

A Study of Mark – Lesson 23

Mark 8:11-21 Religious leaders Ask for a Sign

8 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.

The Yeast of the Pharisees and Herod

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.”

¹⁶ They discussed this with one another / and said, / “It is because we have no bread.”

¹⁷ Aware of their discussion, / Jesus asked them: / “Why are you talking about having no bread? / Do you still not see / or understand? / Are your hearts hardened? / ¹⁸ Do you have eyes / but fail to see, / and ears but fail to hear? / And don’t you remember? / ¹⁹ When I broke the five loaves / for the five thousand, / how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?”

“Twelve,” / they replied.

²⁰ “And when I broke the seven loaves / for the four thousand, / how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?”

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/ They answered, / “Seven.”

²¹ He said to them, / “Do you still not understand?”

Vocabulary

1. **To sigh:** To make a deep audible breath expressing sadness, relief, tiredness or a similar emotion.
2. **Generation:** All of the people born or living about this time. Grandparents, parents, and children make up three generations.
3. **A sign:** Something regarded as an indication or evidence of what is happening or going to happen: *The signs are that the Recession is almost over.* Here: A miracle regarded as evidence of supernatural power (chiefly in biblical and literary use).
4. **Yeast:** A microscopic fungus consisting of single oval cells that reproduce by budding, and are capable of converting sugar into alcohol and carbon dioxide. We use yeast to make the bread rise. It takes very little yeast to do a big job.

Questions

1. Who are the Pharisees?
2. Jesus had gone across the lake back into Judea. There the Pharisees wanted a sign. Why?
3. Do we sometimes make up our minds about someone, and regardless of anything, continue to make fun of or disbelieve him/her?
4. What does *harden your heart* mean?
5. What is the party of Herod?

6. What does yeast do in bread? How much do you need to make bread rise?
7. How is an idea like yeast?
8. Jesus is teaching and training the disciples. Do you know why?

Notes: Groups you need to understand

Pharisees and the Sadducees

Beliefs of the Pharisees and the Sadducees were very different. Often hostile to each other, they were united in their desire to get rid of Jesus.

Pharisees Customs & Beliefs	Sadducees Customs & Beliefs
Lived according to oral and scribal law. Kept even the smallest rule.	Rejected ALL oral and scribal law. Kept only written words of OT
Believed in angels and the resurrection of the body	Did not believe in angels or life after death
Not a political party. Only wanted a government that allowed them to live their religion	Small, wealthy, and political. Served and cooperated with the Romans government
Longed and looked for the Messiah	Sadducees did not believe in a Messiah
Hated and distrusted Jesus	Feared Jesus would start a war or revolution.

Rome and Roman Soldiers:

Remember that Judea was a conquered nation. The people longed for a country without occupation forces from Rome. Also, Caesar Augustus was regarded as a god and worshipped with temples and all the trimmings of a religion. The Jews hated that influence. Caesar August brought the young princes from all nations to Rome and had them educated and indoctrinated. Then he controlled them from Rome.

Herodians and King Herod:

King Herod was a puppet king on Augustus Caesar. His job was to keep peace in the Judean provinces and put down any disturbances or hints of revolution. Herod had power of life or death over the people. Without the Roman troops and Roman administrators, Herod would probably not be there.

Gentiles and Jews:

The Jews considered anyone not a Jew to be a Gentile. There were many rules about how a Jew could or could not interact with a Gentile.

It is rather important for us to understand what Jesus was getting at in verses 15 and 16. Any baker will tell you that a little yeast is enough to make a whole batch of dough rise. Just a little of it affects everything. To understand what Jesus means you could translate 'yeast' as 'attitude' Just a little of the attitude of those people affects everything, corrupts everything.