

## **Finding the middle ground: Learning to Sacrifice Self Without Compromising Faith**

### **Lesson 10: Conflict in Community Part 1 (Government and Politics- The Great Divide, Pick a Side)**

Acts 23:3-13

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#### **The Pharisees**

The most important of the three were the Pharisees because they are the spiritual fathers of modern Judaism. Their main distinguishing characteristic was a belief in an Oral Law that God gave to Moses at Sinai along with the Torah. The Torah, or Written Law, was akin to the U.S. Constitution in the sense that it set down a series of laws that were open to interpretation. The Pharisees believed that God also gave Moses the knowledge of what these laws meant and how they should be applied. This oral tradition was codified and written down roughly three centuries later in what is known as the Talmud.

The Pharisees also maintained that an after-life existed and that God punished the wicked and rewarded the righteous in the world to come. They also believed in a messiah who would herald an era of world peace.

Pharisees were in a sense blue-collar Jews who adhered to the tenets developed after the destruction of the Temple; that is, such things as individual prayer and assembly in synagogues.

#### **The Sadducees**

The Sadducees were elitists who wanted to maintain the priestly caste, but they were also liberal in their willingness to incorporate Hellenism into their lives, something the Pharisees opposed. The Sadducees rejected the idea of the Oral Law and insisted on a literal interpretation of the Written Law; consequently, they did not believe in an afterlife, since it is not mentioned in the Torah. The main focus of Sadducee life was rituals associated with the Temple.

The Sadducees disappeared around 70 A.D., after the destruction of the Second Temple. None of the writings of the Sadducees has survived, so the little we know about them comes from their Pharisaic opponents.

These two "parties" served in the Great Sanhedrin, a kind of Jewish Supreme Court made up of 71 members whose responsibility was to interpret civil and religious laws.

**\*There has been conflict between 'two parties', conflict in interpreting the law, and conflict on how to govern since the beginning of Christianity. Most importantly the law often times conflicted with Christ...but why? How could a law created by God conflict with his son?**

**Luke 12:1-5; 11-12; 52-53**

Meanwhile, when a crowd of many thousands had gathered, so that they were trampling on one another, Jesus began to speak first to his disciples, saying: "Be[fn] on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. What you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in the ear in the inner rooms will be proclaimed from the roofs. "I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those

who kill the body and after that can do no more. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after your body has been killed, has authority to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him.

(11-12) “When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say.”

(52-53) Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division. From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three. They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.”

## Pharisee

### Mark 23

#### Marks of a Pharisee

#### Distinction as a Christian

### Christians in the midst of Political Conflict.

1 Peter 2:1-5

Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, *hypocrisy*, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good. As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him—you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 2: 6-12

For in Scripture it says: “See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.” Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, “The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,” and, “A stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.” They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for. But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

#### Break Down:

**Vs. 1**

**There are very specific attributes we are to rid ourselves of, why?**

**Vs. 2-5**

**Who does the responsibility for these behaviors fall on? Ourselves or our government?**

**Vs 7-8**

**Why would the stone make unbelievers stumble? How does that relate today?**

**What are some of the benefits of being part of God's Royal Family?**

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)

**What are some of the expectations of being a part of God's royal family?**

**Submitting to Governing Authority**

Romans 13:1-6

Reference Matthew 23:3-

\*How we interact with authority is important to God, we are to be obedient and follow instructions but at the same time be alert to ensure we do not model our lives after those governing in opposition to the Bible. Christ spoke out against false teaching and sinful behavior but he went about it by causing those involved to examine themselves. We are to seek justice (Proverbs 31) but do it respectfully and in accordance with God's expectations of us as Christians.

Challenge: Assess your attitude toward our leadership/government/politicians- is it one of rebellion or submission? How does the conflict in government lend to your internal conflict? What pieces of your identity are associated with a party or side that you need to let go of?