Factions in Israel During Jesus' Ministry (Mike Kaye, CE Elder)

I love the interactions Jesus has with the leaders of Israel. But who/what were they?

- **Pharisees**: From the Hebrew word for *separated*. Middle-class; minority in the priesthood and Sanhedrin but highly influential due to the peoples' support. Accepted the full Scripture but held oral tradition as equal in authority (Mark 7:1-23). Believed in life after death, angels, miracles and the Messiah. Emphasis on personal piety, ritual purity and righteousness. Some accepted Christ (e.g., Nicodemus, Paul). Two schools of thought from famous rabbis: Shammai called for strict interpretation of the Law; Hillel for a liberal view. Jesus criticized them for ignoring the spirit of the Law and hypocrisy.
- **Sadducees**: Aristocratic & Hellenized party headed by the high priest; compromised with Rome for political stability & ruled over the temple. Accepted only the Torah as Scripture (first 5 books of OT) and rejected any teaching they did not find there (e.g., life after death, angels, miracles, the Messiah); Jesus pointed out their error in Matthew 22:23. Continued persecuting the church when the Pharisees stopped. Caiaphas was officially the current high priest, but the Jews considered his father-in-law, Annas, who had been deposed by the Romans, as the true one. Annas' family ran the "bazaars of Annas" in the temple grounds for Gentiles where the crass commercialism drove Jesus to cleanse the temple--possibly twice (early in John 2:13–16; later in Luke 19:45-46)
- **Scribes**: Authorities on the Jewish Scripture--meticulously made copies to ensure absolute accuracy to preserve the original in every detail; wrote commentaries and interpreted legal points. Also derived a huge set of detailed rules to implement & follow God's commands--the *Mishnah* lists 39 major types of labors forbidden on the Sabbath (e.g., *carrying*) and adds extensive detail (e.g., could not carry a handkerchief, unless one end of it be sewed to one's garment). Some scribes were also Pharisees.
- **Rabbis** were the teachers who passed on the scribal understanding of Scriptures.
- **Essenes**: A group of strict Jews; turned away from Hellenization efforts and established a community at Qumran, near the Dead Sea. They developed a monastic lifestyle and a collection of their documents, the Dead Sea Scrolls, was discovered in 1947.
- **Zealots**: Sought to overthrow Roman rule; the most extreme among them were known as **Sicarii** (dagger men), who would attack Romans or Jews friendly to them.
- **Herod Antipas**: Tetrarch of Galilee and Perea (4 BC-39 AD); married his half-brother's wife which John the Baptist condemned, which led to John's beheading.
- **Sanhedrin**: Supreme council of Israel for religious and political life of all Jews. Made up of 70 men and the high priest. Comprised primarily of Sadducees and Pharisees.