



# Stuff They Didn't Teach Me In Sunday School



## Episode 103 - The Movers and Shakers

(Period between the Old Testament and New Testament)

In New Testament times, five groups among the Jews were the movers and shakers of society: the Pharisees, scribes, Sadducees, Essenes and the Zealots. In the coming weeks we will see Jesus clash with several of these groups, especially the scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees.

**Scribes:** These men copied the Old Testament Scriptures by hand. They carefully counted the letters, words and lines on each page to verify the accuracy of their copies. Through their meticulous work they became intimately familiar with the Scriptures and were looked upon as experts in interpreting God's Word. Unfortunately their interpretation was flawed because they failed to realize the entire Old Testament was pointing to God's Son, who would come to save the world. Instead, they interpreted the Old Testament as a series of laws through which people could satisfy God's righteous demands. Their interpretations became the traditions that governed how the Jews should live their lives.

- What makes someone an expert in interpreting the Bible?
- If we were to approach the Bible as if it were a book of rules for life, how would that affect our view of who God is and how He feels toward us?
- Briefly discuss a few of the Old Testament stories we have discussed in previous sessions (some examples are Samson, David and Goliath, Daniel and the lion's den). How could a Sunday school teacher unintentionally give children the impression these stories are only to show us how we should live our lives?
- Discuss how these stories actually show us God helping us against our enemies.
- Why would the scribes' viewpoint naturally lead to clashes with Jesus?

**Pharisees:** The Pharisees were lay people who sought to obey the traditions and laws of the scribes and teachers. In their zeal to live the kind of life they thought God wanted, they weren't above flaunting their holiness before the people. That attitude often resulted in them being hypocritical and judgmental toward others.

- What is the danger in comparing ourselves to others or judging those who live differently than we do?
- What false confidence can this self-centered viewpoint give?
- How does being self-absorbed turn our worship of God into empty ritual?
- What can we do to avoid falling into that trap?
- Why do you think Jesus clashed so strongly against the Pharisees?
- Why do you think they pushed back so hard against Him?

**Sadducees:** The powerful ruling class among the Jews was composed largely of Sadducees. They rejected the traditions of the Pharisees, particularly ridiculing the idea of a physical resurrection, as well as the existence of angels. As rulers, they maintained their power by compromising between the Roman authorities and the sentiments of their Jewish population.

- Describe a situation where you became so engrossed in earthly matters you forgot heavenly, eternal things. What strains and struggles did that bring?
- Why would Jesus have a problem with leaders who denied the resurrection of the body?
- Why would you expect the Sadducees to see Jesus as a dangerous man?

In the coming weeks as we see Jesus Christ carry on His ministry and teaching the people of God's undeserved love and forgiveness, we will see just how much opposition He stirs up among these movers and shakers of His day.