

Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes

Characteristic	Pharisees	Sadducees	Essenes
Possible Origin of Name	(a) Hebrew word meaning “separate”; or (b) Hebrew word meaning “specifier”.	(a) Hebrew word <i>tsadiq</i> , meaning “holy”; or (b) the name “Zadok”, the Aaronic priest who anointed Solomon, which led to the Jewish desire that the High Priest be of the family of Zadok.	Possibly derived from an Aramaic word for “pious”.
Timeframe When Sect Appears	Around 150 - 140 BC during the Hasmonean dynasty.	Around 150 - 140 BC during the Hasmonean dynasty. (Same timeframe as Pharisees.)	Around 170 or 160 BC, founded by an enigmatic figure called the “Teacher of Righteousness”.
Role in Judaism	Pharisees were common people, but knowledgeable. Taught in the synagogues and interpreted the Torah and the oral traditions. Well-liked by the common people. Advocated for social justice. By the first century AD, Pharisees became mired in the minutia and letter of Mosaic Law, rather than its intent.	Sadducees advocated an ironclad link between Judaism and the temple. They oversee the sacrifices and maintenance of the temple. During most of the intertestamental period they make up the majority of the Sanhedrin. High Priest is usually a Sadducee.	Their isolationist lifestyle precluded an active role in then-contemporary Judaism. They very likely copied and preserved scrolls that were deemed scripture; as well as scrolls that defined the rules that governed their lifestyle and beliefs. Minimal intermingling with outsiders.
Beliefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Oral law and traditions were sacred along with the Torah. - Literal resurrection of the dead. - Immortality of the soul. - Reward and punishment after death. - Angels are real. - Temple was good; but sacredness could also be found in the home. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strict adherence to the Torah; oral teachings were noted but not sacred. - A person’s circumstances in this world are what that person has earned in the eyes of God. - The soul dies when the body dies; no afterlife. - No reward or punishment after death. - Angels do not exist. - No temple, no Judaism. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ritual purity. - Hierarchical system of angels. - The soul lives in a bodiless eternity and is temporarily entombed in a worldly body. - No animal sacrifices. - No accumulation of wealth. - No slavery. - With proper purification, God will help the Jews overthrow the pagans.
God’s Role & Free Will	Free will; but God knows the outcome and can opt to intercede.	Free will. God is in charge, but God does not have knowledge of the outcome.	Predestination.
Social Class	Common people.	Priests and aristocrats.	Unknown.
Attitude toward Hellenism	Selective; favored some practices, opposed others.	Favored.	Opposed.
Today	Today’s rabbis.	Vanished within 10 years of the destruction of the temple in 70 AD.	Vanished after the Jewish Revolt of 67 AD; but some Essene churches have started up since discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls.