

Groups During Jesus Day

Introduction

- The major groups were: Zealots, Essenes, Sadducees, and Pharisees
- All of these groups came to prominence out of the Hasmonean dynasty and into the era of Roman rule
- They were all in conflict with one another
- All four groups have the same goal: Prepare for the Messiah

Zealots

- Often the leaders of revolution attempts
- Different would be messiahs came along and led multiple revolutions from 4BC to 6AD
- Acts 5 mentions a couple revolts led by Zealot leaders who were thought to be messiahs
- Simon the Zealot (one of the apostles) was of this group before Jesus called him
- Diminish after fall of temple to Rome in 70AD and are permanently gone after the revolt of 132-135AD
- Their approach to preparing for the the Messiah:
 - Say your prayers and prepare for holy war
 - God will give military victory over the armies of darkness

Essenes

- Never mentioned in the New Testament
- Known for their ascetic way of life
- Everything for them was communal: reading of Scripture, refusal to own slaves, sharing of property, and meals
- Some lived in Qumran (caves where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found) while some lived in a section of Jerusalem
- There is potential that John the Baptist was an Essene
- Believed in two Messiahs
- No mention after the fall of the temple to Rome in 70AD
- Their approach to preparing for the the Messiah:
 - Separate from the corrupted culture (of both Jews and Gentiles)

- God will bring about the Messianic age through this community

Sadducees

- Moderately mentioned in the New Testament
- This is the priestly and aristocratic group
- They were in charge of the temple
- Believed only in a strict following of the Torah (first five books of the Bible)
- Denied the doctrine of the resurrection
- Ceased to exist after the destruction of the Temple by the Romans in 70AD
- Their approach to preparing for the the Messiah:
 - Keep temple and sacrifices going

Pharisees

- Most prominent in New Testament
- Two major schools of thought: Shammai and Hillel
- Main goal was to get everyone to live like a priest as a way to bring about the Messiah
- The main concern was not religion but eschatology
 - If we are pure enough we will be restored by God, bring about the Messianic age, and have theocratic independence.
- Concerned with studying and obeying the Scriptures and Oral tradition
- Only group to have a voice of influence after the destruction of the Temple
- Became the foundation of Rabbinic Judaism
- Their approach to preparing for the the Messiah:
 - Everyone needs to be ritually clean and pure
 - Obey the Torah accurately enough and the Messiah will come