

Jesus Warns about the Contagion of Unbelief

Matthew 16	Mark 8
1 The Pharisees and Sadducees came, and testing him, asked him to show them a sign from heaven.	11 The Pharisees came out and began to question him, seeking from him a sign from heaven, and testing him.
	12 (a) He sighed deeply in his spirit, and said, “Why does this generation seek a sign?” [...]
2 But he answered them, “When it is evening, you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.’”	
3 “In the morning, ‘It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.’ Hypocrites! You know how to discern the appearance of the sky, but you can’t discern the signs of the times!”	
4 (a) “An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and there will be no sign given to it,” [...]	12 (b) [...] “Most certainly I tell you, no sign will be given to this generation.”
4 (b) [...] “except the sign of the prophet Jonah.” [...]¹	
4 (c) [...] He left them, [...]	13 (a) He left them, [...]
4 (d) [...] and departed. 5 (a) The disciples came to the other side [...]	13 (b) [...] and again entering into the boat, departed to the other side.
5 (b) [...] and had forgotten to take bread.	14 (a) They forgot to take bread; [...]
	14 (b) [...] and they didn’t have more than one loaf in the boat with them.
6 (a) Jesus said to them, “Take heed and beware of the yeast of the Pharisees” [...]²	15 (a) He warned them, saying, “Take heed: beware of the yeast of the Pharisees” [...]
6 (b) [...] “and Sadducees.”	
	15 (b) [...] “and the yeast of Herod.”
7 They reasoned among themselves, saying, “We brought no bread.”	16 They reasoned with one another, saying, “It’s because we have no bread.”

¹ The resurrection was the only sign Jesus would offer them (Matthew 16:4) now that they had rejected all the previous supernatural signs (Matthew 16:9-10; Mark 8:19-20); the declaration in Mark 8:12 does not disagree with Matthew 16:4, as the point is that they will not be given the sign they demand (Matthew 16:1; Mark 8:11).

² There are some possible explanations for why Matthew records Jesus’ condemnation of the Pharisees and Sadducees while Mark records the Pharisees and Herodians, a few of which will be covered here. (1) Perhaps Jesus mentioned all three groups while each Gospel writer recalled and mentioned two without intending it as an exhaustive list—See the note on slight differences in wording. (2) Perhaps there was some overlap between the Herodians and Sadducees, so when Jesus mentioned that particular group, the Gospel writers mentioned them by different names. While the Sadducees and Herodians were distinct groups, both were part of the elites of society—as opposed to the Pharisees who were religious elites, respected by the common people but looked down on by the others. It is possible, therefore, that some of the people Jesus referred to were known to fall into both the Sadducee and Herodian categories, being a theological and political label, respectively.

Matthew 16	Mark 8
8 Jesus, perceiving it, said, "Why do you reason among yourselves, you of little faith, 'because you have brought no bread?'"	17 (a) Jesus, perceiving it, said to them, "Why do you reason that it's because you have no bread?" [...]
	17 (b) [...] "Don't you perceive yet, neither understand? Is your heart still hardened?"
	18 "Having eyes, don't you see? Having ears, don't you hear? Don't you remember?"
9 "Don't you yet perceive, neither remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many baskets you took up?" ³	19 "When I broke the five loaves among the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?" They told him, "Twelve."
10 "Nor the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many baskets you took up?"	20 "When the seven loaves fed the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?" They told him, "Seven."
	21 He asked them, "Don't you understand yet?"
11 "How is it that you don't perceive that I didn't speak to you concerning bread? But beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees."	
12 Then they understood that he didn't tell them to beware of the yeast of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.	

³ Slight differences in wording between the Gospels' record of dialog do not mean the Gospels disagree. The idea that it is necessary to quote something verbatim was not emphasized in ancient records. In fact, any marks that function like modern quotation marks were still hundreds of years away. Writers were often more concerned with accurately recording points or ideas than with precisely recording words. For example, based on their structure, it is possible that Mark 8:19-20 provide a record that more closely follows the wording of the discussion while Matthew 16:9-10 records the overall point of the conversation. Similarly, Matthew 16:11 may follow the wording of the conversation more closely, while Mark 8:21 summarizes the point. Typically, it is easy to see how the Gospels emphasize the same points even when the corresponding wording differs.