

Who were the Herodians?

At the time of Jesus, there were certain groups—the Pharisees, the Herodians, and the Sadducees—that held positions of authority and power over the people. Other groups were the Sanhedrin, the scribes, and the lawyers. Each of these groups held power in either religious or political matters. The Herodians held political power, and most scholars believe that they were a political party that supported King Herod Antipas, the Roman Empire's ruler over much of the land of the Jews from 4 B.C. to A.D. 39. The Herodians favored submitting to the Herods, and therefore to Rome, for political expediency. This support of Herod compromised Jewish independence in the minds of the Pharisees, making it difficult for the Herodians and Pharisees to unite and agree on anything. But one thing did unite them—opposing Jesus. Herod himself wanted Jesus dead (Luke 13:31), and the Pharisees had already hatched plots against Him (John 11:53), so they joined efforts to achieve their common goal.

The first appearance of the Herodians in Scripture is Mark 3:6, "Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus." Jesus had been doing miracles, which caused some of the people to believe in Him for salvation, and that threatened the power and position of the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Herodians. The Herodians again joined with the Pharisees to challenge Jesus, to see if they could trap Jesus in His words by a trick question, to either discredit Him or to get Him to stop preaching (Matthew 22:16).

Jesus regarded the two groups as in unity against Him and warned His followers against them. "'Be careful,' Jesus warned them. 'Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod'" (Mark 8:15). Yeast in this context is false teaching, the rejection of Jesus as the Messiah, and hypocrisy. Many scholars believe that the Herodians looked to

Herod as a messiah, a savior of sorts who would put the Jewish land in favor with the Roman Empire and bring blessings to them. Jesus' presentation of Himself as the Messiah was a threat to the Herodians' attempt to make Herod the influential political power in the land.

In the future, the Bible tells us that many will be deceived by the antichrist and will view the antichrist as a "messiah." He will be a political leader as well as a false religious leader, and he will promise peace and prosperity through his political programs. The Herodians at the time of Jesus were also focused on political goals rather than the eternal goals that Jesus proclaimed. They thought Herod might bring temporary peace politically. But Jesus came to bring us eternal salvation, by dying on the cross to pay for our sins. The lesson we learn from the error of the Herodians is that we are not to trust in man, as they trusted in Herod (Psalm 118:8). We are to put our trust in the Lord Jesus and let His will be done in our lives and on the earth.