

## ***Doctrine of the Pharisee***

1. A Pharisee was a follower of the sect of the Pharisees, a numerous and powerful sect of the Jews. They were distinguished for their ceremonial observances, and apparent sanctity of life.

1.1 The Pharisees were also rigid interpreters of the Mosaic law; but they frequently violated its spirit by their traditional interpretations and precepts. They ascribed these interpretations and precepts equal with the Old Testament Scriptures.

Mat 5:20 For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Mat 12:2 But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day.

Mat 23:4 For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.

Mat 23:5 But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments,

Mat 23:6 And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues,

Mat 23:7 And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.

Mat 23:8 But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren.

2. The Pharisees are first mentioned as an existing party in Israel during the reign of John Hyrcanus (135-104 B.C.). Hyrcanus I was the first to lead the new Jewish state after the Maccabees.

2.1 According to Josephus, "They (*the Pharisees*) had at this time great influence with the masses." Hyrcanus was at first one of their disciples, but because of a misunderstanding broke with them and joined the Sadducees." His defection began a series of power struggles that ultimately resulted in Roman intervention.

3. As a foreboding note, Josephus adds: "Out of this, of course, grew the hatred of the masses for him and his sons. Hyrcanus was also said to have set aside certain "regulations" which the Pharisees had established for the people. All of this created political confusion and discord among the Jewish citizenry.

3.1 Josephus explains, "The Pharisees had passed on to the people certain regulations handed down by former generations and not recorded in the laws of Moses, for which reason they were rejected by the Sadducean group."

4. Josephus's account underlines the key factor in any definition of Pharisaism--the concept of tradition, of the continually expanding oral law during the period bridging the Old and New Testament.

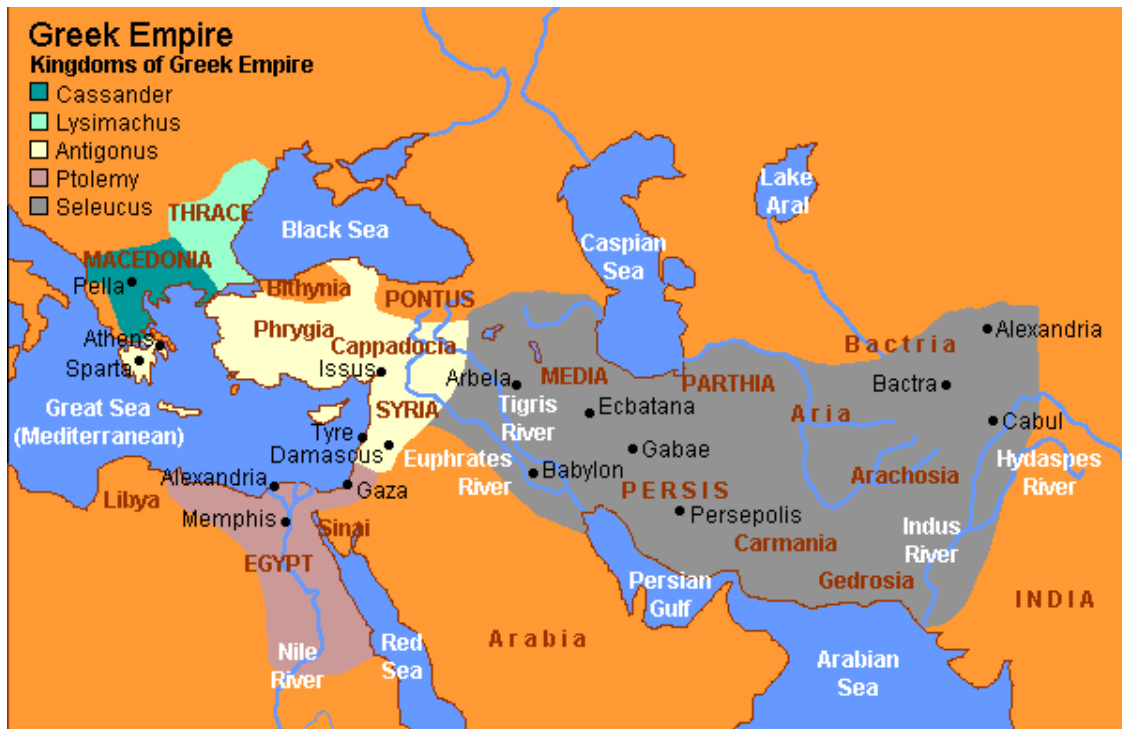
4.1 It also indicates that by the time of Hyrcanus, Pharisaism was already a flourishing movement with great popular influence.

4.1.1 Passing on regulations handed down by former generations certainly suggested to the people, continuity with the past.

4.1.2 Although some of the beliefs of the Pharisees may have roots that go back much earlier, Pharisaism as we know it seems to have come into being as a Jewish response to the challenge of Greek culture in the early second century B.C.

4.2 Most probably the Maccabean era does mark their real beginning. They may even have possessed some oral traditions that went back to early post-Exilic times. After the Maccabean revolt, the political fortunes of the Pharisees fluctuated.

4.3 When war against the external enemy (Greece) came to an end, an internal struggle broke out between the Hellenist Jews, Sadducees and the Pharisees only to be finally put-down by a Roman army led by Pompey. Let me quickly review the events following the break-up of Alexander's hegemony.

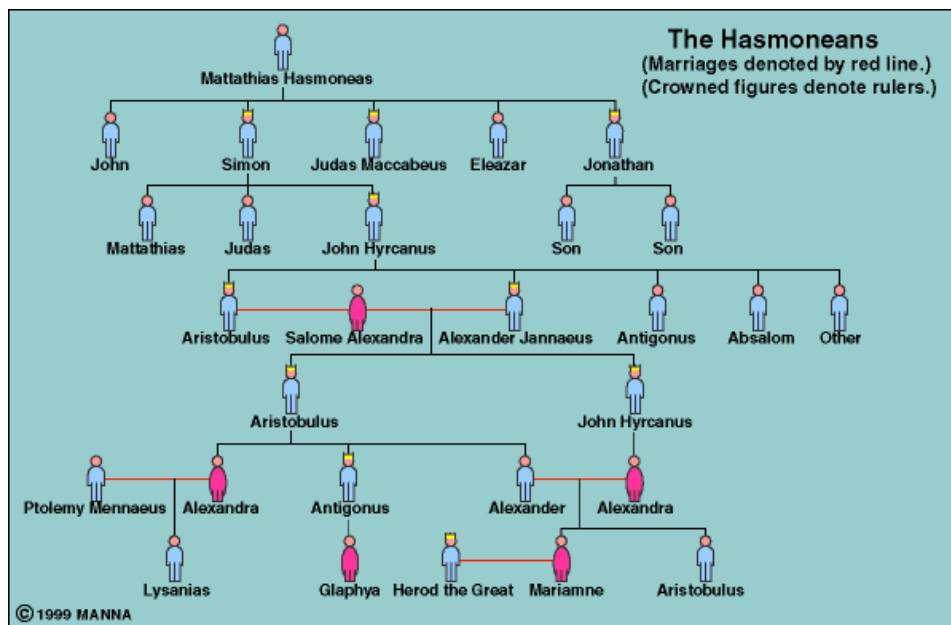


4.3.1 Two of the four generals serving Alexander were Seleucus and Ptolemy. These two soon eliminated Antigonus, leaving the "sharing" of Syria and parts of Asia Minor for Ptolemy (who reigned over Egypt with aspirations of ruling the Holy Land) and Seleucus (who reigned over what was formerly Persia with similar aspirations).

4.3.2 After several battles, marital intrigues and various political machinations between the Ptolemies and Seleucids, the Seleucids won out taking control of what we call today Israel. In approximately 173 B.C. a particularly onerous “king” named Antiochus Epiphanies exercised nefarious powers over Israel and abused both priests and lay people. Finally in 167 B.C. a revolt on the part of “Israel” occurred.

4.3.3 The popular revolt was led by Mattathias Hasmoneas and his sons Judas, Simon and Jonathan. Guerilla warfare ensued and the Maccabeans (as the Hasmoneans came to be known) were victorious. Israel became a free and autonomous state but a state rife with religious controversy; ergo, a failure waiting to happen.

4.3.4 As you can see from our chart of the Hasmonean rulers, the first ruler was Mattathias Hasmoneas followed by a co-regency of Simon, Judas and Jonathan Maccabee. The name Maccabee was an appellative of praise for the sons of Mattathias who excelled at military tactics and were thus given the name “Maccabee” meaning hammer. The first ruler to follow the Maccabean boys was John Hyrcanus I who at his coronation was a Pharisee. He would later convert and become a Sadducee.



4.3.5 With the rise of Aristobulus, Jannaeus and Salome) the Pharisees, with the support of Salome, were given a position of influence. Many historians believe the threat of war with Syria also made compromise the order of the day. The compromise however was short-lived.

4.3.6 Rome was desirous of influencing Israel to avoid the many internal squabbles so prevalent in the land. Political independence, gained earlier, was lost again and the Jewish people were placed under Roman rule in 63 B.C.

4.4 The Pharisaic piety, so despised by Jesus, seems to date from the troubled period that followed Pompey's conquest. The Pharisees believed God's judgment was a direct result of Israel's failure to comply with their interpretation of God's protocol.

4.5 The doctrine of a future resurrection so uniformly attributed to the Pharisees is simply the product of their consistent application of this retribution principle--you will be resurrected and judged.

4.6 The Pharisees believed in a Messianic hope. Of Him it is said, "He shall be a righteous king, taught of God, over them, and there shall be no unrighteousness in his days in their midst, for all shall be holy and their king the anointed, the Lord."

4.7 While the king and the kingdom for which the Pharisees looked was earthly, it was also spiritual, and not to be gained by "trust in horse and rider and bow." From Pompey's conquest forward, the Pharisees were for the most part peace loving and good citizens.

4.7.1 Although some of the zealots came out of their number, the Pharisees as a group sought to avert conflict with Rome, but were finally drawn into the ill-fated revolt of A.D. 70 with great reluctance.

4.8 After the destruction of Jerusalem, it was the Pharisees who undertook to pick up the shattered pieces of Jewish faith and life and to reconstruct Judaism as we know it in the rabbinic writings.

4.8.1 The situation was analogous to that which prevailed after the Babylonian exile: there was no Jewish nation, and the unity of the people was expressed through the law and the synagogue and good works.

4.8.2 Eschatological hopes were pinned not on revolutionary activity but on God's intervention and that in His own good time.

4.9 At the time of Jesus, the Pharisees seem to have been a group of laymen (not priests) some of whom were especially trained in the study of Scripture. These were the scribes and it was against the scribes and Pharisees that Jesus directed some of His most scathing denunciations. He did not take sharp issue with their synagogue teachings; they sat in Moses' seat and their words were to be kept.

Mat 23:2 "The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat.

Mat 23:3 So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach.

4.10 But they were hypocrites because they did not live up to their own high standards of righteousness.

- They laid burdens upon others which they themselves were unwilling to bear.

Mat 23:4 They tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them.

Mat 23:5 "Everything they do is done for men to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long;

Mat 23:6 they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues;

- They used sophisticated and subtle reasoning to evade the spirit of the law while carrying out its letter.

Mar 7:9 And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.

Mar 7:10 For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death:

Mar 7:11 But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free.

Mar 7:12 And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother;

Mar 7:13 Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.

- They gloried in their own righteousness and did good works only to be seen by men.

Mat 23:5 But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments,

Mat 23:6 And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, Mat 23:7 And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.

Mat 23:8 But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren.

Mat 23:9 And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven.

Mat 23:10 Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ.

Mat 23:11 But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.

Mat 23:12 And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.

Luk 18:9 And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:

Luk 18:10 Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.

Luk 18:11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.

Luk 18:12 I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.

Luk 18:13 And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

Luk 18:14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

- John the Baptist had called them a "brood of vipers" who rested complacent in their Abrahamic sonship.

Mat 3:7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

- Jesus seconded this verdict, adding that they were "whitened sepulchers," and sons not of the "prophets and righteous" (like Abraham) for whom they had built elaborate tombs, but of those who had slain those same prophets and the righteous, even from Abel to Zechariah.

Mat 23:27 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.

Mat 23:28 Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.

Mat 23:29 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchers of the righteous,

Mat 23:30 And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.

Mat 23:31 Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets.

Mat 23:32 Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.

Mat 23:33 Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?

Mat 23:34 Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city:

Mat 23:35 That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.

Mat 23:36 Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.

- They were "blind leaders of the blind" who sought many proselytes but in reality kept men out of the kingdom of heaven.

Mat 15:14 Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.

Mat 23:13 But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.

Mat 23:14 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.

Mat 23:15 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.

- The strands just noted in the New Testament are well known, but it should not be forgotten that on occasion Pharisees are seen in a somewhat more favorable light.

Luk 7:36 And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat.

Luk 13:31 The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, Get thee out, and depart hence: for Herod will kill thee.

Luk 13:32 And he said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.

Luk 13:33 Nevertheless I must walk to day, and tomorrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.

Luk 13:34 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!

Luk 13:35 Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

- To Gamaliel are attributed some of the same good qualities that Josephus saw in the Pharisees--moderation, avoidance of harsh punishments, and awareness of divine sovereignty as well as human responsibility.

Acts 5:33 When they heard that, they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them.

Acts 5:34 Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space;

Acts 5:35 And said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men.

Acts 5:36 For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought.

Acts 5:37 After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed.

Acts 5:38 And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought:

Acts 5:39 But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.

- Paul was a Pharisee before his conversion, and apparently regarded this party as the highest expression of the "righteousness which is in the law."

Phi 3:4 Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more:

Phi 3:5 Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;

Phi 3:6 Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

Gal 1:14 And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.

## 5. Summary

5.1 A definition of Pharisaism might begin by stressing that it was legalistic but not literalistic. It was a religion that "built a fence around the law," by taking the legal regulations of the Old Testament, many of which were intended for the Levitical priests, and making them relevant and applicable to every Jew. This the Pharisees did by their system of oral tradition and interpretation.

5.2 Why then did Jesus denounce Pharisaism? partly because of the hypocrisy of some of its representatives who "say, and do not."

Mat 23:3 All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.

Mat 23:4 For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.

Mat 23:5 But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments,

Mat 23:6 And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues,

Mat 23:7 And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.

5.3 While laying external burdens upon themselves and their followers, they had actually made righteousness an easier way, a goal that was attainable by certain acts, so that when these acts had been performed the Pharisee might think he had done all that was required of him.

5.4 Against this attitude Jesus said that when all such requirements had been carried out, the servant of God could still not rest secure.

Luk 17:7 "Suppose one of you had a servant plowing or looking after the sheep. Would he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, 'Come along now and sit down to eat'?

Luk 17:8 Would he not rather say, 'Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink'?



Luk 17:9 Would he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do?

Luk 17:10 So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.'"

Luk 23:5 "Everything they do is done for men to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long;

Luk 23:6 they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues;

Luk 23:7 they love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them 'Rabbi.'

Mat 23:5 But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments,

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Mat 23:7 And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.

Joh 3:1 There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:

Joh 3:2 The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.

Joh 3:3 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Joh 3:4 Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?

Joh 3:5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

Joh 3:6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Joh 3:7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.