

RISE AND FALL OF THE JUDAIST GOVERNMENT IN JUDEA

According to Judaist civil teachings, today's Judaism traces its descent without a break through the centuries starting from the early Pharisees of about 150 B.C., there being 3 main Judaist sects at the time: the Essenes, the Sadducees and Pharisees.

In 76 B.C., some 25 years after having begun to exert a civil influence over the populace, the Pharisees were formally given the governmental power by the then ruling Israelite monarchy, the Judean populace having submitted to religious pressure for an Israelite constitutional change from the Mosaic to the Babylonian pre-Judaist law, the nation of Judea thereafter being governed by a religion which evolved to current Judaism. Despite the Pharisees being given the power of government at that time, the Essenes possessed a wider political influence and used such to dominate Judaism until the early 1st century B.C. The two other main sects of Judaism, the Sadducees and Pharisees were implacably hostile to each other and were essentially equal in status. But by the time of Christ in A.D. 30, and despite continued opposition from the Pharisees and scribes (most of whom were Pharisees), the Sadducees had increased their political hold in Judea to become predominant in government. Nonetheless, the Sadducees were often compelled by fear of a populace uprising to agree with the Pharisees. On the occasion of Christ's trial however, the Pharisees immediately united in judgment with the Sadducean-dominated council, despite such trial being illegal on 12 counts under the Jewish law of the day, it having been established that:

1. A person may not be arrested without a formal charge having been issued, albeit such occurring in this instance after Judas accepted 'bribe' money to secure a private arrest of Christ without a charge being declared by the Authorities,
2. An accused may not be examined in secret,
3. An accused may not be examined or tried at night,
4. Judges of a matter on trial must be impartial and may not personally create a charge against an accused, as occurred in this instance,
5. No charge against a person may be laid by a court when there are not at least two credible witnesses to the offence,
6. A trial for a capital offence may not be concluded in one day unless the accused is acquitted,

7. In a trial for a capital offence there must be the testimony of at least two witnesses to the act committed, unlike as occurred during the beginning of Christ's trial when the testimony introduced was an uncorroborated allegation that he threatened to destroy Jerusalem's temple, and also by magic raise it up ("without hands" – Mark 14:58) within three days, such allegation being soon after exchanged for a charge of blasphemy which the judges then personally endorsed,
8. A judge may not pronounce guilt without taking the time to legally examine and find culpability in the alleged offence, such being not followed in this instance, Christ's few words being forcibly dismissed with an aggressive allegation that his identification with the 'son of man in heaven' constituted a blasphemy warranting the death penalty: such identification being unexplored by the chief Judaists as to whether Christ's claim contained a criminal element,
9. The senior Jewish court or Sanhedrin may not declare judgment in unison: each member's judgment being required to be given in a particular order,
10. A formal court may not be conducted in a private residence, especially to issue a capital sentence, even if, as occurred in this instance, such residence was that of the high priest,
11. A Sanhedrin judge may not sit on a case if prejudice against the accused were plainly evident, as in this instance where most of the Sanhedrin members displayed their enmity against Christ by paying money to secure his capture,
12. The terms of conviction may not be altered after the trial court has been dismissed, such as occurred in this instance where the same was changed from the Judaist religious charge of blasphemy, to a Roman civil offence of seditious conspiracy against Caesar (despite the local Roman ruler thrice publicly declaring him innocent – Luke 23:20-22).

After the time of Christ, the Pharisees' religious authority continued independent from the Sadducean party, there also then coexisting a minor fourth sect, the Zealots (founded by a Galilean leader of a revolt against Rome in A.D. 6). While the Essenes became identified with an ethereal way of life rather than with the pursuit of religious power, the Sadducees were to become nonexistent following the destruction of the Israelite temple in A.D. 70, and the Zealots similarly became nonexistent in A.D. 73 after their stronghold (Masada) was destroyed by the Romans. Thus the Pharisees became the only leaders of the Judaist religion, and by A.D. 200, Judaism and Pharisaic teaching had become synonymous.