

“Beware the Leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod”
Religion, Worldliness, & Jesus
MARK 8:14-21

CONTEXT:

This is the second time that Jesus has fed a large crowd with limited means. In Mark 6:30-34 he fed 5,000 using the 5 loaves and 2 fish. Here he feeds 4,000 (in both groups we’re only told about the men so it may be assumed that this was a much larger number) using 7 loaves and a few small fish. Following this miracle the disciples picked up 7 whicker baskets full of the leftovers.

They left and came to a district called Dalmanutha. There, the Pharisees came to Him and demanded a sign. Jesus rejected their request and returns to the boat where he and the disciples depart together.

TEXT:

And they had forgotten to take bread; and did not have more than one loaf with them. And He was giving them orders, saying, “Watch out! Beware the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.” - Mark 8:14-15

WARNING: “Watch out for the leaven...”

_____ : Can also be translated as “_____” and has both literal and figurative uses throughout scripture.

Literal: In the literal sense it was what was added to flour during the bread-making process causing the dough to rise. In the O.T. it was used in connection with the Exodus when the people were told not to leaven the bread so that they could leave quickly (**Ex. 12:33-34**). The observance of the Passover included the baking of unleavened bread as a thing of remembrance (**Deut. 16:3**).

Figurative: In the figurative sense, leaven is synonymous with _____ and _____. This is especially the case in the teachings of Jesus.

Matt. 13:33, Luke 13:21 – The Parable of the Leaven.

Luke 12:1 – The leaven of the Pharisees described as _____.

Matt. 16:12 – The Disciples understood this as referring to the Pharisees’ _____.

Leaven can clearly refer to both _____ and _____.

Who were these two groups?

_____ : We’re much more familiar with these guys because they are found throughout the gospels. The movement began initially with good intentions: to return to a true and good worship of God that avoided engaging in the worldliness of the Hellenistic Culture that had pervaded Palestine since the arrival of the Greeks under Alexander the Great.

Problems in the Pharisaical tradition: Under the guise of keeping the Law of the Mosaic Covenant, the Pharisees created new laws and regulations. As time passed, these became more of a focus than God. The worship of laws and regulations is religion. The practice of religion led inevitably to hypocrisy, a charge Jesus levied at the Pharisees on numerous occasions. (**Matt. 23:13-15, Mark 7:6, Luke 11:44**)

Teachings: Essentially, the Pharisees taught their own rules and regulations. They encouraged people to go _____ what God had revealed to preserve their "_____".

(This is a really, really bad idea. Genesis 2:17 compared to 3:2-3)

Actions: The issue was not abstaining from things based on personal conviction; it was attempting to force other people to conform to their personal teachings and beliefs as well as those of the Word of God.

The _____, _____ nature of many of the Pharisees severely damaged the effectiveness of their ministry among the people.

The Pharisees practiced a dead religion that masqueraded as the worship of the one true God. The sin of the Pharisees was _____.

_____: It is important to note that this could be referring to Herod the Great or the ruler of the area at that specific time, Herod Antipas.

More History (You know you love it)

_____: His father had been loyal to Julius Caesar in his civil war against Pompey and was repaid with Roman citizenship. Herod himself profited from another Roman civil war that involved Antony and Cassius. He was given power and eventually became the primary ruler in Palestine by the will of the Roman government. He was also the ruler who had the male children killed after the Magi came to him and spoke of the birth of the Messiah.

_____: The son of Herod the Great, he was the Tetrarch (governor or regional ruler) of Galilee and the surrounding area. This meant that anyone Jesus interacted with who was involved in local Jewish politics would have been a follower of Herod or one of his lower officials. He was the ruler who had John the Baptist killed and sent Jesus back to Pilate after mocking Him.

The _____: These guys are not a group that we spend a lot of time studying in Sunday school because scripture only records a few of Jesus interactions with them. These were the minions and underlings of Herod Antipas and his political party.

Teachings and Actions: While the Bible does not record specific teachings of Herod and his followers, we can infer from History and the incident with John the Baptist how they loved.

Mark 6:17-8 shows us that Herod (Antipas) was living in an _____ relationship with his brother's wife. Herod and his followers had also fully immersed themselves in _____.

Negatives: _____

The significant thing to understand about Herod and his followers is that they represented the Jewish conformity and full adoption of pagan practices and culture. Their sin was _____.

A Study in Contrast:

Now, as you can see, what Jesus has just done is to warn the disciples about two opposite ends of the spectrum. The Herodians represented everything that the Pharisees loathed, and vice versa. There was no love lost between these two groups.



And yet ...

Mark 3:1-6 Jesus broke religious tradition and healed a man on the Sabbath. This turned the Pharisees against Him and towards those who until now had been their greatest enemies.

“And the Pharisees went out and immediately began taking counsel with the Herodians against Him, as to how they might destroy Him.” – Mark 3:6

The only thing _____ and _____ people agree on is that they’re offended by _____!

- The Pharisees resented the fact that Jesus followed God’s revealed Word, keeping the Mosaic Law but not their extra-biblical laws. He also reached out to those whom the Pharisees had deemed unworthy or unclean.
- The Herodians most likely resented Jesus for the same reason they resented John the Baptist. Jesus loved those who were sinners, but called them out of their sin. The Herodians loved their darkness and therefore hated Jesus’ light. Jesus and John called both groups to repentance.

The Purpose of Jesus’ Warning:

Jesus knew that human nature (sinful nature) tends to gravitate to _____, either towards religion (**Ex. 32:6**) or worldliness (**1 Cor. 3:1**).

He offers them the solution to this temptation as He continued to teach them in the boat.

And they began to discuss with one another the fact that they had no bread. And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, “Why do you discuss the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet see or understand? Do you have a hardened heart? “HAVING EYES, DO YOU NOT SEE? AND HAVING EARS, DO YOU NOT HEAR? And do you not remember when I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces that you picked up?” And they said to Him, “Twelve.” “And when I broke the seven for the four thousand, how many large baskets full of broken pieces did you pick up?” And they said to Him, “Seven.” And He was saying to them, “Do you not yet understand?”– Mk 8:16-21

The disciples focus was on _____ and not _____. Jesus was the one who had accomplished the miracles they had experienced, but they could not get their eyes off of their own circumstances. They were on dangerous ground because focus on self will always lead to worldliness or religion. (**Romans 1:18-32**)

Only a focus and reliance on Christ could truly provide for them, both physically and spiritually.

Hitting Home:

As disciples of Christ, we also need to heed his warning. There is a temptation inherent within us to turn following Jesus into a religion or to stop following Him and begin following the world.

Jesus prayed against this in *John 17:15-17*

“I do not ask you to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.”

Jesus understood that being _____ the world, but not _____ the world meant living in the tension between religion and worldliness.

How do we live in this tension? What does it look like?

Ephesians 5:1-2 -----> Ephesians 5:18

Questions:

1.

Jesus for the religious →

2.

Jesus for the worldly →

3.

