

Who Were the Sadducees?

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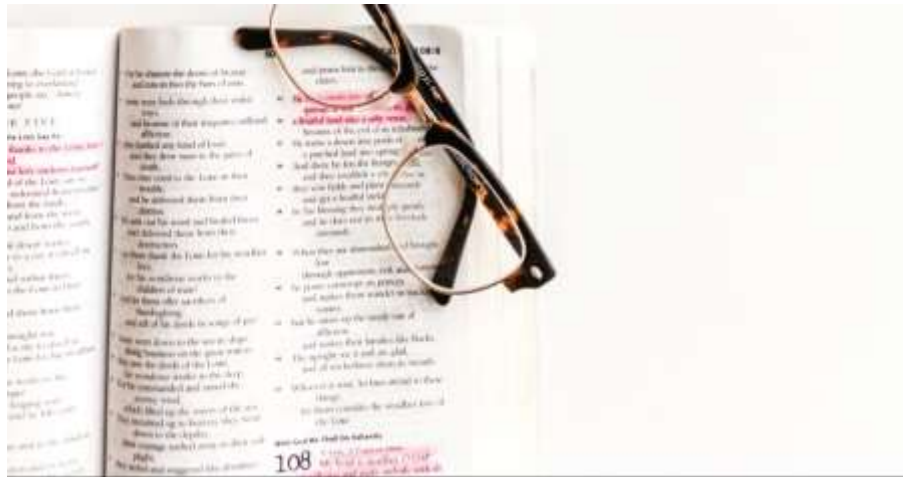


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The Sadducees are mentioned throughout the Gospels and had noteworthy interactions with Jesus during his earthly life and ministry. The Sadducees often approached Jesus with the intent to question him, trick him into contradicting the Scriptures, and eventually, they began to fear him and likely helped plot his death.

“But when [John] saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, ‘You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?’” ([Matthew 3:7](#)).

The person and mission of Jesus and the Sadducees were at odds almost immediately, even as John the Baptist was paving the way for Jesus to begin his ministry. In the Gospels, the Sadducees are portrayed as opposed to Jesus and feared that he would overthrow them in power. We also find other references to the Sadducees in the New Testament, specifically in the Book of Acts when they interacted with the apostles.

“But the high priest rose up, and all who were with him (that is, the party of the Sadducees), and filled with jealousy they arrested the apostles and put them in the public prison” ([Acts 5:17-18](#)).

Just as they resisted Jesus, they opposed the apostles too, who were sent out to preach the Gospel to all nations. Scripture places the Sadducees at immense odds with the Good News of Jesus Christ. Sadducees were Jewish, religious, wealthy, and held power. Many were high priests or noblemen. It is likely that along with the Pharisees and elders they plotted to have Jesus arrested and sentenced to death.

Who Were the Sadducees?

The Sadducees during the time Jesus walked this earth were religious Jews who were high priests and nobles. Sadducees were wealthy, influential, and powerful. They had very distinct beliefs. We find in Matthew's Gospel this brief note about the beliefs of the Sadducees.

"That same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to [Jesus] with a question" ([Matthew 22:23](#)).

The Sadducees did not believe in any Scripture beyond the Torah, which consists of the first five books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. They believed only the laws found in the Torah were to be followed. Another passage found in Scripture provides additional information about what the Sadducees believed.

"The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, and that there are neither angels nor spirits, but the Pharisees believe all these things" ([Acts 23:8](#)).

From the New Testament, we also learn that the Sadducees did not believe in life after death and they denied the existence of supernatural spirits or demonic forces. It is obvious that their beliefs did not align with what Jesus preached and taught, and it made sense that they had conflict with Jesus and tried to discredit him.

What Is the Difference between Sadducees and Pharisees?

Both the Sadducees and the Pharisees would have described themselves as religious Jews. However, the commonalities end there. They had very different beliefs when it came to their religious understandings and roles in society. The Pharisees were primarily Jewish leaders who distinguished themselves by strict adherence to the written and oral Jewish laws. They were described as hypocritical and self-righteous in the Gospels.

Unlike the Sadducees, Pharisees believed in angels and demons and affirmed the supernatural elements of [faith](#). The Pharisees believed in resurrection after death and recognized Jewish Scriptures beyond the Torah as relevant to follow, such as the law and prophets.

The Pharisees were likely not a large and formal of a group like the Sadducees, nor did they have as much power and influence as the Sadducees. The Pharisees were an unorganized group of more common people, with less wealth and power than what the Sadducees had. Though the Pharisees and the Sadducees differed from one another and were usually in conflict with each other, they found Jesus to be a common threat.

Together they resisted him and sought to disgrace him (see [Matthew 16:1](#)).



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What Did the Sadducees Do in the Bible?

The Sadducees are mentioned throughout the Gospels and in parts of the New Testament. They were a group that adhered strictly to the laws found in the Torah. They consisted of elite and wealthy folks that were high priests, chief priests, and merchants. The Sadducees were devoted to the temple and at odds with the Pharisees, Jesus, and the apostles. They were also part of the Sanhedrin.

“And the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and to test him they asked him to show them a sign from [heaven](#)” ([Matthew 16:1](#)).

Along with the Pharisees, the Sadducees are often recorded in the Gospels as approaching Jesus with the intent to trick him or discredit him. Later, the Sadducees also opposed the ministry of the apostles who were tasked with going into all nations and sharing the Gospel message of Jesus Christ.

“The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people. They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people, proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. They seized Peter and John and, because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day” ([Acts 4:1-3](#)).

These are important accounts found in the New Testament that help us understand who the Sadducees were and how they perceived Jesus and the growth of Christianity immediately after Jesus’ death and resurrection.

What Happened to the Sadducees?

Very little is known about the Sadducees. There are no surviving writings from this group, nor is much written about them in historical documents. Given their dedication

to the temple, they are believed to have disappeared after the destruction of the second temple around 70 A.D.

Why Is it Important to Know about the Sadducees?

It helps to understand who the Sadducees are because they appear in the Gospels and interacted with Jesus and the apostles in intense ways. Jesus made it clear to his disciples that the Sadducees were spiritually dangerous.

“[Jesus said], ‘How is it that you fail to understand that I did not speak about bread? Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.’ Then they understood that he did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees” ([Matthew 16:11-12](#)).

If Jesus warned his followers about the teachings of the Sadducees, then it is important to know what they taught. What is known of the beliefs of the Sadducees certainly contradicts the teachings of Jesus and what is found throughout Scripture. For instance, the Sadducees denied an afterlife and angelic beings, but the scope of the Bible and Jesus’ teachings affirm these.

The Sadducees were a religious sect that existed when Jesus walked this earth. They were distinct from the Pharisees and also put themselves in opposition to Jesus’ ministry and eventually the Christian movement. Jesus encountered them during his ministry and even his disciples dealt with them as they began to spread the Gospel and preach Jesus’ resurrection.

Both Jesus and his disciples faced opposition from the Sadducees. This group had unique beliefs and roles in society that set them apart from the Pharisees and other Jewish sects at that time. Though they no longer exist today, it helps to understand who they were and what they believed to better comprehend their appearances in the New Testament.