

# Who Is Jesus

Part Nine / Wednesday, February 6, 2019

## Opposition to Jesus Begins to Form

1 It would be an incorrect assumption that opposition to Jesus began early in His ministry.  
2 In fact, the opposition started well BEFORE it began. For example: Matthew 2:3  
3 **When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem**  
4 **with him.**

5  
6 Opposition to someone or something can take two forms – both of them diabolical and  
7 hurtful.

8  
9  It has been stated by many that perhaps the most hurtful opposition to someone is  
10 ignoring the person. That happened in Herod's palace. In his court could be  
11 found priests and scribes. Matthew 2:4 **And when he had gathered all the**  
12 **chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where**  
13 **Christ should be born.** We have no record that any of that group followed the  
14 wise men to find this Promised One - at least out of curiosity. They simply went  
15 back to their normal lives, business as usual. They were not interested. They  
16 dismissed Jesus out of hand. They could have been witnesses to the greatest  
17 moments of their lives, but they just couldn't be bothered.

18  
19  The second form of opposition comes from those so threatened they made efforts  
20 to destroy the person or teaching. We are certainly seeing both of these forms  
21 taking shape in our nation today. With His every act, His every word, opposition  
22 to Jesus mounted on such an escalating scale it involved world leaders, alleged  
23 spiritual leaders and the mobs in the street. One has to wonder how far away we  
24 are from seeing such responses to Jesus in the United States of America.

25  
26 Someone might protest, "Well, I'm not FOR Jesus, but I'm not really AGAINST Him  
27 either." To which Jesus has already responded: Matthew 12:30 **He that is not with**  
28 **me is against me.** And Matthew 6:24 **No man can serve two masters: for either he**  
29 **will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the**  
30 **other.**

31  
32 In tonight's study we will turn the spotlight on:

33 The Pharisees

34 The Saducees

35 The Herodians



Depiction of a Pharisee in the film *The Passion of The Christ*

- 23 The Priests
- 24 The Romans
- 25 The Zealots - and others

Let's identify some of these opponents of our Lord so we understand their position and why they so strongly - and occasionally - violently hated Him.

### THE PHARISEES

Perhaps no "disloyal opposition" to Jesus ever exceeded that of the Pharisees - some 6,000 or so in number in the Gospels. The very name "Pharisee" in its Semitic form meant "the separated ones or separatists." They were also known as *chasedim* which means "loved of God." Simply put: "Better-than-you." These Pharisees had been around as a group for over a century when Jesus was born. You could find a Pharisee almost anywhere in Israel.

Pharisees wore distinctive clothing (as seen in the above picture, taken from Mel Gibson's film, *The Passion of the Christ*).

1 The significant role of the Pharisees in the lives of Jesus and Paul requires we give some  
2 attention to sect - and why they were “the way they were.” There are several key  
3 elements to this group that mark them well:  
4

### 5 Legalism

6  
7 While somewhat apparent in the early life of the Jews prior to the last Babylonian  
8 invasion in 586 B.C., this aspect of legalism really became prevalent after. The  
9 Babylonians destroyed the Great Temple, built by King Solomon 400 years earlier, and  
10 sacrifices had stopped. The synagogue became the main place of worship and in some  
11 cases civil life. The Pharisees studied the Torah Law of Moses and added much to it,  
12 which became dominant in Jewish thought. While THE SCRIBES were the “experts” in  
13 interpreting Scripture, the Pharisees made it their business to implement it. (This is a  
14 reason why we often see the two groups linked together in Scripture, that is, “the Scribes  
15 and Pharisees.” More about the Scribes a bit later.  
16

17 How did one qualify to be labeled a Pharisee? Strict adherence to the Law - oral or  
18 written. Three factors contributed to this:  
19

### 20 Nationalism

21  
22 Because Jews were so persecuted on so many fronts, nationalism drew them together.  
23 Between the fall of Babylon and the birth of Jesus came along a Greek named Antiochus  
24 Epiphanes (175-164 control). *I recommend you read James Michener’s classic book,*  
25 *The Source, to gain at least a beginning of the persecution wrought by this evil, evil man!*  
26

27 Antiochus did everything in his power to Hellenize the Jews (make them Greek in culture,  
28 religion and language). The havoc he played was unspeakable. This gave the Pharisees  
29 a lot of support among the citizens as they began to develop a national and religious  
30 awareness which changed the nation for a long time.  
31

### 32 Religion

33  
34 The nationalism led to a much more strict religion among the Jews than before, perhaps  
35 not so much for the sake of their souls, but for the sake of their distinctive belief system  
36 (in the opinion of this teacher). Any secularization of Moses’ decrees was met with the  
37 most strict obstructionism, including force. Even their fellow Jew was not exempt from  
38 a death decree for religious violations if so convicted (and okayed by the Romans).  
39

40 On the heels of the Babylonian invasion and return to the Land, the Jews had a new

1 nemesis - the Samaritans. John 4:9 **Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him,**  
2 **How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria?**  
3 **for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.** Inter-marriage was a violation,  
4 for example. So more and more the Jews in Jesus' day became a more closely organized  
5 closed group, pledging themselves to obey all the tenets of their religious traditions.  
6

7 Examples of their extreme beliefs:

- 8 ✓ They were sticklers for ceremonial baths and outward purity
- 9 ✓ They stayed separate often from their own fellow Jews (better than you!)
- 10 ✓ Paid tithes on everything, even after the Temple and Roman taxation
- 11 ✓ They would not touch any dead thing, human or animal
- 12 ✓ Would not associate with anyone who had been defiled through sickness
- 13 ✓ They despised those they considered inferior
- 14 ✓ They believed they were the only spokesmen for God
- 15 ✓ They were strong believers in predestination

16  
17 So it is easy to understand why they hated Jesus and His teachings. Jesus objected to  
18 them strenuously:

19  
20 He called them a "generation of vipers" and condemned their lack of repentance  
21 (Matthew 3:7) **But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his**  
22 **baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee**  
23 **from the wrath to come?** In Matthew 23, Jesus really rebuked them for their self-  
24 righteousness.  
25

26 Small wonder then that the Pharisees were out to get Jesus. But those Pharisees were not  
27 acting alone.  
28

## 29 SADDUCCEES

30  
31 The origin of this sect is not clear, so I won't go into it in any detail. But their beliefs  
32 are pretty well understood and it's easy to see why they didn't like Jesus.  
33

- 34 ✓ While the Pharisees had innumerable oral laws, the Sadducees did not; they held  
35 only to the written ones. They said the Pharisees wanted observance to anything  
36 the Pharisees could come up with and it was "binding and unnecessary." They  
37 claimed (and it was true) that the Pharisees believed their oral traditions were just  
38 as binding as the laws of Moses.
- 39 ✓ The Sadducees did not believe in life after death and thus did not believe in the  
40 resurrection of Jesus. The historian Josephus observed, "The doctrine of the

1 Sadducees is that the soul dies with the body.”

2 ✓ The Sadducees did not believe in angels and spirits. One writer has observed: A  
3 number of factors may have been responsible for this: Their general indifference  
4 to religion, their rationalistic temper, and the wild extravagances of the angelology  
5 and demonology of the Pharisees.

6 ✓ The Sadducees did not believe in predestination. They threw aside all ideas of  
7 divine influence in the world. They believed that all our actions are due to our  
8 own personal conclusions about life and the decisions we make.  
9

10 After the birth of the Church (Acts 2) the Sadducees were active against this amazing  
11 action of the Holy Spirit. Along with the consent of the priests, Peter and John were  
12 thrown into prison. According to Josephus, the Sadducees were responsible for the  
13 death of James, the half-brother of our Lord. With the destruction of Jerusalem in 70  
14 A.D., this sect disappeared.

## 16 THE HERODIANS

17  
18 During the earthly life of Jesus Christ, there were groups as already noted who held  
19 positions of power and authority of people in Israel. The Herodians held political clout.  
20 This group apparently supported the current king, Herod Antipas, the Roman Empire’s  
21 ruler over much of the land of the Jews from 4 B.C. (When Herod the Great died) to A.D.  
22 39. This pretty well covers the earthly life span of Jesus.  
23

24 The Herodians favored submission to Herod - and therefore to Rome. This support of  
25 Herod incurred the wrath of the Pharisees. Those two groups agreed on almost nothing –  
26 except opposing Jesus. Herod himself wanted Jesus dead: Luke 13:31 **The same day**  
27 **there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, Get thee out, and depart**  
28 **hence: for Herod will kill thee.** That verse shows how diabolical the Pharisees were, to  
29 His face warning Jesus, but behind His back trying to kill Him. John 11:53 **Then**  
30 **from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death.**  
31

32 Jesus warned His followers against both the Herodians and the Pharisees: Mark 8:15  
33 **And he charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and**  
34 **of the leaven of Herod.** “Yeast” in this context was the false teaching of these  
35 adversarial groups.  
36

## 37 THE ZEALOTS

38  
39 Strange as it may seem, one of Jesus’ first twelve followers, an apostle, was a Zealot.  
40 Acts 1:13 **And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where**

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30



The magnificent Mount Arbel, overlooking Galilee and the Sea of Galilee. The view from here is absolutely breathtaking. On a clear day, one can even see the 10,000 ft snow-coveded Mount Hermon, the mountain that separates Lebanon, Israel and Syria. A bit beyond the curve of the water, one finds Capernaum, the home of Peter and Jesus (for a while).

**abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes (the zealot), and Judas the brother of James.**

The picture above is of Mount Arbel. Many of the Zealots had once held escape caves on this mountain, but were burnt to death by Herod’s men who mounted the cliff on scaffolding.

31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38

One historian wrote, “The Zealots have an inviolable attachment to liberty, and say that God is to be their only Ruler and Lord.” (Antiquities 18.1.6)

It can be at least partially laid to the feet of this group that the great Jewish Revolt began in 66 A.D., which led to the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. A remnant of the Zealots fled Jerusalem when it was aflame and fled to Masada. Because of their often-violent tactics, the Zealots have been called some of the world’s first freedom-fighters. They

1 opposed Jesus' message of peace, love and grace.

## 3 THE PRIESTHOOD

4  
5 We hear so often of "separation of church and state." A study of the U.S. Constitution  
6 reveals an altogether different definition of this than today's opponents of Christianity  
7 propose. The majority of our founding fathers were at the least Deists and at best true  
8 Bible believers.

9  
10 But in Jesus' day there was no separation at all between church and state. The priests  
11 "called the shots" in about every public issue. They were not only rulers, they were  
12 judges. The office of priest was more political than religious. Most of the priests were  
13 "in Rome's back pocket."

14  
15 John 11:45-48

16 **Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus**  
17 **did, believed on him. [46] But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and**  
18 **told them what things Jesus had done.**

19 **[47] Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What**  
20 **do we? for this man doeth many miracles. [48] If we let him thus alone, all men will**  
21 **believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and**  
22 **nation.**

23  
24 John 19:15, 16

25 **But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto**  
26 **them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but**  
27 **Caesar. [16] Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they**  
28 **took Jesus, and led him away.**

29  
30 How telling is verse 15: Men who were supposed to be God's men cried out, "No,  
31 Caesar is our King!" There are historical records that reveal the priests authorized a  
32 daily sacrifice for Caesar (in this case, it was Tiberius) in the Temple itself.

33  
34 These priests lived very well. I often take our pilgrims to Israel through the ruins of one  
35 of those homes where we find mosaic floors, dining rooms with elaborate, painted and  
36 carved stucco wall decorations, carved stone tabletops and other elegant furnishings.  
37 How did they support such lavish living? Every Jew was required to pay a temple tax -  
38 along with all the other heavy taxation. The people of the land carried a financial  
39 burden they could scarcely bear - or tolerate. The land was a lighted fuse, about to hit  
40 the explosives!

1 For certain the priests opposed Jesus. They were jealous of His popularity, to be sure,  
2 but the underlying reason for their enmity was fear. When a new king came to power,  
3 he would set his version of the priesthood in place. Jesus' popularity spawned talk about  
4 town that He would be a great king! If that should happen, the priests feared they would  
5 be out of a job - or worse. In their opinion, the priests believed that Jesus was inviting  
6 the wrath of Rome.

7

They did not understand that Jesus' Kingdom was not of this world, and His  
priesthood was not according to flesh and blood.

8 **WAYS THESE GROUPS OPPOSED JESUS THEN**  
9 **WITH REMINDERS OF HOW HIS OPPONENTS WITHSTAND HIM NOW**

10  
11 1. They Opposed His Values Luke 6:2

12 **And certain of the Pharisees said unto them, Why do ye that which is not lawful to**  
13 **do on the sabbath days?**

14  
15 The enemies tried to undermine Jesus and His teachings by publicly criticizing them.  
16 They used intimidation, attempting to make His followers feel like second-class citizens.

17  
18 Today, mockery and sarcasm are used by "would-be late night TV comedians" to  
19 downgrade "people of the Book," the Bible. Probably most of Hollywood (not all) try to  
20 downgrade Christianity by making believers in Jesus look like dunces in their poorly-  
21 written sagas. Alleged "award shows" take potshots at verities we followers of Jesus  
22 hold dear.

23  
24 Their efforts won't work in the long run because Christians will not be intimidated. We  
25 will not cheapen our cherished beliefs by succumbing to their pot-shots.

26  
27 2. Jesus' opponents wanted Him gone – out of the way! Mark 3:6

28 **And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians**  
29 **against him, how they might destroy him.**

30  
31 When I was a media newsman, many years ago (many!!), I wrote for the Associated Press  
32 as a "stringer," as well as three newscasts a day for radio and television. Working  
33 alongside me was a dear man (Karl Bates) who worked with Eric Sevareid on the then-  
34 famous Blue Network in Washington (during the 40s through 60s). He taught me a lot  
35 of tricks of the trade. On slow news days, we would take an interesting story and add



1 color sidebars – not to change the reality or intent of the story, but to add interest or  
2 additional verifiable information to it. The process was called “*manufacturing news.*”  
3 Only then it was legitimate. Today....it often isn’t. Networks manufacture non-stories  
4 all the time, or attempt to make mountains out of molehills. Anyone who has ever  
5 worked in the industry can spot this immediately. If the story is legitimately enhanced,  
6 fine. If it isn’t, it really is “fake news.”  
7

8 It seems every network has “a dog in the hunt” so to speak, a point of view. All too often  
9 the newscasters make themselves the story, rather than just reporting the story. This is  
10 fertile ground for would-be politicians, especially those wanting to make a quick name for  
11 themselves. One of the results of this is the “tossing around” of Christianity or Christ  
12 Himself. Some quite famous national names have made a travesty of our Lord and His  
13 message, which, sadly, influences many ill-informed, poorly-read or inadequately trained  
14 of today’s public. This is only one of the ways Satan has “set up” a very gullible public  
15 to turn away from Jesus Christ.  
16

17 3. Some opponents of Jesus attempt to use His own words against Him, by quoting and  
18 twisting Scripture.  
19

20 Luke 6:3-5

21 **And Jesus answering them said, Have ye not read so much as this, what David**  
22 **did, when himself was an hungred, and they which were with him; [4] How he went**  
23 **into the house of God, and did take and eat the shewbread, and gave also to them**  
24 **that were with him; which it is not lawful to eat but for the priests alone? [5] And he**  
25 **said unto them, That the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.**  
26

27 What a pungent response to the opponents: “Have you not read?” These priests were  
28 supposed to be professionals, helpers on folks’ way to God. But, as Jesus pointed out,  
29 they didn’t know the Scriptures themselves, nor the history of God’s people. That  
30 response from Jesus must have been like a sharp slap in the face to the priests.  
31

32 Here’s the scriptural background for that story: 1 Samuel 21:1-6

33 **Then came David to Nob to Ahimelech the priest: and Ahimelech was afraid at**  
34 **the meeting of David, and said unto him, Why art thou alone, and no man with thee?**  
35 **[2] And David said unto Ahimelech the priest, The king hath commanded me a**  
36 **business, and hath said unto me, Let no man know any thing of the business**  
37 **whereabout I send thee, and what I have commanded thee: and I have appointed my**  
38 **servants to such and such a place. [3] Now therefore what is under thine hand? give**  
39 **me five loaves of bread in mine hand, or what there is present. [4] And the priest**  
40 **answered David, and said, There is no common bread under mine hand, but there is**

1 **hallowed bread; if the young men have kept themselves at least from women. [5]**  
2 **And David answered the priest, and said unto him, Of a truth women have been**  
3 **kept from us about these three days, since I came out, and the vessels of the young**  
4 **men are holy, and the bread is in a manner common, yea, though it were sanctified**  
5 **this day in the vessel. [6] So the priest gave him hallowed bread: for there was no**  
6 **bread there but the shewbread, that was taken from before the Lord, to put hot**  
7 **bread in the day when it was taken away.** The high priest gave this consecrated bread  
8 to David and his men to eat. He understood that their physical need at that moment  
9 outweighed ceremonial regulations. So Jesus was saying to these critics, “If you  
10 condemn Me...you must also condemn David!”

11  
12 On another occasion, Jesus and His men were taking a Sabbath afternoon stroll and  
13 paused to eat grain in a farmer’s field. That was acceptable, of course, except – this was  
14 Sabbath. Deut. 23:25 **When thou comest into the standing corn of thy neighbour,**  
15 **then thou mayest pluck the ears with thine hand; but thou shalt not move a sickle**  
16 **unto thy neighbour’s standing corn.** So Scripture allowed taking an ear of corn by  
17 hand, but not with a blade. But...the disciples did this on SABBATH. Jesus made it  
18 very clear that HE was the LORD OF THE SABBATH!

19  
20 Mark reported on one occasion that, when rebuked by the Master, “**...they remained**  
21 **silent.**” (Mark 3:4) The critics of Jesus could not withstand the power of Jesus nor the  
22 Words of Jesus.

23  
24 Jesus never backed down. He was never intimidated. Nor should we be! Opposition  
25 to Christ is very real and it’s a growing evil. Jesus warned us of this: John 15:20  
26 **Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If**  
27 **they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying,**  
28 **they will keep yours also.** Never let anyone deter you from fulfilling God’s purposes  
29 in your life. Complete your mission, your call.

30  
31  
32 NEXT WEEK: Christ’s Constitution Of His Kingdom  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40