

## The Opposition

### In the Gospel of Luke

### Acts

### Letters

The Pharisees, along with the lawyers, followed Jesus throughout His preaching ministry. See the following Scriptures: Luke 5:21, 33; 6:2, 7; 7:30, 36ff; 10:25ff; 11:14ff, 37, 53; 12:1; 14:1; 15:2; 16:14; 17:20; 19:39.

Jesus encountered the Sadducees when He attended the festivals in Jerusalem. The chief priest was a Sadducee. John 7:32; 11:47; 18:13.

The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection; however, they owned the high priest office and the tithes; therefore, they wanted to kill Jesus because they were losing control of the people. See His last encounters: Luke 20:1, 27; 20:46; 22:1ff.

Some observations from the foregoing:

12:1. Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees. See 20:46.

They charged Jesus with blasphemy and with casting out demons by Beelzebub.

See 5:21; 11:15.

6:2. The Pharisees were extremist, especially about the Sabbath day and physical contact with sinners. See 15:2.

Jesus said, "They rejected God's purpose for themselves." They had not humbled themselves to John's baptism. Luke 7:30.

When Jesus became king, He continued His strategy to "seek and save the lost." Luke 19:10.

He began in Jerusalem with the mass of Jews who came for the Pentecost celebration. Acts 2:1-13.

Luke recorded Jesus' evangelism program at Jerusalem in Acts chapters 1-6.

Please note these points:

The Jews who came to celebrate Pentecost were looking for the Messiah (Christ). The Messiah was Jesus of Nazareth. 4:10.

Peter said, "This man was handed over to you by God's set purposes and fore knowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put Him to death by nailing Him to a tree." 2:23. See 3:13-15.

The Roman Gentiles were some of these wicked men.

Peter chided, "Now, brothers, I know you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders." 3:17.

**Jesus' opposition to His "gospel meeting" in Jerusalem were the same Jewish leaders who pressured Pilate to nail Jesus to the cross.** See 4:5-7; 5:27-34.

Note the introduction of a Pharisee named Gamaliel and one of his disciples, a young man named Saul. 5:34; 7:58; 22:3-5.

After the Sanhedrin court (Sadducees and Pharisees) and the high priest (Sadducees) killed Stephen, the Pharisees started a great persecution of the church.

"You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you?" Gal. 3:1.

This sounds like the strategy of the Pharisees.

(Their strategy was to get in among their intended victims and divide them).

Jesus kept the Pharisees on the defensive while on earth. See Luke 14:1-4.

Some Jews had "cut in on you (The church) and kept you from obeying the truth." Gal. 5:7.

Paul asked, "Does God give you His Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard?" Galatians 3:5.

Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be no value to you at all." Gal. 5:2. Also see 5:12; 6:12, 13.

"For you brothers, became imitators of God's churches in Judea, which are in Christ Jesus: You suffered from your countrymen the same things those churches suffered from the Jews, ..." I Thess. 2:14.

"For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ." II Cor. 11:13.

In the church Jesus builds - all people share the same status. All are justified sinners (Rom. 5:18).

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16:14. They loved money and the prominent seats. See 14:1ff.

Jesus carefully detailed His paradigm of the motives and character of the Pharisees and lawyers in 11:37-52.

The Pharisees were mean, just plain mean. It is a trait of self-righteous people. See 11:53, 54.

Saul was a ringleader. 8:1-3; 23:6.

The Jewish leaders in Jerusalem continuously tried to kill Saul/Paul. See 9:23-30; 21:10-25:9.

King Herod Agrippa I had James, the apostle, killed and when He saw it pleased the Jews he tried to kill Peter. Therefore, Rome joined the Jews in opposition to Jesus' evangelism of both Jews and Gentiles. 12:1-11.

The first sign of the "yeast of the Pharisees" may be seen in the church in Jerusalem when Peter preached the gospel to the household of Cornelius, who were Gentiles. See 11:2; 21:20, 21; 15:5. Also see Luke 12:1.

Paul and Barnabas may have encountered jealous Pharisees at Pisidian Antioch, Iconium and Lystra. 13:44, 45; 14:2-4, 19.

Paul's past fellow colleagues served to fulfill Jesus' statement in 9:16 and brought Paul to conclude, "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God." 14:22. See 15:24-27.

Thessalonica, Berea, Corinth and Ephesus: More trouble from jealous Jews in these places. 17:5, 13; 18:6, 15; 19:9. These Jews had the characteristics of the Pharisees who sought out Jesus.

**The situation in Jerusalem when Paul arrived with the collection for the saints.** "You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews have believed, and all of them are zealous for the law." 21:20.

Paul was standing before the same Sanhedrin court where Luke first introduced him at Stephen's martyrdom, but on the opposite side of the bar. 22:30; 24:1; 25:8.

"This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus." Eph. 3:6.

"Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh." Phil. 3:2.

"Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ." Col. 2:16, 17.

See Col. 2:11, 13, 21.

"They want to be teachers of the law but, they don't know what they are talking about or what they confidently affirm." We know the law is good if it is used properly. We also know that law is made for the lawless. I Timothy 1:7-11.

Therefore, rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in faith and pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the commands of those who reject the truth. Titus 1:10-16.

"Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings. It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace, not by ceremonial foods, which are of no value to those who eat them. We have an altar from which those who minister at the tabernacle have no right to eat." Hebrews 13:9, 10.

## Questions for Discussion

Please review the lesson, **How to Read a Narrative**, Part I, Lesson Three. A document without a protagonist and an antagonist is not a story. Luke's two documents engage two very powerful figures to fulfill these roles. In God's kingdom we have Jesus Christ and in the other kingdom there is Satan. In Luke's narrative in Acts both of these leaders use people to serve their cause. In order to enjoy the story we need to clearly identify who is serving who.

### A. The Gospel of Luke.

1. Who was Jesus' main opposition to His ministry while on earth?
2. Jesus defined them for us in Luke 11:37-54. Please read this and write a summary paragraph about the motives of Jesus' opposition.
3. Please read Luke 7:29, 30. What did the Pharisees reject? How might this have been their first step to their degradation?
4. In what sense were they "extremists?"
5. What was the power position the Sadducees held in Israel?
6. How did they serve Satan in the latter part of Jesus' evangelism ministry?

### B. Jesus' opposition in Acts.

1. How did Satan's team inadvertently serve God's set purpose?
2. How did Satan use some members of both the Pharisee and Sadducee parties to oppose Jesus' first great evangelism effort after He became king?
3. How did two of the fourteen apostles work for Jesus' opposition at one time or another?
4. Name the person who worked with the same zeal for the protagonist and the antagonist during the time he was on their team. Who was the hunter who became the hunted by his old colleagues?
5. When the Gentiles were brought into Christ, what position did the Pharisees take at the Jerusalem meeting?
6. In our next lesson we will travel with Paul and Barnabas as they carried out Jesus evangelism tour of Asia. Please review their

encounter as they went to the Jew first in the cities where they found a synagogue. List some of the attitudes of the Jews who rejected their preaching that were similar to Jesus' summary description of the Pharisees.

### C. The Pharisees attacked the young churches.

1. Did the troublesome Jews work for the opposition from inside or outside the churches in Galatia?
2. What was the opposition's "issue of the hour" in Galatia?
3. From Paul's letter to the Thessalonians identify who persecuted the Christians in Israel?
4. Describe the method Satan used in corporation with some Pharisees to disrupt the church in Corinth.
5. Paul was particularly harsh with the Jewish opposition in His letter from prison to the church in Philippi. What kind of animal did he use to reinforce his warning to the church about some Jews?