

● Lesson 8

MANY ROADS, ONE WAY

Roads take us from one place to another, and sometimes we need a map to guide us so that we stay on the right road. God gave His people the “road map” of His Word in the Old Testament that would ultimately lead to faith in Jesus as the only Savior from sin. But over time, various groups or sects strayed from His Word and were no longer following the right “road.” Jesus says in John 14:6 that there is only one way to the Father. That one way is Jesus. Because these groups had strayed from this road, many opposed and even rejected Jesus the true Savior.

Several Jewish **religious** groups that strayed from God’s road are identified in Scripture. Jesus often interacted with these groups.

PHARISEES

The Road of Outward Appearances

Have you ever heard of a Pharisee? If someone calls you a “Pharisee,” it may mean you are being arrogant and **hypocritical**. At the time of Jesus, the Pharisees were a religious group who wanted to uphold the **Mosaic Law** through rituals or actions done according to religious law or social custom. They obeyed the outward details of the law rather than being concerned about the attitude of their hearts.

For example, the Pharisees thought they had kept the Fifth Commandment because they had never murdered anyone, but Jesus taught that hating someone or being angry at them was the same as murder (Matthew 5:21-22).



The Pharisees often argued about trivial details of the law. They argued about how far you could walk on the Sabbath day before it was considered work. They also wondered whether or not it was lawful to eat an egg that had been laid on the Sabbath.

1. Why did the Pharisees do all these things or follow these rituals? Matthew 23:5

Memory Verse

Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.”

John 14:6

The name “Pharisee” means “those who separate themselves.” While God did call His people to live a life of separation, the Pharisees took this to extremes by practicing a “separation” which would reflect a greater “godliness” than the other Jewish people around them.

For instance, the Pharisee mentioned in Luke 18:11-12 compared himself to others and boasted about fasting twice a week. God’s law prescribed only one day of fasting in the year on the Day of Atonement (see Leviticus 16:29-31). Many Pharisees **tithed** every last thing they acquired, including even the small flavoring herbs such as mint and rue. However, they neglected the important things like justice and love of God (see Luke 11:42).

The Pharisees added to the Law hundreds of rules and traditions. Trying to follow these rules became a heavy burden for the Jewish people.

Because Jesus confronted their flawed thinking and self-righteous practices, the Pharisees turned against Him and plotted to kill Him. However, some Pharisees responded positively to Jesus’ teaching. Nicodemus came to Jesus in John 3:1 and also stood in defense of Jesus when others were trying to entrap Him (John 7:50-51).

2. What words did Jesus use to describe the Pharisees in Matthew 23?

- v. 14 _____
- v. 16 _____
- v. 17 _____
- v. 33 _____

SADDUCEES

The Road of the Rich

The Sadducees were a small group of wealthy priests and influential upper-class people. Due to earlier Greek influences, they had adopted some Greek culture and customs. Because of their wealth and social position, few of the common people supported them.

The Sadducees accepted the laws of the Old Testament but rejected the rules added by the Pharisees. Even though they represented only a small portion of the Jews, the Sadducees maintained a powerful position in the Jewish “supreme court” (the Sanhedrin).

Because they placed great emphasis on ceremonial worship, the Sadducees wanted to control the temple and **influence** the selection of the high priest. In order to accomplish this, they **allied** themselves to the ruling Jews and Romans. Being so closely connected with the temple activities, the Sadducees ceased to exist after the temple was destroyed in 70 A.D.

3. What did the Sadducees believe about the resurrection? Matthew 22:23 _____

HERODIANS

The Road of Politics

The “Herods” were appointed by the Romans to rule

as kings. They were Edomites, descendants of Esau. The Herodians, a Jewish religious group, were political supporters of the Herods. They saw Jesus as a threat to their political power. Remember King Herod’s response when Jesus was born? Herod ordered the murder of all babies under two years of age in Bethlehem because he saw the newborn king as a threat to his throne.

The Herodians, along with the Pharisees, were known **adversaries** of Jesus. Both groups also objected to paying taxes to Rome.

4. What did Jesus do that caused the Herodians and Pharisees to **conspire** together against Him? Mark 3:2-6

Fast Fact: Phylactery



- A leather box closed with a flap and bound to a person with a leather band. One side was marked with the Hebrew letter *shin*, the first letter of and an abbreviation for the divine name *Shaddai* meaning “the Almighty.”
- The box contained strips of parchment inscribed with four Scripture texts: Exodus 13:1-10, Exodus 13:11-16, Deuteronomy 6:4-9, and Deuteronomy 11:13-21.
- Strict Jews such as the Pharisees took the words of Deuteronomy literally and wore them on the inside of the left arm or in the center of the forehead.
- Phylacteries are still worn today by males over age 13 among orthodox Jews who adhere to a strict interpretation of Jewish law.

29 A.D.

33 A.D.

Start of Jesus’ public ministry

Death and resurrection

ZEALOTS

The Road of Activism

The Zealots were a group of people in Jesus' day who objected to the Roman domination of their country. They used violence and assassination in their hatred of the Romans, believing that no foreign power had the right to rule their God-given land. Because they were frequently armed with daggers, they became known by the Romans as "dagger men."

The Zealots believed that God would send a political ruler who would drive the Romans from their land and free His people from Roman domination. Many common Jews were influenced by these ideas and were convinced Jesus was the ruler they were waiting for.

5. What disciple of Jesus had been a Zealot?

Luke 6:15 _____

The Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, and Zealots were some of the sects that strayed off the main road and away from the truth that Jesus is the Savior. These sects had led people away from the truth of God's Word. Jesus taught in John 14:6 that He is the only way to the Father.

Matthew 7:13-14 describes a gate that is wide and a way that is broad as well as a gate that is small and a way that is narrow.

6. Where does the wide way lead? v.13

Catechism Corner

1. Can we be saved through the Law? (Q. 15)

No; since the fall in sin, no man can perfectly keep the Law.

2. Of what benefit, then, is the Law? (Q. 16)

- *It points out to us our sins and the wrath of God toward sin.*
- *It makes us anxious to seek Christ.*
- *It points out to the believer what fruits his faith must bear.*

3. Read Romans 3:23 and James 2:10.

a. Why can't I get to heaven by being good (obeying the Law)? _____

b. If I can't get to heaven by being good, how do I get there? (John 3:16) _____

7. Where does the narrow way lead? v.14

Jesus warned that false teachers would continue to come (Matthew 7:15 ff) and lure people away from the narrow way of the truth.

8. How do we know what are false teachings and what are true teachings? II Timothy 3:12-15

9. How will God guide us and keep us on the narrow road of truth? Psalm 119:105

Word Works 2

Find your way through the letter maze by connecting all the letters except Z, X, and B. Start with the letter J in the first column, ending with the letter E at the bottom. You may move in any direction. Write the connected letters on the lines below.

B	S	U	Z	X	B	B	Z	U	X
E	Z	S	B	X	Z	T	R	T	X
J	B	X	S	Z	E	Z	B	H	X
X	Z	A	B	B	H	T	Z	X	A
B	I	X	B	Z	X	Y	B	N	X
D	Z	B	H	E	A	X	D	X	B
I	B	T	Z	W	X	B	T	Z	X
X	A	M	B	Z	X	B	H	L	Z
X	X	X	B	X	Z	Z	E	I	X
Z	Z	B	X	Z	B	E	F	X	Z

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