

Scripturalism vs Judaism VI

What it Would be like to be in the Church of the Pharisees?

Fred R. Coulter—July 7, 1993

I'm going to read excerpts from *Jerusalem in the Times of Jesus* by Joachim Jeremias. Let me just make a qualifying statement before I get into it: Nearly all of the sources that I have been reading are written by Jews. Please understand that *none of these things* are hateful and anti-Semitic sayings by someone who is a rabid Jew-hater. Please understand that that is not so! As a matter of fact, as we saw when we read some of the references from Edershiem that he held back a lot of the most difficult things that the Jews believed about other people.

Please just realize that I'm trying to *relate* the historical background, the time and the context in which Christ came; the time and the context in which the New Testament was written; the time and the context of the apostles and the Apostle Paul, and all the difficulties that they had.

As I have mentioned previously, and I'll just go ahead and review here: During the days of Jesus and the apostles there were not any Protestants, there were not any Catholics. We are dealing strictly with the fundamental issue of Scripturalism vs Judaism and we are going to see today how much further corrupted that the Jews were at the time of Jesus, and also into the two parties of the Sadducees and the Pharisees and the scribes. In the book by Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Times of Jesus*, he also gives us a good insight into the scribes. For all of those who claim that Jesus was a Pharisee, you would have to say that He would have had to go along with all their lies, all of their twistings, all of their teachings and everything.

It's very evident that Jesus never was a Pharisee, He never agreed with the Pharisees. There may be have been some Pharisees who agreed in part with Jesus, but as a whole Jesus strongly denounced them! Remember, He told His disciples to *beware* of the leaven of the Sadducees and the Pharisees—that is of *their* doctrines, of *their* teachings! Yet, some today just want to take us backward, throw us into Pharisaism, throw us into Judaism and all of this sort of thing.

- That is not what Christ wants!
- That is not coming to the fullness of the knowledge of the spiritual Truth of God.
- That is not growing in grace and knowledge.

That is going backward into the *religion of the external rituals* performed by the Pharisees and into a Pharisaical religion, which is hideous indeed!

We're talking about the priestly aristocracy, which is the ruling priestly caste:

Jerusalem in the Times of Jesus by Joachim Jeremias:

To return to our list of the last high priest, Onias II was the last legitimate high priest in the rightful Zadokite succession according to the reliable interpretation of the book of Daniel. He was replaced at the command of Antiochus IV in 175 B.C. by his brother Jesus (he had adopted the name Jason) who had promised the king in return a considerable sum of money in the introduction of Greek customs into Jerusalem; and this in spite of this fact, that according to the Law, Onias II had a lifelong right to his office, and that his son, also called Onias III was next in succession (2-Maccabees 4:7-22).

The disruption of the high priestly succession began with the illegitimate appointment OF Jason as high priest in 175 BC., for the fact that Jason too had high priestly blood in his veins did not, in the people's sense of right, alter the illegality of his assumed rank.

However, Jason did not enjoy for long his wrongfully acquired title. After three years of office, Antiochus IV deposed him in 172 and replaced him with a non-Zadokite—an unheard of outrage to the religious feelings of the people—one Menelaus from priestly clan of Bilga, who had promised the king an ever higher fee. Since the people rightly saw in Onias II, still living, the rightful high priest, Menelaus had him treacherously murdered at the end of 172 or early in 171 B.C.

Onias, enraged at the murder of his father, and now the rightful successor to the high priestly title, resorted to force and succeeded in taking Jerusalem by a surprise attack, apart from the fortress where Menelaus had taken refuge. But Onias could not hold out against Antiochus IV, who recaptured Jerusalem in 169, and Onias III had to flee, while Menelaus was reinstated in office. In this desperate situation Onias III turned to Egypt, where the Jewish community

venerated him as the legitimate high priest, and obtained permission from Ptolemy VI Philometer (181-145) and his consort Cleopatra to build the temple at Leontopolis.

I mentioned Leontopolis before, and we're going to come back to the Jewish temple at Leontopolis, because this is going to be a really important factor in coming to understand whence came Catholicism.

The fact that Onias III resolved to build a temple in a heathen land, and moreover found priests, Levites, a community and the very considerable resources necessary to pursue his plan, and finally that this rival temple in a heathen land existed for 243 years, until its destruction by the Romans in AD 73, all would be completely incomprehensible if we did not know how ingrained in the Jewish race was the awareness that Onias III, as the son of the last rightful Zadokite high priest, Onias II, was the legitimate heir to the high priesthood.

The legitimacy of the high priest, and the fact that the Temple of Jerusalem was desecrated by the Syrians, allayed all misgivings... [which those Egypt may have had] ...which must have arisen over the unhallowed place where the new temple was built. In the meantime the storm of religious persecution broke over Israel (167 to 164), with the Maccabean revolt, and in December 164 the desecrated Temple at Jerusalem was reconsecrated.

There were some there at the temple at Leontopolis in Egypt where you have the rightful heir as the high priest. You have Levites, functions and ceremonies going on. You have the whole Jewish community, including all those of Alexandria who welcomed him, who worshiped there, who looked upon this as a rightful and legitimate succession because of what was done to the priesthood even though the priesthood was in Jerusalem and the temple in Jerusalem was reconsecrated.

Josephus gives the impression that the Maccabees did not impugn the position of Menelaus as high priest. This tolerance is not easy to explain, but may be due to an infinite respect for the authority of the high priest as such. It may also be due to the feeling that Onias III, the legitimate heir, had forfeited his claims by setting up a rival temple in Egypt...

But there's no reason to believe that Onias III felt that he had given up his claim.

...as also to the fact that the Maccabees were by no means as yet the undisputed masters of the situation: in 163, for example, they had to endure the appointment of a high priest by the Syrian king. Some such factor may underlie Josephus' account of the peaceful relations that ensued between the Maccabees and Menelaus.

However, it is not certain that the Maccabees did tolerate the collaborator Menelaus as high priest, especially as 1-Maccabees 4:42 reads: "So he (Judas) chose priests of blameless conversation, such as had pleasure in the law." The most we could say is that Menelaus was nominally high priest until 162. It is certain that in the year 162 the ten-year-old Antiochus V Eupator, at the instigation of his guardian, the general Lysias, had Menelaus put to death in order to gain favor with the Jews.

The priest Jacim (Alcimus), who had by this time (162) been made high priest by the Syrians, was certainly not in the direct line of succession to the last lawful high priest Onias II, but he was at least a Zadokite. The fact that now, after Menelaus, there was again a man with Zadokite ancestry was high priest was enough to revive the hopes of the people, and the Hasidim (Pharisees) deserted the Maccabees and joined him. However, they were bitterly disappointed in the man on whom they had set their hopes, and moreover his term of office soon ended with his death in May 159.

The situation in Jerusalem had now become very confused as a result of the arbitrary interference by the Syrian kings in the high priestly succession, and of the fact that the legitimate successor, Onias III had gone to Egypt. This confusion is shown most clearly from Josephus' report that from 159-152 the highest priestly office in Judaism remained vacant.

Which then obviously gave more credence to the one in Leontopolis with Onias III.

For seven years this state of affairs continued, with Jewry lacking a religious leader, until autumn 152, when at the Feast of Tabernacles Jonathan the Hasmonean, then ruler of the Jews, assumed the high priestly vestment. Until then [it] had been merely a family of priests within the priestly clan of Jojarib,

one of the daily courses of which there were four to nine in each priestly clan (weekly course). The Hasmoneans earned their right to the high priestly title, which the Syrians offered them, by their services to the people in preserving them from danger of religious extinction by the Syrian persecutions. Also of influence was the fact that the Oniads, lawful successors to the high priesthood, were serving in the temple of Onias at Leontopolis, which was not recognized in Jerusalem.

There we have some very interesting things concerning the temple at Leontopolis.

Now, talking about the succession of the priests and down to the time of Jesus:

For 115 years, until the conquest of Jerusalem by Herod the Great and C. Sosius the Roman governor of Syria in July 37 B.D., the Hasmoneans were high priest in unbroken succession, and provided eight high priests during this time. Then they were exterminated by Herod, for the Idumean upstart right saw in them the principal threat to his rule. In 35 B.C. there was just one more Hasmonean high priest, the seventeen-year-old Aristobulus, appointed by his brother-in-law Herod. As he walked to the altar, at the Feast of Tabernacles in 35 B.C., the people acclaimed him tumultuously, even with tears.

That was reason enough for Herod to have the young man drowned immediately after the festival, in a pool near Jericho. Aristobulus was the last high priest of his family. Herod wallowed in blood. He put to death even the distant relatives of the Hasmonean line, so that no single male Hasmonean was left alive to be considered as ruler and consequently as high priest.

A third epoch began with the sack of Jerusalem in 37 B.C., with the abolition of the lifelong nature of the high priestly office together with the principle of succession. With two exceptions, Herod nominated "insignificant persons who were merely of priestly descent" to the high priesthood, the exceptions being Ananel the Babylonian and Aristobulus the Hasmonean mentioned above. He deposed the high priests and appointed others at will.

This anomalous state of affairs continued until the destruction of the Temple in A.D.70, and in this way no less than twenty-eight high priests filled the highest

priestly office during the 106 years from 37 B.C. to 70 A.D., of whom twenty-five were of ordinary priestly families. This number should be compared with the eight Hasmonean high priests who held office in the longer period of 115 years.

Now here is the incongruous state of affairs that this produced:

There were in the First Century A.D. two groups of priestly families, one legitimate, one illegitimate. The legitimate group comprised simply and solely the Zadokites serving in the Temple of Onias at Leontopolis and the families descended from this ruling line. The illegitimate were the priestly families from the midst of whom one or more members had been raised to the highest spiritual dignity by variable winds of chance and politics since 37^{B.C.}, since the Hasmoneans, who formed a group between these two and had held the high priesthood for more than a century, though descended from an ordinary priestly family, were finally exterminated. This is indeed the picture which the sources give us.

This also shows us why we have such a situation that the priesthood over there in Leontopolis was so widely accepted by the Alexandrian and the Egyptian Jews.

Now we're going to find out some more intrigue that happened in the high priestly line, so we can understand how these different things were functioning. Jeremiah tells us of a high priest who came from Babylon who was of the Zadokites, too, and he lived in Babylonia.

It produced Ananel, whom Herod appointed first high priest after the sack of Jerusalem in 37 B.C. Thus Herod, too, as would the zealots later, played a role of guardian of tradition, when he appointed a descendant of the legitimate Zadokite family as high priest in place of the Hasmonean "usurper," even though he prudently chose a man of no importance.

Hence it follows from what has been said that in the first centuries before and after Christ there were priestly families descended from the lawful Zadokite line, and that the first and the last high priest to hold office between 37 B.C. and AD 70 were of Zadokite descent. It is very enlightening to see that the Zadokite family, though politically obscure, stood in the popular view high above the influential but illegitimate high priestly families. In

the east, ancestry has always counted more than power, in fact it is regarded as divinely ordained, and this is something we shall have to establish again and again.

Of those families in between the first and the last, which were from the Zadokite line or descent, he has this to say:

All the other twenty-five high priests belonged to ordinary priestly families. These families, so suddenly raised to the nobility, who came partly from abroad, partly from the provinces, quickly formed a new and powerful, if illegitimate, hierarchy. There were essentially four families in this hierarchy, each of which strove to keep the highest priestly office to itself for as long as possible. Of the twenty-five illegitimate high priests of the Herodian-Roman epoch no fewer than twenty-two belonged to these four families: eight from the family of Boethus...

Boethus will become very important because their descendants are called Boethains, of the Sadducean party. They were the ones who were in charge of the temple at the time of Jesus, and they were the ones who counted Pentecost correctly, choosing the regular Sabbath during the Feast of Unleavened Bread as the beginning point, and then counting from the morrow after the regular Sabbath. Hence, we come to a Sunday Pentecost on the 50th day, even though they may have been illegitimate because of their lack of proper descent, they correctly understood how to count Pentecost. Nevertheless, they fulfilled the high priest office.

...eight were of the family of Boethus, eight of Hannas, three of Phiabi and three of Kamith. It can be assumed that the three remaining high priests had some connection with these families.

Originally, the most powerful of the four families was that of Boethus. This family came from Alexandria...

Very important—isn't it? Boethus came from Alexandria, yet, we are told that the Septuagint—which was translated in Alexandria—held to the Pharisaic counting of Pentecost. Somewhere there's an incongruity about this whole situation, because it isn't so! We'll have to answer that question later on.

Its first representative was the high priest Simon, the father-in-law of Herod. This family managed in time to come, to produce seven further members for the high priesthood, and its powerful influence can be seen, too, in the name "Boethuseans" by which a section of the

Sadducees, and probably even the whole party, was known.

In the following period, the family of Boethus was overtaken by the house of the high priest Annas whose five sons, along with his son-in-law Caiaphas and his grandson Mattias (AD 65), held the premier rank.

We need to keep this in mind when we come down to the time of Jesus, because Annas and Caiaphas and Jonathan were the ones who were involved in the confrontation with Jesus, with the early confrontation of the apostles we find in the first couple of chapters of the book of Acts.

Now let's go to what is called *the lay nobility* or *the Sadducean party*. In order to understand about the Pharisees, we need to understand somewhat about the Sadducees.

The still prevalent view that the Sadducees were a clerical party recruited, partly if not exclusively, from higher circles in the priesthood, thus stands in need of correction. It is certainly true that the later Hasmoneans and the families of the illegitimate high priestly aristocracy, in contrast with the majority of priest, were for the most part of Sadducean opinions.

Thus the high priest and prince of the Jews John Hyrcanus (134-104 B.C.) who at the beginning of his reign favored the Pharisees, went over in the end to the Sadduceans, thus Alexander Jannaeus (103-76 B.C.) high priest and king, also the high priest Simon, son of Boethus, the high priest Joseph, surnamed Caiaphas (AD 18-37) and Ananus the younger, son of Ananus (A.D. 62), and finally the two Sadducean high priests of rabbinic tradition whose names are not mentioned, but one of who we must identify as Ishmael... [son of Phiabi II].

The chief priests were generally Sadducees. Even at the time of Agrippa their court seems to have given judgment according to the severe Sadducean law. It is true moreover, that these high ranking priests took leadership among the Sadducees.

As we find that the book of Acts shows that the Sadducees, as supporters of the high priests (Acts 5:17)

A group of the Sadducees, perhaps even the whole group, were called Boethuseans after the high priest son of Boethus. But all of this does not in any way prove that the Sadducees consisted exclusively or even predominately of priests. Indeed, this

possibility is precluded by the absence of any such affirmation in Josephus' presentation of the Sadducees and also by the distinction drawn in Acts between the priests of the Sadducees opinion and the Sadducees themselves.

I would have to say because Josephus does not confirm it; does not give us any real historical credence because Josephus being a Pharisee certainly wanted to minimize any influence that he would give credit to the Sadducees for.

We see then that the Sadducean party was made up of chief priests and elders: the priestly and the lay nobility. Thus the patrician family stood in the same relationship as the priestly nobility as the Pharisees to the scribes.

In other words, the Pharisees were lesser than the scribes.

In both cases the laity formed the mass of supporters: the religious men and the Sadducean clergy, the Pharisaical theologian were the leaders.

All of those combined were all the leaders.

The Sadducees formed a tightly closed circle and this observation is particularly helpful in understanding the awareness of tradition among the patrician families. These facts emerged from the information of the number of Pharisee supporters was small. And Josephus says they possessed their own tradition based on the exegesis of the Scripture which members must follow in their conduct of life. The exclusive character of the Sadducean group is shown even more clearly by the fact that Josephus classifies them with the Pharisees and the Essenes.

The Sadducean theology is equally instructive in understanding the lay nobility's position as guardian of tradition. They held strictly to the literal interpretation of the Torah. In particular to the precepts of the cultists... [that is of the ritual at the temple] ...and the priesthood, and thus found themselves in direct opposition to the Pharisees and their oral law, which declared that the rules of purity for priests were binding on the pious laity, too.

Which is absolutely not true. The whole premise of the Pharisees is based on a false premise. They say that everyone in the whole society had to follow the rules and regulations of purity and cleanness that was obligatory upon the priests. Absolutely not so!

Saying of the Sadducees, he continues:

In addition, they had their own penal code. We have much evidence of its extreme severity. We have already met a Sadducean tribunal of chief priests and we are reminded in several places of sentences passed according to Sadducean laws. This makes the existence of Sadducean scribes quite definite.

So, when we get to the term of scribes, we're talking about Sadducees, we're talking about some Pharisees, and we're talking about scribes who were lawyers of the Law.

Indeed, we cannot really contest it since the sources make particular mention of Sadducean scribes. It shows again that the patrician families of the Sadducees formed a tightly closed group with an elaborate tradition of theology in doctrine. They kept strictly to the exact text of the Scriptures, which shows the conservative character of these circles.

Thanks to their ties with the powerful priestly nobility, the rich patrician families were a very influential factor in the life of the nation, especially under the Hasmonians up to the beginning of Queen Alexandria's reign was politically powerful and the political power was in their hands. Together with the leading priests, they made up the Sanhedrin and consequently they together with the sovereign... [the one who was the ruler] ...possessed judiciary power and authority to govern.

The decline in their power dates from the time of Alexandria. Under her, the Pharisees gained a foothold in the Sanhedrin and the mass of people rallied more and more to them. The Sadducees were involved in hostilities with Herod the Great, in particular during the long pontificate of the high priest Simon (22-5 B.C.) who was the son of Boethus. After whom they are called Boethusians.

It seems to have given them an opportunity of strengthening themselves internally, but this could not deflect the tide of change. The decline in political importance of the high priest during the first half of the century A.D. was the cause of the decline of the lay nobility, and the Pharisees relying on their large number of supporters among the people saw their power in the Sanhedrin become stronger and stronger.

Once more chance seemed to have decreed that the nobility should lead the people. In A.D. 66, when the uprising against Rome began, the young nobles took into their hands the people's destiny, but it was only a matter of months, for by A.D. 67 zealots had taken command. The decline in the state marked the decline of the lay nobility and the Sadducean influence which had grown from the union of priestly and lay nobility. The new and powerful ruling class of scribes had everywhere taken over the ancient class of priestly and lay nobility founded on the privileges of birth.

Jeremias says that in the time of Jesus the clergy—that is the Levites and the priests—numbered between 18 and 24,000. This is important for us to understand so when come to the Pharisees we realize that there were only 6,000 Pharisees and they were not all concentrated in the area of Jerusalem.

I'm going to cover a little bit more about the function of the priests and the Levites and give us just a little understanding on how they worked at the temple, to give us background leading up to the scribes and the Pharisees. The duties of the priests were divided into 24 weeks with 24 courses and each of the courses would serve two weeks plus the festival time.

In each of the twenty-four weeks, and in addition at the three annual pilgrim festivals, one of the weekly courses of priests went up to Jerusalem to officiate from one Sabbath to the next. Each course consisted of average of 300 priests and 400 Levites, and it was accompanied by a group of lay representatives from its district.

The keys of the temple and the 93 vessels were ceremonially handed over to the course going off duty. In this way the weekly course of Abia traveled from the hill country of Judea to the temple in the last years of the reign of Herod. On the day when his daily course was on duty, the priest Zacharias had been chosen for the privilege of offering the incense, probably at the evening offering, and it was then that he had the vision in the Holy Place.

That is Zacharias, John the Baptist's father.

The cultic functions...

Whenever you hear the word *cultic* it doesn't necessarily mean something evil. Cultic merely means the operation of the elaborate rituals that they went through, the required sacrifices, the required incense, the required washings—all of this sort of thing.

...of the priests were then confined to two weeks in the year and the three pilgrim festivals. The priests lived at their homes for ten or eleven months, according to whether the distance from Jerusalem and the distance to and fro five times took up more or less time. Only very occasionally did they exercise any priestly function at home, such as declaring a leper clean after healing before he went up to Jerusalem to obtain a final declaration of cleanness after offering the prescribed sacrifice. The tithes and other special taxes were the priest's income, but these were by no means sufficient to keep them in idleness throughout the year.

In many places priests assist in the local courts of justice...

We need to understand this when we come to the scribes. This will help us understand Matthew 23 when we get there.

...probably in an honorary capacity. Sometimes they were called there out of respect for their priestly status. Sometimes if they were trained as scribes...

Scribes become very important in what we are going to cover in relationship to the number of scribes vs the number of Pharisees. We're going to see that there were probably 4 or 5 times as many scribes as there were Pharisees.

...because of their learning, and sometimes to satisfy Biblical precepts—for example in cases of assessment of votive offerings which Biblical precepts said must be done by a priest—it was usually the duty of a priest to sit at the court, because of the precept in Lev. 27:12, and to defend the interest of the temple which claimed the equivalent of anything vowed to God. There were, as Philo states, priests living in the country well versed in Scriptural learning, who were entrusted during the synagogue worship with the reading and expounding of Scriptures. But it is understandable that there were others who were not educated men.

What we're having here is some clues for us to how it was possible that the area of Galilee, during the days of Jesus, was able to be more Scripturalists than traditional. If you had some of the priests there who were officiating in the congregations of the synagogues—which was very likely possible—then they would be there to expound the Scriptures. You would have the whole

force of the Pharisees put down at a much lower level. We could liken it today in relationship to the way some people view the structures of churches, that the Pharisees were actually an independent association of men who had very little official authority, and derived most of their power from the righteous acts and traditions that they accomplished.

We find that the Pharisees had no official duties at the temple, unless perhaps one of the priests or one of the Levites belonged to the Pharisaic party. There were probably not very many who belonged to the Pharisaic party. There were some as we know, such as Gamaliel. However, we find that they did not recapture their power until sometime in the late 50s beginning the early 60s and it was not until 66_{A.D.} that they actually began taking over the whole temple process. We need to keep that in mind, especially in reference to those who try to make us believe that Jesus was in fact an Orthodox Pharisee.

We have another confirmation of this, as we continue:

There were profound contrasts between the great majority of priests and the senior priests who belonged generally to the priestly aristocracy. It's not surprising then that the mass of priests together with the young hotheads of the aristocracy, but in opposition to the leading members of the priesthood, threw their lot with the people at the outbreak of the anti-Roman rebellion on A.D. 66.

We're going to see this date—A.D. 66—come up time and time again in relationship to the rise of the Pharisees and the takeover of their power at the temple during that particular time.

Now we're going to cover a little bit concerning the Levites and concerning what they were doing.

The Levites, descendants of the priests of the high places deposed by the Deuteronomy law formed an inferior clergy. In theory, they passed for descendants of Levite, one of the 12 patriarchs of Israel. Their relationship with the priesthood was conceived of in the following manner: The priests were descendants of one prominent Levite Aaron so they formed a privilege class within the descendants of Levi. While the legitimate high priests are descendants of one prominent Aaronite Zadok formed a privilege class within the priesthood. Thus the Levites stood lower in rank to the priests as 'claris minora,' and as such took no part in offering the sacrifice. They

were entrusted solely with the performing of the temple music, carrying out inferior duties.

On particular fact is characteristic of their standing. Like the laity, they were forbidden on pain of death to have access to the temple building and to the altar. The Levites numbered about 10,000.

So, we have 24,000 priests, 10,000 Levites. If we begin comparing this with the 6,000 Pharisees—and yet, we still don't have a number for the scribes—we get a proper perspective of the power of the Pharisees, and they were not nearly as powerful as they record that they were. We'll see why they were able to record that they had more power at a later date.

The singers and musicians formed the upper straight among the Levites. The temple servants—the rest of them—had to discharge all the humbler duties which resulted from the function and maintenance of the temple, especially those connected with the cultists.

That is all of the cleanup work due to the offerings and the sacrifices and things like this, with the exception of the area around where the altar was. The priests had their own men to do that, because the priests alone could be in that area.

Finally, the Levites formed the police force of the temple.

That has a great bearing to do when Jesus was arrested.

If we remember that the Sanhedrin usually held their sessions in the temple area, we can have little doubt that the band sent by this authority to arrest Jesus consisted of these Levitical priests of the temple, reinforced by servants of the high priest and, according to John, by Roman soldiers.

This gives us a little more insight as to the situation with the Levites.

We have very little evidence on the training of Levites. The Levite Joseph Barnabas, the leading member of the primitive Christian Church, a prophet, teacher and missionary, was an outstanding man in the intellectual sphere and well versed in Scripture.

This is Barnabas who was ordained an apostle the same time as Paul was.

Since he was from Cyprus, his father seems to have been one of the Levites

who never served in Jerusalem, and as such served as being no way compulsory. We know of several Levites who were scribes.

We're going to see that that's probably the way that they made a good deal of their income, by being scribes. They were well versed in the Scriptures. They could or could not work at the temple. Many of them did. There were 10,000 Levites, so we have a total of 34,000 Levites and priests that functioned at the temple during the time of Jesus vs the so-called 6,000 that were the Pharisees.

So, just in sheer numbers we can get a little better understanding of how the Pharisees did not have as much power as they claim, especially when we realize that the Pharisees were the only ones who survived the destruction of the temple in 70_{A.D.} and their intense hatred for the priesthood, the Sadducees. When they survived and were able to then become custodians of the Scriptures, they look back and enhance their power by giving themselves with a historical revisionist review, such as Josephus did, of their power. Then they made themselves look far more important than they actually were.

Now, he concludes the section on the Levites this way:

On the whole, the evidence about the Levites is extraordinarily meager, but it's sufficient to enable us to form a general picture of the social position of this lower part of the clergy.

Now, let's get into the section on the scribes and we will realize that there were a good many of the Levites and the priests—who were also scribes—so it's no wonder that Jesus nearly in every case always put the scribes before the Pharisees, because they were, in fact, far more important.

Together with the old ruling class of the hereditary nobility of priests and laity, there grew up in the last centuries _{B.C.} a new upper class, that of the scribes. At the time with which we are dealing, the First Century _{A.D.} until the destruction of the temple, the struggle for supremacy between the ancient ruling class and the new reached its peak. And the balance began to be tipped by degree in favor of the new class [the scribes]. How is this possible? Which circles did this new ruling class recruit its members? Upon what did their power and prestige rest that they could dare to compete with the hierarchy of the hereditary nobility of such long standing?

Such are the questions that now arise. To find the answers for them, we must first examine the company of scribes in Jerusalem. When we look at the origin of these scribes a very picture emerges. In Jerusalem before A.D. 70 we can prove the existence of a large number of priests who were scribes. Besides these members of the priestly aristocracy ordinary priests also wore the robe of a scribe. Among the scribes who lived in Jerusalem before the destruction of the temple, we also find members of the lower order of clergy, that is Levites. The Levite Barnabas, prophet and teacher of the early Christian community. Among the scribes in Jerusalem along side men of ancient families such as Paul we find even men who not appear of Israelite descent. In the course of our investigation we'll show what that means.

The famous teachers of the middle First Century B.C. who were said to have descended from proselytes. It was knowledge alone that gave power to the scribes. Anyone who wished to join company with the scribes by ordination had to pursue a regular course of study for several years. The young Israelite desirous of dedicating his life to such scholarship began his education as a pupil. The student was in personal contact with his teacher and listened to his instructions, and when he had learned to master all the traditional material and the holic method to the point of being competent to take personal decisions on religious legislation and penal justice he was a non-ordained scholar. It was only when he obtained the canonical age of ordination fix surely too late at forty that he could by ordination be received into the company of scribes as a member with full rights an ordained scholar.

Henceforth, he was authorized to make his own decisions on matters of religious legislation and of ritual to act as judge in criminal proceedings and to pass judgment in civil cases either as a member of the court or as an individual. He had the right to be called "rabbi"; for it is certain that this title was already used for scribes by the time of Jesus. However, other men who had not gone through the regular course of education for ordination were also called "rabbi." Jesus of Nazareth is an example.

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This is because the title at the beginning of the First Century A.D. was undergoing a transition from its former status as a general title of honor to one reserved exclusively for scribes. At all events a man who had not completed a rabbinical education was known as *nepaOrjKws* and had no right to the privileges of an ordained teacher. Only ordained teachers transmitted and created the tradition derived from the Torah, which according to Pharisaical teachings—which the masses of the people respected—was regarded as equal and indeed above the Torah. Their decision to have the power to bind and loose for all the Jews of the entire world.

That's why they place themselves in such a high, lofty position, because they felt as though in having this knowledge that they were the ones who could pass judgment, who could control, who could rule and all of this sort of thing. This is how the scribes began to have more and more power.

Apart from the chief priests of the patrician families, the scribe was the only person could enter the Supreme Court, that is the Sanhedrin. The Pharisaic party in the Sanhedrin was composed entirely of scribes.

In other words the few Pharisees who were on the Sanhedrin had to first be scribes.

This Sanhedrin, we reflect, was not merely a court of government, but primarily one of justice. Now the knowledge of Scriptural exegesis was the determining factor in judicial decisions. When a community was faced with a choice between a layman and scribe for nomination to the office of elder to a community, or of the ruler of the synagogue, or of judge, it invariably preferred the scribe. This means that a large number of important posts hitherto held by priests and laymen of high rank had in the First Century A.D. passed entirely or predominately into the hands of the scribes.

Again, we want to see the power and authority that they had *vs* the Pharisees.

However, the decisive reason for their dominate influence over the people has not yet been stated. The determining factor was not that the scribes were the guardians of tradition in the dominate role of religious legislation, and because of this could occupy key positions in society, but rather the fact far too little recognized that

they were the guardians of the secret knowledge of an esoteric... [an inner knowledge of] ...tradition.

In other words, what they were saying is that God alone gave this inner esoteric traditional knowledge and was passed down orally from teacher to student and they never did tell the people what this was. Therefore, it gave them this aura of secret knowledge and secret power over the people.

Esoteric teaching in the strict sense thus had as its object, as a great deal of other evidence confirms, the strictest and deepest secrets of the Divine Being. Probably the Holy name endowed with magical virtues was part of this, and the secrets and the marvels of creation. Only in private between teacher and his most intimate pupil were there discussions on theosophy, cosmogony as they had been transmitted in the first chapters of Ezekiel and Genesis. They spoke very softly and during the discussion of the most sacred vision of the chariot they went so far as to cover their heads as a sign of deep reverence before the secret of the Divine Being.

As we will see, this then developed into Gnostic teachings. Inner knowledge, inner secret knowledge that God had given them above and beyond what they could read in the books. We get a little understanding as to how they looked at these esoteric teachings from what is called the fourth book of Esdras.

The fourth book of Esdras ends with the order given to Pseudo-Esdras to publish the twenty-four books that had been written down by him, the twenty-four canonical writings of the Old Testament, that the worthy and unworthy may read it.

So, the Scriptures were available for everyone to read, however, the command continues in the text and it says:

...keep the last seventy books... that you may deliver them only to such as be wise among the people, for in them is the spring of understanding, the fountain of wisdom and the stream of knowledge. This refers to the esoteric or the apocalyptic... [revealed revelational writings] ...to which the majority of men were denied access. They were inspired... [supposedly] ...like the books of Canon surpassed these... [the books of Canon] ...in value and sanctity.

Here the Jews were taking this inner knowledge, raising it to a level above that authority of the Scriptures.

The apocalyptic writings of late Judaism thus contain the esoteric knowledge of the scribes, and knowing this fact we can immediately perceive the extent of such teachings and the value that was set upon them. The esoteric teachings were not isolated theological writings, but great theological systems, great doctrinal instructions, whose content was attributed to Divine inspiration.

We are now in a position to define boundaries in rabbinic tradition between matters esoteric and exoteric.

Esoteric is inner secret knowledge. *Exoteric* is the knowledge they gave to the people to explain certain things that only the people could be allowed to be given or understand.

So, we have the same exact thing today! The closest we come to this type of knowledge is modern Masonry and Knights of Columbus and other secret organizations where they have *esoteric* knowledge. So is the Catholic Church. It is filled with *esoteric* knowledge. So are the rabbis and the rabbinical teachings that are today.

The *esoteric* knowledge then is that knowledge, which when you get down and analyze it, will be revealed to be not inspired of God, but that overall cosmic system of Satan, which gets into Gnosticism, philosophy and the religions of this world, which Rev. 17 says comes from 'Babylon the Great.'

All the teachings of the apocalyptic, or the supposedly revealed literature, of the pseudo-apocryphal writings... [the apocryphal writings not canonized in the Bible] ...foreign to Talmudic tradition or occurring there only in isolation belongs to the esoteric tradition. Such, for example, is the teaching on the savior Bar-Nasa... [son of man] ...a fact of considerable importance in understanding the message of Jesus.

When Jesus said He was the Son of man to those religious leaders, you need to understand that perhaps one of the very reasons that they were so against Jesus was because as he went through—as we read in the Gospels—calling Himself the Son of man, the Son of God, knowing exactly what they taught, He would hit certain key nerves which exposed the satanic origin of these so-called apocalyptic pseudepigraphical writings which were inspired not of God, but of Satan. Perhaps this will

give us a little greater understanding why Jesus said that they were of their father the devil.

It is the knowledge of the esoteric character of apocalyptic that above all enables us to understand rightly the organic connection between apocalyptic and Talmudic literature. Statements such as Boset's that apocalyptic literature contained the religion of the people and the Talmudic, the theology of the scribes, turns truth upside down.

What Jeremias is really revealing is that much of the inner teachings that they had were actually teachings of Satan the devil. However, he can't come right out and say it in so many words. Here's a mouthful to understand, so I'll try and make it clearer for you as we go along.

Certain esoteric teaching of an exegetical... [a systematic study of Scripture] ...and juridical order ... [laws or judgments set down] ...was added to the theosophical... [which is the philosophy of God] ...cosmological... [the study of spiritual things in the world; i.e. demonism and angelism] ...and apocalyptic, inspired revealed knowledge of esoteric teachings.

That's really a mouthful, and Paul was showing in his writings that Christ had overcome the principalities and the powers of this world being the demonic forces that rule it, and here Jeremias is saying that this was the *inner secret knowledge* that the scribes and the rabbis held.

Some was kept secret because of its holiness. This is particularly true of the reasons of the Torah...

The 'reasons of the Torah' probably were the reasons why the Jews had the law the way that they had, which they changed with their *traditions*.

...i.e. the reason which led God to establish particular legal prescriptions. God is made known by the silence in Scriptures concerning these reasons of Torah...

This is almost an incongruous statement. How could God make known by 'silence in Scriptures'? But that's the way that they reason. As he said, it turns Truth upside down.

...that it is His will to leave the mass of people in ignorance by reasons why He had established these particular legal requirements.

That's why Jesus preached everything to destroy their traditions, to destroy what they were supposedly exercising over the people, and to show that it was really the Truth of God, to show that it was really the Scriptures that counted. That's why Jesus said, 'Have you never read...' Maybe we understand a little bit more about these things so that we can understand what was happening during the days of Jesus.

We have just spoken of the esoteric teachings of the scribes in the narrowest sense...

We're just getting a part of the tip of an iceberg 'in the very narrowest sense.'

...which might not be divulged to unauthorized people. We must not forget, however, a still more important fact, that the period we are studying, the whole oral tradition, particularly the Halakah was an esoteric... [inner knowledge only to the initiants] ...doctrine to the extent that, although taught in places of instruction in synagogues, it could not be propagated by the written words since it was the secret of God and could only be transmitted orally from teacher to pupil, because it was forbidden to mingle Scripture with tradition.

Why do you suppose that was forbidden? *Because anyone who could read the Scriptures would see the utter folly and futility of all of these traditions!* That's why they didn't like it to be well-known as to what was taught.

It was not until the Second Century A.D. that in order to counter New Testament canon the Jews produced a parallel compliment to the Old Testament by writing down the oral Torah, which would make it assessable to all. In this way, most of the doctrine was stripped of its character of esoteric tradition.

I might mention that we are led to believe this, but it is not so, because no one can lay their hands on the things in the kabala. However, every once in a while something of the kabala does get out and we have some of that, which we will cover at a later date.

Suffice it to say, most of this inner knowledge is still secret inner knowledge that the rabbis keep to themselves. And the reason that they keep it to themselves is because they better dare not be known that they are serving Satan the devil. Otherwise, their particular lot in the world would even be far worse affected than it is today. When we get into the formation of the Catholic Church through the Gnostic system of the Alexandrian Jews and the Hellenists, and how that formed many of the

things that led to the beginning of the Catholic Church, we are going to be absolutely stunned! It is really amazing the information that is coming out now that gives us a greater understanding of those things, which until the last ten years was just not even available. In some cases not even the last three years; one publication (book) we have was published in 1990.

Section on the scribes: It is only when we have realized the esoteric character of the teaching of the scribes, not only in the narrowest sense, but as concerning the whole of the oral tradition, even with respect to the text of the Old Testament, that we shall be able to understand the social position of the scribes.

From a social point of view they were, as possessors of Divine esoteric... [inner secret hidden knowledge] ...the immediate heirs and successors of the prophets.

That's how they stood their ground.

In the time of Jesus then Jerusalem was the Citadel of theological and judicial knowledge of Judaism.

This gives us the very reason why Jesus did not live and work, nor was born in Jerusalem. Here is the whole center.

It was the Citadel of the theological and judicial knowledge of Judaism. To be sure at this time the Babylonian schools were important, but from them came the Bene Batria, who until the time Hillel were the leading scribes in Jerusalem and to whom Hillel himself owned his grounding in scribal lore. But as important as the Babylonian schools were, they could not vie with those of Jerusalem. It is said that Hillel alone gathered eighty pupils around him. They learned from their master in daily life, as well as in the lecture room.

Their master's actions even his gestures were closely watched and they drew from them guidance on ritual questions. Their decisions and the teaching of the master was propagated beyond the borders of the land. The pupils cherished them as a precious treasure and transmitted them by the chain of tradition.

The reason I bring this out is because under Hillel and Gamaliel—especially Gamaliel—that's where Paul got his teachings. That's why God called him to ensure that none of the Pharisaic and scribal knowledge of this satanical origin would enter into the Church when it began.

We understand therefore, that the scribes were venerated like the prophets of old, with unbounded respect and reverential awe as the bearers and teachers of sacred esoteric... [inner secret] ...knowledge. Their words had sovereign authority. The Pharisaic community especially gave their scribes unconditional obedience. And the Pharisaic scribes were by far the most numerous.

And we might add: in relationship to the number of Pharisees.

If the teachings of most of the Sadducean scribes disappeared from tradition, the main reason is that the Sadducean role ended with the fall of Jerusalem.... [They were all killed at the temple.] ...And the tradition handed down to us fixed by the written word from the second century came exclusively from their enemies the Pharisees.

Therefore, that's why in the writings of Josephus and all of the rabbis today, they downgrade anything that was done by the Sadducees because they were the enemies. That pretty well takes care of the section on the scribes.

Let's go to the section on the Pharisees, and we're going to find that this is very interesting indeed. We will notice how Jeremiah puts them in the order of the hierarchy within the society during the time of Jesus. We have the high priest, the priests, the Levites, the scribes and the Pharisees. The Pharisees are on the lower rung of the ladder. That is the reason that many of them survived, because they were not all in Jerusalem at the fall of Jerusalem.

Let's get a little history here concerning the Pharisees and a little understanding as to what went on, why it went on, how it went on, who the Pharisees were and what it would be like to be in the church of the Pharisees:

Sociologically speaking, there is no question of including the Pharisees among the upper classes. Their name means "the separate ones, the holy ones, the true community of Israel."

You see immediately the conflict this presents with the New Testament Church. When the New Testament Church starts, they are the *saints, the true Israel, the Holy ones of God!* That's, in fact, what the word *saint* means. We will see that a lot of the conflict that was inherent between the New Testament Church and the Pharisees was based upon the fact of who and what the Pharisees were, and said that they were and what they did.

As we shall they were for the most part men of the people with no scribal education. But they were so closely linked with the scribes that it's difficult to separate them. The more so since the scribes rise to power marked the rise of the Pharisees also.

If in the following pages we are to study the composition of the Jerusalem Pharisaical community and to describe their position within the framework of society, we must never lose sight of the fact that they formed a closed community.... [or closed communities] ...Thus, the Pharisees were by no means simple men living by the religious precepts laid down by Pharisaic scribes, especially the precepts on tithes and purity. They were members of religious associations pursuing these ends. The first appearance of the Pharisees and the Second Century B. C. shows them already an organized group. The first mention of them is in the two books of Maccabees, and they are called "the company of Hasidims"—that is they were the synagogue of the Holy ones.

They were mighty men of Israel, even all such were voluntarily devoted to the law. The Essenes also originated in the Second Century B.C. and whatever foreign influence that might have affected their beginnings, they were an origin very close to the Pharisees, as witness their strict rules of purity and the efforts toward separateness. It is possible therefore, to draw from the strict life of the Essene community inferences about the communal character of the Pharisees.

As we read some of these things concerning the Pharisaic community, and the requirements of it, a lot of you are going to be revisiting some of the things you experienced in your former church experience within the Church of God. It's going to be uncanny and, in some cases, almost unreal the similarities of what you're going to find.

As a matter of fact, as of the date that I'm doing this—July 8, 1993—there is currently a relatively new split off of the Church of God that is going to be the Church of God of the Pharisees, because they're going to have a lot of rules, a lot of regulations. They're going to claim a lot of physical things such as closeness to the one who was the 'apostle' of God, such as teaching many students who are now ministers, such as having labored with the Church and having been put down and held back; one who brought many rules and regulations

and physical requirements and punctilious things to the Church of God that actually made void *grace*; actually made people afraid to *love*—that is to love God and to put that as the first and foremost thing.

So, when we get into some of these things concerning the Pharisees, I want you to understand what happens when the Church of God relies solely on law and tries to derive the love of God from law-keeping rather than to derive law-keeping from the love of God.

We must take into account the customs of life and the traditions of the holy communities, in particular their faithful observance of fixed times of prayer, which was universally praised. We must compare this with the fact that in the First Century A.D. the observance of fixed hours of prayer was recognized as a distinctive sign of a Pharisee. All this leads inevitably to the conclusion that in all probability the Holy community of Jerusalem was a Pharisaic community in the Holy City of the First Century A.D.

Moreover, we must remember that the Pharisees themselves attached the greatest importance to works of super-rogation and good works.

Super-rogation is works that were done very punctiliously; works that were very fastidious; works that were done in the open; excessive letter of the law, heavy handed obedience to their rules—that's super-rogation.

What is more the accomplishments of the works of super-rogation was an integral part of the very essence of Pharisaism and its idea of meritorious behavior.

You need to understand that in the New Testament when Paul talks about works of law, this is what he is talking about. He is not necessarily talking about keeping the commandments of God. In most cases he is not, but he's referring to this super-rogation of merits that made people better before God, because of what they did, and that is called *justification by works*. Whereas, the true New Testament teaching is that you have *justification by faith and grace*.

The Pharisaic communities of Jerusalem, several of which are known as we have seen, had strict rules of admission, which again shows their character of a closed society. Before admission there was a period of probation of one month or one year, during the course of which the postulate had to prove his ability to follow the ritual laws. Once this period was over, the candidate committed himself to observe the rules of the community.

In the earlier period, which is the only time to concern us here, this pledge was taken before a member who was a scribe. The new member of the community bound himself to observe the Pharisaical laws of purity and ties. Hence forward, the Pharisee was a member of an association. These associations had their leaders. As pointed out, they had a chief Pharisee. These last, it seemed, were linked to a common meal, particularly on a Friday evening at the beginning of the Sabbath. They had their own internal code of rules and could agree, among other things, on the expulsion of a member. We shall do well not to overestimate the number of the members of these Pharisees.

Then he shows that even Josephus—who was a Pharisee—put their number at 6,000, which by the way, after reading these things, I would have to conclude is probably ballooned a little bit more out of proportion than it actually was. Then he talks about how Matthew and Luke very often lumped together the scribes and the Pharisees.

Matthew in the discourse of Jesus, and Luke in the narrative parts of his Gospels frequently used this expression: *scribes and Pharisees*.

Then he gives some of the condemnation of the scribes, which are:

They are reproached for:

- a) imposing very strict religious laws on other people while avoiding them themselves.
- b) building the tombs of the prophets while ready to condemn to death men sent by God.
- c) keeping their learning secret, and so cutting off the people's access to the Kingdom of God, while making no use of them themselves of their own knowledge.
- d) Inordinate pride in dress and salutation, and in order of seating, particularly with regard to the synagogues.

These reproaches have a general bearing on their scribal education and in the resulting privileges in social life. Jesus' reproaches of the Pharisees are summarized as follows, and they are of an entirely different kind. They are accused of:

- a) hypocrisy in caring out the laws of purity while remaining impure inwardly

- b) hypocrisy in paying tithes on green and dried vegetables not required by the law, while neglecting the religious and moral obligations of the law

We can see that these reproaches have absolutely nothing to do with the theological education. They're leveled at men who have led their lives according to the demands of the religious laws of the Pharisaic scribes.

Then he gives a review of the condemnation in Matt. 23. We'll get to that in due course in our series.

In the same way, the first two chapters in the Sermon on the Mount contain a discourse against the scribes and one against the Pharisees.

We'll get to that to show the difference and show why He said that 'your righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees.' The whole reality is that your righteousness must be motivated *from within* by the Spirit of God, with Christ in you, with the love of God.

These verses are no longer directed against doctrinal tradition but against men who in everyday life made a great show of super-rogation of alms giving, prayer and fasting, etc. We must therefore, make a distinction between scribes and Pharisees and reject completely the idea that the Pharisees were the same as the scribes. The only point that is true is that the leaders and the influential members of the Pharisaic community were scribes.

Then he gives some names of the outstanding Pharisees who were scribes.

The sum total of these names is, as we see, not very great. Truth to tell, we know only a small number of names of Scribes who belong to a Pharisaic community. Actually their numbers was much greater.

Well he's just guessing that they were because he himself was a descendant from the Pharisees. So, we'll have to leave that to an open question. However, when you read Jeremias very carefully, there's a lot of doublespeak. What I mean is, there are times that he says there were a lot of Pharisees, and other times he says no, really, don't exaggerate it, as he does in this particular statement, as we read on.

In cases like this, we may, without hesitation, presume that the scribe who is defending Pharisaic opinions himself belongs to a Pharisaic community. But we must not underestimate the number of teachers who did not belong to a Pharisaic community. In all cases this number...

[that is those who did not belong to the Pharisaic community] ...is considerably higher than the Talmudic tradition would have it. The tradition is derived from purely a Pharisaic point of view.

There again, this is part of his doublespeak, to let those who know and understand be able to pick out the things that the Pharisees were not quite as important as they really made themselves out to be. Now, here's a very revealing statement:

In short the Pharisaic communities were most comprised of petty commoners, men of the people with no scribal education, earnestly themselves sacrificing, but all to often they were not free from uncharitableness and pride with regard to the masses...

That is the uneducated people, the people without the law.

...who did not observe the demands of the religious laws as they did, and in contrast to whom the Pharisees considered themselves to be the *true* Israel.

Again, I want to emphasize that this sets up a great conflict with the New Testament Church, which was taught to be the actual true Israel.

Another thing which is kind of incongruous is that we have a lot more information on the Essene communities than we do on the Pharisaic communities. However, we can draw a lot of things from the Essene communities which we're going to go ahead and cover now, which then absolutely applied to the Pharisaic communities.

We see first of all that we are dealing with a tightly closed group. A list of members was made in which was kept the sequence of priests, Levites, Israelites and proselytes, which was also valid for assemblies. Precise rules governed admission to the community. Only those whose days were completed could be included among them that are mastered as it were those who qualified.

As it appears, this fixed the minimum age of entry at 20 years and expressly states 20 years as the limit. First of all, there was a preliminary examination by the supervising scribe...

Now, some of you when you were baptized, let's think about some of the things that were asked of you before you were allowed to be baptized:

...of which much later had the sole right of accepting candidates and to whom the postulant must present himself. The supervisor then made known to him the

strict legal maximums of the community. The candidate took the oath of entry and then was put on the list of members. Next, according to the manual of disciples, there was a period of two years probation. Serious transgressions were punished by temporary or permanent expulsion. See also the rules of punishment in the manual.

These details are mainly in agreement with the result of our earlier examination of the Pharisaic communities. This becomes particularly clear when we remember that the synagogue in contrast to these two movements knew nothing of expulsion.

And I might add, with the exception where the Pharisees had an upper hand in the synagogue, they would have the rules of expulsion.

As for the administration, there was at the head of each camp, community or association a supervisor who had to be between 30 and 50-years-old. He was a scribe who could inform on the exact meaning of the law. Transgressions had to be reported to him.

In other words, transgressions by members of the community had to be reported to him.

He alone had the right to admit a candidate to the community. He examined and classified the new recruits. Moreover, he was the spiritual father of the community.

Does that bring back some memories? *It ought to!* In that sense he had the right to bind or loose or to put heavy burdens upon the followers, etc. Does that show some things that you were use to in the past? Then he gives a little history about how the Pharisaic communities and the scribal leaders gained their power in the First Century B.C.

After the death of Alexandra, the Pharisee's power diminished under Aristobolus (67-63 B.C.).

That's when a lot of the Pharisees were killed. Then the Pharisees came back to power a little bit and had access to the court in Jerusalem and to Herod and he favored them. Then there was a conflict between Herod and the Pharisees.

Only in 6 B.C., two years before his death, did Herod, as a result of court intrigues, break with the Pharisees.

Again, they were put down in political power. Again there were a good number of them killed. So, at the beginning of the ministry of Jesus Christ they had regained some of their power. But from the time of the death of Christ on until A.D. 66 at the beginning of the revolt against Rome, that's when they gained

in power. Let's pick up a little bit more here in covering that history.

In the following Era until the beginning of the revolt against Rome in A.D. 66, the influence of the Pharisees on the political life of the Jewish people was limited. To be sure, they were still on the supreme council, but it was the priestly and lay aristocracy, the Sadduceans who had the determining role.

Again, we find these historical things coming up time and time again, that it was the Sadducees who had control of the temple. It was the Sadducees who had control and determination and pronouncement of the Holy Days—not the Pharisees.

However, the Pharisees could always make their voice heard on the Sanhedrin during sessions and had close relations with Herod Antipas patriarch of Galilee. Yet, we do know that the Pharisee Saul was commissioned with the active persecution of Christians. Generally speaking, however, the Pharisees' influence on politics and the administration of justice in Palestine before A.D. 66 must not be exaggerated. Their only real importance during this time was in the realm of religion and here they, not the Sadducees, were supreme.

Of course now, here's some of the doublespeak that he has, trying to say that the Pharisees ordered the Sadducees to do certain things. But remember, that was not until the Roman revolt in 66_{A.D.} Then he explains a little bit about the religious beliefs of the Pharisees.

Whereas, the Torah... [the laws of God] ...laid down rules of purity and rules on food for the officiating priests alone, the Pharisaic group made these rules a general practice in everyday life of not only the priests, but in the life of the whole people. In this way they meant to build up the Holy community of Israel, the true Israel, for this is the meaning of the word "Pharisee." The Sadducean group, on the other hand, was conservative and it was held that the priestly laws were limited to priests and the cultists' conformity with the text of the Scripture.

This conflict between Pharisees and Sadducees sprang from this opposition. It dominated the profound religious revolution of Judaism between the Maccabean wars and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

And it says of the Pharisees:

They voluntarily submitted themselves to priestly rules and thus prepared the way for a universal priesthood.

We're going to see that this becomes important as we get into the study of the Gospels a little later.

The people as a whole were not disconcerted by this situation, in spite of some very angry outbursts against this new ruling class, and the evidence of an intense desire to throw off the yoke of a contempt based upon religious superiority.

To this desire, we may trace partly at least the motive to follow Jesus among those who travailed and were heavy laden were the publicans and sinners. But as a whole the people looked to the Pharisees and their involuntary commitment to works of super-rogation as models of piety... [that is supposedly Godliness] ...and as the embodiment of the ideal life which the Scribes, these men of Divine secret knowledge, had set before them.

It was an act of unparalleled risk which Jesus performed when, from the full power of His consciousness of sovereignty, He openly and fearlessly called these men to repentance and this act brought Him to the cross.

So, we can say absolutely conclusively and dogmatically that ***Jesus Christ was not a Pharisee; never a Pharisee; never belonged to any of their organizations.*** And as matter of fact, the communities of the Pharisees are an absolute effrontery to God. That's why there was this tremendous conflict that went on between the Jews and the Christians—or as we have entitled it: *Scripturalism vs Judaism!*

The main important thing that Jesus was doing was ***separating the Truth of the Laws of God from the lies and the demonic and satanic superstition of all of the extra laws and rigorous and religious requirements that the scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees had added to the Laws of God.***

Now you will understand why Jesus said that ***'unless your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of God!'***

References: Book: *Jerusalem in the Times of Jesus*
by Joachim Jeremias

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