

11 How is it you don't understand that I was not talking to you about bread? But be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees." 12 Then they understood that he was not telling them to guard against the yeast used in bread, but against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees. - Matthew 16:11-12 NIV

The disciples were worried that they hadn't brought enough bread. What lesson did Jesus remind them about which they should have remembered? In Matthew the threat described is from the teachers of the Law. What do you think they taught that Jesus considered dangerous to His followers? Are there currently any teachings in Christian community that you believe could "infect the church" in ways Jesus would not approve?

There is no explanation of Herod's leaven, but just as the leaders of the religious community opposed Jesus and His teachings, the political leaders also saw Jesus as a threat and opposed Him. And like the disciples, we need to see and understand that corruption can come in many forms. The more time we spend in God's presence, the brighter the light He shines on those things that still threaten to turn our focus away from Jesus.

WRAP-UP

As Jesus continued His ministry around the Sea of Galilee, He once again showed deep compassion by miraculously feeding a large crowd of 4,000, involving His disciples in the act of provision. Despite these powerful signs, the Pharisees sought to test Him by demanding more proof, revealing their hardened hearts and spiritual blindness. Jesus, refusing to perform for them, warned His disciples about the "yeast"—the corrupting influence—of the Pharisees and Herod. Yet the disciples struggled to grasp His warning, still distracted by physical needs. This passage challenges us to trust in Jesus' sufficiency, recognize and resist spiritual corruption, and remain focused on Him amidst religious and political distractions.

MEMORY VERSE

"Be careful," Jesus warned them. "Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod." - Mark 8:15 NIV

Challenge – Ask God to sharpen your awareness and understanding of the threats in our world.

Signs and Warnings Gospel of Mark Ch. 8 - Week 1

INTRODUCTION

As Jesus continued His ministry along the Sea of Galilee large crowds gathered to be fed, both spiritually and literally. In a scene very much like His feeding of the 5,000, Jesus has compassion on those who hunger after Him. This time He feeds 4,000 before He departs to the other side of Galilee. Here once again the Pharisees have come to argue and cast doubts upon Jesus' teaching. They asked for a sign from heaven to test Him. Could they really need more proof than what Jesus had already done? But Jesus refused to perform for them, instead He left and warned His disciples against "the yeast of the Pharisees and Herod." But the disciples were as confused as ever about the threat posed by teaching of the religious and political factions around them.

Ice Breaker

Have you ever baked sourdough bread? How successful was it?

Key Passages

"Be careful," Jesus warned them. "Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod." - Mark 8:15 NIV

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Compassion and Abundant Provision

1 During those days another large crowd gathered. Since they had nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples to him and said, 2 "I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. - Mark 8:1-2 NIV

In this week's passage Jesus continues to travel, teach and heal along the region of Galilee. As word spreads the crowds gather and the scene we saw in chapter 6 repeats itself in chapter 8.

3 If I send them home hungry, they will collapse on the way, because some of them have come a long distance." 4 His disciples answered, "But where in this remote place can anyone get enough bread to feed them?" 5 "How many loaves do you have?" Jesus asked. "Seven," they replied. 6 He told the crowd to sit down on the ground. When he had taken the seven loaves and given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people, and they did so. 7 They had a few small fish as well; he gave thanks for them also and told the disciples to distribute them. - Mark 8:3-7 NIV

Jesus' response was similar to the feeding of 5,000. How did He involve His disciples in providing for the crowd? In what way does Jesus involve us in providing for the spiritual and material needs of those who hunger for Him?

The disciples failed to recognize that Jesus was more than enough to meet the needs of the crowd. We can have the same failing when we think that we are the ones who provide the resources people need, be that food, and money or time and talents. We need to learn the lesson that the disciples were being taught, Jesus will take whatever we have to give (5 loaves, or \$5) and multiply it by His power so that we can share His abundant provision with others.

2. Seeking a Sign

When the crowd was fed and satisfied, there was more than enough food, and even leftovers! So, Jesus sent them home and He and His disciples moved on. When Jesus arrived at His destination, He was followed by the Pharisees.

11 The Pharisees came and began to question Jesus. To test him, they asked him for a sign from heaven. 12 He sighed deeply and said, "Why does this generation ask for a sign? Truly I tell you, no sign will be given to it." 13 Then he left them, got back into the boat and crossed to the other side. - Mark 8:11-13 NIV

The Pharisees were there to argue. The word for "question" in v.11 is syzēteō and can mean argue or dispute as well as to question. This was an attempt to ensnare Jesus. Based on His reaction, how did this make Jesus feel? If they had been there honestly seeking answers to their questions, do you think He would have responded differently?

Matthew's Gospel gives us further information about this encounter. These men were the teachers of the law and should be well aware of the prophetic signs which Jesus had already demonstrated. But apparently, they were blind to the "signs of the times" which would announce the Messiah's coming.

1 The Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus and tested him by asking him to show them a sign from heaven. 2 He replied, "When evening comes, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red,' 3 and in the morning, 'Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.' You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times. 4 A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah." Jesus then left them and went away. - Matthew 16:1-4 NIV
40 For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. - Matthew 12:40 NIV

In calling them wicked (ponēros) and adulterous (moichalis) Jesus was accusing the Pharisees of having evil intent and being unfaithful to God. In what way were they unfaithful to God? In Matthew's Gospel what does Jesus identify as the sign of Jonah? Do you think the sign of Jonah was sufficient to convince the Pharisees that Jesus was Messiah?

3. Yeast of Pharisees and Herod

13 Then he left them, got back into the boat and crossed to the other side. 14 The disciples had forgotten to bring bread, except for one loaf they had with them in the boat. 15 "Be careful," Jesus warned them. "Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod." - Mark 8:13-15 NIV

After observing the Pharisees in action Jesus admonished His disciples very firmly. He told them to look out (horaō) and be discerning and perceptive (blepō) of the yeast (leaven) of the Pharisees and of Herod.

There were two parts to Jesus' warning. First was to see the danger and the second was to understand it. Would you say you are more likely to see threats but not understand them or to understand threats but not recognize them around you?

Jesus warned about the leaven (yeast) of the Pharisees and of Herod. The bible uses leaven as a metaphor for mental and moral corruption, viewed in its tendency to infect others. This is because a small quantity of leaven thoroughly pervades a thing by its influence.

At first the disciples were confused, being distracted by their lack of bread. They still needed to see the danger and understand it as Jesus had just commanded them to do.