

Comparison of Jesus' Teaching with Jewish Groups of His Time

Theme	Jesus	Pharisees	Sadducees	Essenes
Authority	Spoke on his own authority ('But I say to you...'); claimed to fulfill the Law.	Relied on oral Torah and tradition; debated interpretations.	Focused on written Torah only; rejected oral tradition.	Strict community rules; authority of sect leaders and Torah.
Law & Purity	Deepened the Law to motives (anger, lust). Downplayed ritual purity.	Strict observance of purity laws, Sabbath, tithes.	Temple sacrifices central; less concerned with purity outside Temple.	Extreme purity rules; withdrew from wider society.
Kingdom of God	Present and future reality breaking in through his ministry.	Future divine intervention; tied to obedience of Torah.	Little emphasis; focused on status quo and Temple.	Future apocalyptic judgment; awaited God's final kingdom.
Temple	Criticized and symbolically replaced it with his body/presence.	Respected but not central; Torah observance mattered more.	Temple = center of worship and sacrifice.	Rejected Jerusalem Temple; had own purity practices in desert.
Inclusivity	Ate with sinners, tax collectors, Samaritans, women; broke purity barriers.	Avoided sinners and impurity to maintain holiness.	Elite priestly class; limited to aristocracy.	Strictly separatist; purity boundaries very rigid.
Enemies	Love your enemies; nonviolence; forgiveness.	Opposed Rome but not militarily; resisted assimilation.	Collaborated with Rome for influence.	Expected violent divine judgment on enemies.
Forgiveness of Sins	Claimed authority to forgive sins directly.	Linked to Torah observance, prayer, and sometimes Temple rituals.	Mediated through Temple sacrifices.	Strict repentance rituals within their community.
Messiah / Deliverance	Reinterpreted as suffering Son of Man; victory through cross.	Expected Davidic warrior-king; Torah restorer.	Did not emphasize Messiah; more focused on priesthood/Temple.	Awaited dual messiahs (priestly + kingly); apocalyptic deliverance.
Mission	Universal — all nations included in God's plan.	Focused on Israel's covenant identity.	Maintained Jewish exclusivity.	Separatist — salvation only within their sect.