

UNDERSTANDING THE ANIMOSITY BETWEEN JESUS AND THE PHARISEES

Introduction

One of the things that has to puzzle the student of the New Testament is the prominence of the Pharisees in the gospel accounts, for the Pharisees are nowhere evident in the Old Testament. The questions of who these people were, what they believed, and how they came about as a group, largely are left unanswered in the scriptures. However, the judicious use of other contemporary sources [such as the writings of Josephus and Philo, and those referred to as 1 Maccabees and 2 Maccabees] provides some insight into these issues and allows for intelligent speculation where hard facts might be absent. Through understanding the answers to these questions, the student of scripture can also better understand the nature of the conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees, why this conflict was inevitable, and why it took the course described in the gospel accounts. The historical context provided by the “source literature” referred to above broadens the student’s understanding of this conflict – mostly limited to actions in the gospel accounts – by providing the student with some insight into the self-image, and thus also of the motivation, of the Pharisees, as well as some insight into why Jesus was equally as critical of the Pharisees as they were of him.

John the Baptist fired the first volley in the disagreement, and – if he didn’t set the tone for it then, he certainly was consistent with the tone Jesus would take – when he called the Pharisees [along with the Sadducees] who had come for baptism a “brood of vipers” [Matthew 3.7], exhorted them to “bear fruit in keeping with repentance” and not to rely on their identity as a decedent of Abraham [Matthew 3.8-9], and not only warned them of Jesus’ pending arrival but also poked at them with his phrasing: “among you stands one whom you do not know” [John 1.26]. Thus John was not only confrontational toward the Pharisees, but also specifically attacked the source and validity of their righteousness and hinted that they were not in touch with God’s greater plan even as it unfolded before them, themes Jesus would take up with them later. It was to this man that Jesus would come to be baptized the following day, and this man who would then begin testifying that Jesus was “the Lamb of God” who “baptizes in the Holy Spirit” and “takes away the sin of the world” [Matthew 3.13-17; John 1.29-34], all issues that would trouble the Pharisees during Jesus’ ministry.

Over the course of the next three years, Jesus would himself have several recorded conversations with Pharisees. To them, Jesus frequently would appear blasphemous or sinful because of his different interpretation of scripture and righteousness. Jesus met with, ate with, and was touched by people the Pharisees viewed as unclean sinners [Mark 2.15-17; Luke 5.29-32; 7.36-50], he did not observe the cleansing rituals of the Pharisees [Luke 11.37-50; Matthew 15.1-20; Mark 7.1-23], he frequently exhibited a much different understanding about the Sabbath [Matthew 12.1-14; Mark 2.23-28; 3.1-6; Luke 6.1-11; 14.1-6; John 9.13-41], and he forgave sins and healed people in an astonishing way [Matthew 9.32-34; 12.22-27; Mark 3.20-30; Luke 5.17-26; 11.14:23].

Jesus’ view of the Pharisees was just as negative. Often he exposed them as being confused about the scriptures, sometimes by posing riddles [Matthew 22.34-23.36; Mark 12.28-40; Luke 20.39-47; John 3.1-21] or presenting parables which they could not comprehend [Matthew 21.28-22.14; Mark 12.1-12; Luke 20.9-19], sometimes by presenting them with an argument they could not counter [Matthew 19.3-9; 22.23-33; Mark 10.2-9; 12.18-27; Luke 20.27-38; John 7.53-8:20], sometimes by outright admonishing them for being obtuse [Matthew 16.1-4; Mark 8.11-13]. He also questioned their motives [Matthew 12.22-42; Mark 3.20-30; Luke 11.14-32], accused them of being legalistic [Matthew 15.1-20; Mark 7.1-23], and in various ways accused them of being self righteous or hypocritical [Matthew 5.20; 22.34-23.36; Mark 12.28-40; Luke 11.37-53; 16.1-15; 18.9-14; 20.39-47; John 9.13-41].

It wasn’t long into Jesus’ ministry that some Pharisees began to conspire with supporters of Herod, seeking a way to “destroy” Jesus [Mark 3.6]:

Jesus had provocatively healed a man with a withered hand in the synagogue in Capernaum on the Sabbath. To the local Pharisees, Jesus was in breach of various codes that they held to be fundamental to Judaism (Mk 2:6-10, 16-17, 24-27).

The Pharisees of Galilee, knowing the tetrarch's concern about a populist troublemaker like John the Baptist, had a ready-made point of appeal to the Herodians. Fundamental to a tetrarch's role as a "client" of the Romans was the keeping of the peace. A charismatic leader like Jesus could also easily be portrayed as a threat to local stability and therefore a challenge to Antipas's claims to be an effective ruler. Here the local Pharisees present a political face. Though they doubtless despised the ungodly Hellenistic court of the tetrarch in Tiberias, they were prepared to enter into a pact with his supporters to bring down the rabbi from Nazareth.¹

Eventually, of course, the various groups opposed to Jesus would succeed in accomplishing God's will in that matter. The goal of the rest of this paper is to use the contemporary literature to illuminate why this conflict developed.

The Historical Context and Self-Perspective of the Pharisees

"Data on the Pharisees is so sparse and difficult to evaluate that any historical reconstruction must remain incomplete and uncomfortably hypothetical."² Nevertheless, there are things we can discern from the contemporary literature. From the gospel accounts, we know the Pharisees were recognized religious leaders with influence among the masses, that they had a distinct set of beliefs and behaviorisms, and that they were a part of a complex web of political-social-economic influence during a volatile time in regional history.³

There are definite traces of the Pharisees back into the Hasmonaean period, with mention as far back as the rule of Jonathan Maccabees.⁴ They likely had their beginnings as part of the Hasidaean movement, which "was clearly already in existence at the time of Antiochus's reforms. In all probability, the Hasidaeans arose during the Ptolemaic era, perhaps going back even earlier into Persian times."⁵ "The name *Hasidaean* derives from the Aramaic *hase*, equivalent to the Hebrew *hasid*, 'pious.'"⁶ We know that the Hasidaean movement gained strength in response to atrocities by Antiochus IV.

This Seleucid leader plundered the temple,⁷ sent a tax collector who plundered Jerusalem and defiled the sanctuary,⁸ and tried to subvert the Jewish religion altogether.⁹ He appointed the High Priest Jason, who

¹ Paul Barnett, *Jesus & the Rise of Early Christianity: A History of New Testament Times* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 119.

² Anthony Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes, and Sadducees in Palestinian Society: A Sociological Approach* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; and Livonia, MI: Dove Booksellers, 2001), 277.

³ Saldarini, 283.

⁴ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Trans. William Whiston (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1992), Online: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?lookup=J.+AJ+toc>, accessed 05.24.05, 13.171.

⁵ Barnett, 52-53.

⁶ Barnett, 64 [endnote 17]; italics in original.

⁷ 1 Macc 1.21-23, in *New Revised Standard Version of the Bible with Apocrypha*, Gen. Ed. Bruce M. Metzger (Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., 1989), Online: <http://bible.crosswalk.com/History/BC/Apocrypha/ApocryphaBookList.html>, accessed 05.23.05.

⁸ 1 Macc 1.29-37.

had betrayed the existing High Priest [his brother Onias III], and who promoted Hellenization [even to the point of some priests neglecting their duties to seek Greek forms of prestige] and raided the temple treasury for Antiochus.¹⁰ Jason was later betrayed by Menelaus,¹¹ who after his appointment by Antiochus then guided him into the temple and allowed even greater plunder.¹² Some Jews chose to die rather than conform¹³ and others chose to fight in various ways.

Mattathias of Modein, a poor priest,¹⁴ refused to conform and sacrifice in the proscribed manner and started a fight of rebellion,¹⁵ which would eventually lead his descendants to political power [the Hasmonaean dynasty]. His descendants would restore the temple¹⁶ and fight various gentile groups, including the Idumaeans,¹⁷ from which Herod would spring. Mattathias considered his efforts to be against gentile rule, saying “Pay back the Gentiles in full and obey the commands of the law.”¹⁸

While Mattathias was leading a political revolt for religious reasons, there were others who were rebelling in ways that were more directly tied to their concept of the religion. For example, while Mattathias and his followers would fight on the Sabbath,¹⁹ most of the Hasidaeans would not.²⁰ They were identified as those who had withdrawn in an effort to remain pure,²¹ and differences about how to continue that policy later seem to have caused the primary breach between the Pharisees and the Essenes.²² Some Hasidaeans even joined the Maccabees, more intent on fighting off evil [at least on defense] than on obeying laws like the Sabbath,²³ and later accounts discuss Hasidaeans under Judas Maccabeus as those continuing the battle.²⁴

⁹ 2 Macc 6.1-11, in *New Revised Standard Version of the Bible with Apocrypha*, Gen. Ed. Bruce M. Metzger (Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., 1989), Online: <http://bible.crosswalk.com/History/BC/Apocrypha/ApocryphaBookList.html>, accessed 05.24.05; 1 Macc 1:41-64.

¹⁰ 2 Macc 4.7-16.

¹¹ 2 Macc 4.23-26.

¹² 2 Macc 5.15-16, 21.

¹³ 1 Macc 1.62-63.

¹⁴ Barnett, 53.

¹⁵ 1 Macc 2.19-28.

¹⁶ 1 Macc 4.36-61.

¹⁷ 1 Macc 5.3.

¹⁸ 1 Macc 2.68.

¹⁹ 1 Macc 2.41.

²⁰ 1 Macc 2.38.

²¹ 2 Macc 6.11.

²² Barnett, 55.

²³ 1 Macc 2.42.

²⁴ 2 Macc 14.6.

After being victorious in their struggle, Hasmonaean leaders from Jonathan onward began accepting the title of High Priest as well as whatever title designated the political ruler of the day [eventually King], which began to cost them the support of the Hasidaeans, and this rift was strengthened by the ungodly behavior of some Hasmonaean leaders.²⁵ By the time of Hyrcanus, the Pharisees were a distinct group in opposition to this combination of political and religious leadership.²⁶ Apparently Hyrcanus was originally predisposed toward the Pharisees, but this changed when he asked a group of Pharisees to point out any sin they saw in him and one suggested he give up the High Priesthood. A Sadducee in attendance suggested this was a reproach not to be borne, and the rest of the Pharisees did not please Hyrcanus with their suggestion of a “gentle sentence” of “stripes and bonds,” resulting in his dismissal of the Pharisees from his circle of influence and other actions against them thereafter.²⁷ When a later king, Alexander Jannaeus was oppressive, the Pharisees opposed him also.²⁸

After the fall of the Hasmonaean dynasty, when Herod ruled, the “Pharisees had forced the removal of idolatrous trophies for athletic competitions in Jerusalem, which Herod had introduced near the beginning of his reign... [and] at the end of Herod’s reign, the Pharisees had opposed the erection of a golden eagle on the temple gate.”²⁹ The Pharisees appear to have consistently opposed political rulers who were trying to subvert the Jewish heritage or religion. Josephus said the Pharisees “were in a capacity of greatly opposing kings,” as he noted how they also resisted taking loyalty pledges to Rome’s leaders.³⁰

At the time of the trial for Jesus, the Sanhedrin was composed of chief priests, scribes, and elders [Matthew 26.57; Mark 14.53], the High Priest was a Sadducee [Acts 5.17], and the chief priests in charge of temple worship were generally Sadducees.³¹ We know that at least a few Pharisees were included, because Gamaliel was there during the trial of the apostles [Acts 5.34] and of Paul [Acts 23.6-9]. Herod had insisted on the inclusion of some Pharisees to weaken the power of the Sadducees,³² but the Sanhedrin was generally composed mostly of the aristocratic Sadducees [with a brief exception during the reign of Alexandra].³³

Despite not controlling the temple, the Pharisees apparently had great influence among the common people as the upholders of their religious values,³⁴ which they promoted through their teachings at the synagogues, teachings which thus “reflected the interpretation of Scripture sanctioned by the Pharisees.”³⁵

²⁵ Barnett, 55.

²⁶ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 13.288.

²⁷ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 13.288-298.

²⁸ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 13.401.

²⁹ Barnett, 136.

³⁰ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 17.41-44.

³¹ Kenneth Barker, Gen. Ed, *The Zondervan NASB Study Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House; 1999), 1366 [note for Matthew 2.4].

³² J. A. Thompson, “Sanhedrin,” in *New Bible Dictionary*, ed. I. Howard Marshall, A.R. Millard, J.I. Packer, and D.J. Wiseman (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, USA; 1996), 1060.

³³ Barker, 1578 [note for Acts 4.1; see also Acts 5.17]; Thompson, 1060.

³⁴ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 13.401; 18.12-15.

³⁵ Barnett, 55.

The synagogue as a place of prayer, gathering, education, and worship probably arose initially to make up for the absence of the temple and then the problem of distance from Jerusalem after the temple was built. The synagogue was not a temple. It was an innovation rather than a violation of the Law, and it became the center of religious identity and practice. It also led to the development of teachers and rabbis who would lead the nation in instruction about the Law, which now came to be a center of religious concern. In a way, Judaism became an ethnic way of life and worship built around a nomocracy (a rule by law). That nomocracy was supported by a growing oral law, or body of tradition, designed to deal with the demands of the new and changing setting.³⁶

And that body of tradition was created by the Pharisees [and was one of the defining differences between the Pharisees and the Sadducees].³⁷ Indeed, “According to the Mishnah, *Abot* (c. A.D. 200), the Pharisees saw themselves as maintaining a living tradition that went back to Moses.”³⁸

The Pharisees were known by the people to be “virtuous” in their discourses and actions,³⁹ and “most skillful in the exact explication of their laws.”⁴⁰ The Pharisees “valued themselves highly upon the exact skill they had in the law of their fathers...”⁴¹ Barnett concludes, “The Pharisees were the theological and moral watchdogs of the covenant people. They exercised their influence through the synagogues, working against the corrupting Hellenizing leaven of the Herods and their circle of wealthy supporters.”⁴² Philo said of them, “there are innumerable beings looking on, zealots for and keepers of the national laws, of rigid justice, prompt to stone such a criminal, and visiting without pity all such as work wickedness...”⁴³

Bock infers that the Pharisees thought the covenant relationship with God required the pursuit of holiness from all the people [not just the priests and other religious leaders].⁴⁴ Though we know they were not in total unity as a group – for we know “the disciples of Hillel and Shammai differed sharply on many issues”⁴⁵ – there do seem to be some specific beliefs to which this group subscribed generally. They

³⁶ Darrell L. Bock, *Studying the Historical Jesus: A Guide to Sources and Methods* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 83.

³⁷ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 13.288-298.

³⁸ Barnett, 138.

³⁹ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 18.15.

⁴⁰ Josephus, *War of the Jews*, Trans. William Whiston (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1992), Online: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?lookup=J.+BJ+1.1>, accessed 06.01.05, 162.

⁴¹ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 17.41.

⁴² Barnett, 137.

⁴³ Philo Judaeus, “The Special Laws,” in *The Works of Philo*, Trans. C.D. Yonge (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1992), online: <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/yonge/>, accessed 06.01.05, 2.253 [Barnett says, “Philo does not specifically identify these persons as Pharisees, but they are clearly intended” (152; endnote 35)].

⁴⁴ Bock, 123-124, 126.

⁴⁵ Barnett, 138.

believed in working through their differences peacefully⁴⁶ and showing respect to their elders.⁴⁷ They believed in some sense of man's free will working in conjunction with fate [or God's will].⁴⁸ They pursued a simple life, free of some of the excesses of Hellenistic culture.⁴⁹ They believed in immortality of the soul and that man's choices in this life would affect the rewards or punishment of eternity.⁵⁰

So by the time Jesus began his ministry, the Pharisees had a long history of defending the religious heritage of the Jews, enforcing, teaching, and adding to the law, and enjoying a good reputation for righteousness.

Impressions

"...Jesus and the Pharisees had much in common. Both he and they pointed to the sacred writings as their guide in all things. Both he and they held to the same overarching eschatological framework, upholding the beginning of history at creation, but also its end at the universal resurrection."⁵¹ They also agreed on some other noted distinctions of Pharisaic belief, peaceful resolution of differences, respect for elders, living a simple life, and free will. Indeed, "Most probably, there were numbers of Pharisees who were not opposed to Jesus (cf. Mk 12:28-34; Lk 7:36-49; 13:31; Jn 3:1-15; 7:50-51; 19:39)..."⁵² These scriptures show that there were some Pharisees who praised Jesus for things he said or did, invited him to dinner, and even helped him avoid Herod Antipas. And we know that some Pharisees came to faith in Christ at least after his resurrection [Acts 15.5], though they tended to be among the most legalistic of the believers.⁵³ However, the differences were too great for most of the Pharisees.

The Pharisees saw themselves as the protectors and enforcers of the law during these difficult times of foreign domination and corrupt political leadership. They saw themselves as the expert interpreters of the law, carrying on the traditions of Moses and developing the oral law to help clarify the written law. And they saw themselves as the most righteous in society, the ones who could obey the oral and written law in all its complexity. "It was the Pharisees who took it upon themselves to vet Jesus' credentials..."⁵⁴ "The ministry of Jesus in Galilee attracted the attention of the Pharisaic leaders from Jerusalem who visited the tetrarchy to confront the controversial rabbi (Mk 3:22; 7:1);" Galilee had only recently been brought back into the covenant and was surrounded by Gentile city-states and north of Samaria, so they were concerned it could "easily slip back into the darkness of paganism and once again be lost from the covenant people."⁵⁵

⁴⁶ Josephus, *War*, 162-164.

⁴⁷ Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.12-15.

⁴⁸ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 13.171-173; 18.12-15; *War* 162-164.

⁴⁹ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 18.12-15.

⁵⁰ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 18.12-15; *War* 162-164.

⁵¹ Barnett, 139-140.

⁵² Barnett, 138.

⁵³ Barnett, 240, 286, 289, 315.

⁵⁴ D. R. de Lacey, "Pharisees," in *New Bible Dictionary*, ed. I. Howard Marshall, A.R. Millard, J.I. Packer, and D.J. Wiseman (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, USA; 1996), 914-915.

⁵⁵ Barnett, 140.

After John the Baptist had announced and testified regarding Jesus, Jesus went to Jerusalem and drove the merchants out of the temple for the first time [John 2.13-25].⁵⁶ This no doubt created quite an impression of his strong sense of authority, piousness, and enterprise, and caused the Pharisees to keep an eye on him. When they observed Jesus in Galilee, they must have been dismayed to see him disregarding their laws and rituals of cleansing and exhibiting a seemingly lax understanding of the Sabbath [about which they also had generated much oral law]. The gospels record many instances of confrontation over these issues, more than about other issues. “Many Pharisees must have believed that Jesus brought a curse upon the people by his law breaking.”⁵⁷ When they challenged Jesus on these issues, he confused them with riddles about scripture and parables, embarrassed them before the people among whom they were used to enjoying high standing, and even outright admonished them as legalistic, hypocritical, self-righteous, and misleading of the people through an incorrect understanding of scripture. That had to be hard for them to take, and in light of their self-image regarding the law it is surprising that they did not react more harshly, and no surprise that they viewed Jesus as a threat. As de Lacey says, “Any claim to be the definitive exponents of the Law would ... give a cutting edge to Jesus’ fierce denunciations.”⁵⁸

When the Pharisees came upon Jesus teaching in Galilee, one of the first recorded encounters is of Jesus forgiving the sins of a paralytic [Luke 5.17-26]. The Pharisees accused him of blasphemy, and then were astonished when Jesus’ reaction was to heal the man physically as well. They would later accuse him of healing with the power of Satan instead of the Holy Spirit [Matthew 12.22-42; Mark 3:20-30; Luke 14-32]. The Pharisees held to an apocalyptic hope of deliverance by God to rid the land of foreign domination, but Jesus represented himself as the Messiah of a spiritual kingdom, unwilling to deliver the land of Israel. He even hinted at the inclusion of Gentiles in God’s plan, something that must have touched a nerve during this time of unrest with foreign domination. Indeed, the teachings of Jesus would emphasize grace over the law, faith over tradition, himself over the temple, and the emerging spiritual kingdom over the deliverance of the land, thus countering the generally held religious pillars of the Pharisees.

To Jesus, the Pharisees had failed in their stewardship of the people because they had misunderstood and misrepresented the scriptures, which in turn was due to their sinfully hardened hearts. As Barnett said, “The conflict arose because in seeking to defend the covenant of Yahweh, they had, he asserted, obscured its basic message and meaning from the ‘lost sheep of Israel.’”⁵⁹

Jesus recognized the law as given in its brevity to Moses. But according to the Pharisees’ tradition, they were expected to “make a fence around the law” [quoting Mishnah *Abot* 1.1, per Barnett’s endnote]. This meant that each of the commandments was to be protected by numerous ancillary regulations, as demanded by cultural circumstances... Jesus argued, in response to the Pharisees, that the original intention of the Law was being lost (... see Mk 2:23-3:6) and was even being corrupted by the traditions of men (see Mk 7:9-13).

The Pharisees’ “fence” around the law also effectively fenced off many people from the life of the synagogue, where the law was publicly read. The ‘sinners’ – those who could not remember or forgot to keep or refused to keep this plethora of rules – were excluded from the Pharisaic

⁵⁶ For chronology, I deferred to the following: F. LaGard Smith, comp., *The Daily Bible In Chronological Order* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1984); but I did consult other sources.

⁵⁷ Barnett, 139.

⁵⁸ de Lacey, 914.

⁵⁹ Barnett, 140.

community. These wayward ones were believed to be preventing God's redemption of his covenant people...⁶⁰

It must have frustrated Jesus to consider the good this group of men could have accomplished, being zealous for the law and influential in the religious community, but seeing instead that they had effectively built a wall of regulation that would keep God distant, unapproachable, and legalistic. It likely was due to this frustration that Jesus took [as did John the Baptist] such a harsh tone toward the Pharisees immediately upon initiating his ministry. From the gospel accounts, John the Baptist was harsh even to Pharisees heading out for his baptism [John 1.19-34] and Jesus was harsh even to Nicodemus who came to him with praise prior to any other conflict among them [John 3.1-21].

Jesus must have thought it ironic that the Pharisees held themselves [and were held by others] to be the contemporary experts in the law, when he thought they had misunderstood the law in many ways. The Pharisees followed the law to the letter, but missed the intent. Thus, when they constructed their web of oral traditions – or oral laws – they not only made it impossible for the common people to be obedient but also “built” in the “wrong direction” based on their false understanding of the intent of the law. “He [Jesus] was critical of the ‘tradition’ the people had ‘received’ from their ‘elders,’ that is, from the succession of rabbinic teachers before him (Mk 7:1-5). Jesus frequently took his disciples aside in private... in order – we assume – to ‘hand over’ the true ‘tradition’ that his people were to ‘receive.’”⁶¹

Conclusions About How the Contemporary Literature Illuminates this Conflict

Though I have quoted some modern authors when I have borrowed their insights for interpreting the facts, I have tried to use facts primarily deriving from the contemporary “source” literature to illuminate the historical context of the Pharisees and thus the reasons for their conflict with Jesus.

The contemporary literature first shows the student of scripture who the Pharisees were and how they came to be as a group. In a time of uncertainty, foreign domination, cultural degeneration, and corrupt leadership, the Pharisees evolved out of the Hasidaeans, a group that supported initiatives to protect the religious heritage of the Jews. By the latter Hasmonaeon period, the Pharisees were largely influential among the people because of their teachings in the synagogues, though they usually lacked much direct political influence.

Second, the contemporary literature shows the student of scripture what the Pharisees believed. Besides being zealous for the law, they believed they were the guardians of it [due to how they evolved as a group], and so they believed they needed to clarify it with the oral traditions, and considered themselves most righteous for their position and their ability to comprehend and obey the law. While they shared many theological beliefs with Jesus, their understanding of many concepts was skewed from Jesus' perspective.

When the student of scripture can understand the self-perspective, position in the community, and theological beliefs of the Pharisees, he can understand why Jesus was harsh with the Pharisees right from the start and why they [generally] were so quickly concerned about his teaching and influence, and thus why they would be moved to do what they could to counter his teaching and end his ministry.

⁶⁰ Barnett, 138-139.

⁶¹ Barnett, 203.