

## **BIB 251 The Gospels**

### **Lesson 2** The inter-testament period - Religious history

Intro. To better understand the teachings of Christ particularly as it relates to His correction of false teaching. This is illustrated in the Sermon on the Mount. It is necessary and essential to understand the entrenched religious systems in order to interpret and appreciate the dialogue in the gospels. This religious background developed and changed during the inter-testament period compared to the religious system of the OT. The priesthood and the nations worship had developed into something similar to our denominational Christianity.

Note: imagine coming from a different country and being exposed to Fellowships, Charismatics, not to mention different associations and conventions of Baptists.

#### 1. The Synagogues

- A. Where scriptures would be read and expounded. Because of the dispersion many Jews did not speak the Hebrew which the scriptures were written in.
- B. Required 10 Jewish men to establish a synagogue
- C. Were scattered in “every city” where Jews were located since they could not worship in the temple. This made the transition to local churches easy by being used to a place of worship outside of the temple where scripture was expounded. An open invitation would be given to anyone to speak - Jesus, Paul, Barnabus. It also developed a Congregational form of government.
- D. “the great institution of preaching - one entirely unknown to heathenism - took its rise in the synagogue” Baxter

#### 2. The Scribes

- A. scribes - class of professional experts in the interpretation and application of the OT scriptures. Often called “Lawyers” by Christ
- B. “Guardians, the expounders, the doctors of the Law and of the other scriptures to the whole nation.”
- C. Mt. 7:28-29

#### 3. The Scriptures

- A. Possessed the Septuagint - Greek translation of OT
- B. Talmud
  - 1. Mishna - oral law
  - 2. Gemara - interpretations of the Mishna
- C. “you have heard that it hath been said” “But I say unto you”
- D. Division of Scribes vs. Priests which primarily led to Pharisee vs. Sadducee

#### 4. The Sects

- A. Pharisees = “separatists” (Legalists) almost synonymous with scribe. A scribe by vocation, a Pharisee by conviction. They were like-minded in approach to the scriptures.
  - 1. Emphasized the letter of the law especially the oral law
  - 2. Believed in spiritual (angels, resurrection, etc) made converts
  - 3. Danger of legalism and hypocrisy exists for us today.
- B. Sadducee - (Scepticism) Zadokites (high priest descended from under David)
  - 1. Compromised with “hellenism” which Pharisees resisted and protested
    - Paul said a Hebrew of the Hebrews

2. aristocrats (social clique) of priests
  3. closer to Protestants emphasizing the sacraments
  4. Didn't believe in angels, resurrection, etc.
- C. Essenes - (mysticism) refrain from outward emphasizing spiritual
1. Similar to Amish - ascetic discipline, simple living, withdrawal from ordinary human society, community apart, opposed to war, disallowed oaths, members admitted after protracted probation, only eat food cooked by their own, godly virtues, no impact on their times
  2. Disguised escapism - no salt and light effect upon a society
- D. Herodians (secularism)
1. Enjoyed protection from Rome - built large temple to Caesar
  2. Idumaeans - hated by Pharisees because they were from Esau
  3. Herod murdered all but 2 of Sanhedrin
- E. Zealots - (fanaticism) Jewish nationalist party
1. Ready to fight to bring in Messiah - Simon the zealot, Judas Iscariot?
  2. reaction against Herodians
  3. Barabbas - murder in an insurrection against Romans

Note: "the rulers took counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed" Ps. 2  
All the sects were united and agreed in one thing.

5. The Sanhedrin - great council civil and religious, comparable to Supreme Court
  - A. Constitution: 1 high priest, 24 chief priests, 24 elders, 22 scribes = 70 + 1
  - B. Operation - 23 required to make a quorum, others dismissed to own affairs
  - C. Membership "the applicant had to be morally and physically blameless. He had to be middle-aged, tall, good looking, wealthy, learned in both the Divine Law and diverse branches of profane science such as medicine, mathematics, astronomy, magic, idolatry, etc. in order that he might be able to judge in these matters. He was required to know several languages, so that the Sanhedrin might not be dependent on an interpreter in case any foreigner or foreign question came before them...nor could any such candidates be elected as had no children, because they could not sympathize with domestic affairs, nor those who could not prove that they were the legitimate offspring of a priest, Levite, or Israelite, who played dice, lent money on usury, flew pigeons to entice others, or dealt in produce of the Sabbatical year."
  - D. Jurisdiction - genealogies, immorality of priests, oversight of national and religious affairs, trial of false prophets and heretics, check against high priest, war, boundaries of temple and city, appoint inferior judges, the calendar
  - E. Administration - innocent until proven guilty, would vote Junior to senior so as not to sway younger members by the elder

#### Conclusion

It is a strange thing that in each age different groups can be so blind to their own hypocrisy. The nature of man is the same in every generation and goes to the same extremes in religion as thousands of years ago.