

The two religious groups of the Pharisees and Sadducees described in the Four Gospel Accounts represented two very different and conflicting views in relation to the interpretation of Scripture.

Scholars have described the Pharisees as leaders who represented the Jewish middle class, while the Sadducees represented the aristocratic, upper class of society.

It is generally believed the former emerged as a distinct movement after the Maccabean revolt, in around 160 B.C, being the spiritual descendants of the Hasideans.

They formed as a lay movement in reaction to the hellenization of Jewish society, in contrast to the Sadducees, who were the party of the high priesthood that had provided leadership up to that time.

Commentators believe the eventual split between the two centred not only on the Pharisees placing their traditions on par with Scripture, but on a practice called the "principle of evolution."

Instead of faithfully following the Word of God, even if it contradicted reason, they harmonized its teachings to accommodate the current social conditions.

It was actually this progressive tendency of the Pharisees that allowed their interpretation of the Torah to continue in the long centuries after the Diaspora and remain a living force in modern-day Judaism.

The reason they both hated Christ so much was because He denounced their sins publicly, especially their habit of parading an outward show of religion for public admiration. He taught the common people, "Whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret."