Qumran community destroyed by earthquake; a few decades later rebuilt

200  
BCE

152 BCE – Essene party splits from Temple hierarchy over Hasmonean high priest; Qumran community forms

100  
BCE

104 - 76 BCE – Alexander Jannaeus executes 6,000 for throwing fruit at him at Temple rites; later also crucifies 800 Pharisees for sedition

0  
CE

37 BCE – Sadducees come back to power with Herod; remain in power with Romans; includes high priestly families

66 - 70 BCE – Qumran community destroyed by Romans; Dead Sea Scrolls left hidden

70  
CE

# Josephus' Description

## The Jewish Antiquities 18.1.4 (1<sup>st</sup> c. CE)

“But the doctrine of the Sadducees is this: That **souls die with the bodies**; nor do they regard the observation of **any thing besides what the law enjoins them**; for they think it **an instance of virtue to dispute** with those teachers of philosophy whom they frequent: but this doctrine is received but by a few, yet by those still of the greatest dignity.

# Josephus' Description

## The Jewish Antiquities 18.1.5 (1<sup>st</sup> c. CE)

But they are able to do **almost nothing of themselves**; for when they become magistrates, as they are unwillingly and by force sometimes obliged to be, they addict themselves to the **notions of the Pharisees**, because **the multitude would not otherwise bear them**.

**Why would the most powerful/richest group bow to the ideas of another group?**

# Key Beliefs

**Conservatives  
of Palestine**

**The  
“Oral  
Law”**

**Resurrection**

**Membership**



*Christ Before Caiaphas*, Duccio  
Buoninsegna

# In the Bible?

The Sadducees show up during Jesus' ministry and after

Luke 20:27ff – "...who say there is no resurrection..."

Acts 5:17 – "They arrested the apostles..."

Acts 23:6 – "I stand on trial because of the hope of the resurrection of the dead."

Killed:  
Jesus  
Stephen  
James the  
Greater

The Sadducees controlled the levers of power

# Group Discussion

What was the greatest fear of the Sadducees?

Discussion  
Question

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3 minutes



# A Biblical Perspective

A few items...

John 14:2 – “In my father’s house there are many rooms...”

John 16:2 – “They will put you out of the synagogue...”

Hebrews 7:11 – “If perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood...why was there still need for another priest to come?”

# A Few Implications for Us...

1. Leadership is not based on social status –  
cf. James 2:1-4

2. Our relationships in the church are based on  
something completely foreign to the larger culture,  
the Spirit – cf. Galatians 3:28

3. Holding authority for those in the church is like  
warm butter: it should be held very loosely – cf. Luke  
22:24ff

# Today's Takeaways

The Sadducees saw their societal role as one of mediator between the Romans and the larger populace

Part of acting as mediator meant wielding power against those who threatened the status quo

The early church's model rejected authority based on social status and other criteria in favor of the Spirit

Is our model for living in our culture one of authority based on position, wealth, and personal capability or that of Christ?

# Reading for Next Week

## Matthew 23

- Is this:
  - An intra-Jewish critique by Jesus or
  - A later Christian polemic against Judaism?



**Jewish stone purification jars – Matt. 23:26, John 2:6**

***Are WE the Pharisees?***