

Mark 8:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod.

Analysis

Take heed, beware (όρατε, βλέπετε, horate, blepete)—two imperatives meaning 'see' and 'watch,' emphasizing vigilance. Jesus warns against spiritual danger requiring constant alertness. **The leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod** (ζύμη, zymē)—leaven symbolizes pervasive corrupting influence (1 Corinthians 5:6-8). A small amount of yeast permeates entire dough; likewise, false teaching subtly corrupts entire belief systems.

Pharisaic leaven represents religious hypocrisy, externalism, and self-righteousness (Matthew 23). Herodian leaven represents political compromise and worldly ambition—the Herodians collaborated with Rome for power and privilege. Jesus warns against two opposite but equally dangerous corruptions: religious legalism and secular pragmatism. Both reject God's kingdom in favor of human schemes. Matthew 16:12 clarifies that Jesus warns against 'the doctrine [διδαχή, didachē] of the Pharisees and Sadducees'—teaching that replaces gospel grace with human achievement or political solutions.

Historical Context

Pharisees and Herodians were normally opposed—Pharisees resented Roman occupation; Herodians collaborated with it. Yet they united against Jesus (Mark 3:6; 12:13), demonstrating how competing ideologies align against gospel truth. Leaven was forbidden during Passover (Exodus 12:15-20), symbolizing sin's removal. Jesus spoke this warning shortly before Passover (John 6:4), making

leaven imagery particularly poignant. First-century Jews understood leaven as symbol of corruption requiring vigilant removal from households and hearts.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How do Pharisaic legalism and Herodian pragmatism represent twin dangers still threatening the church today?
2. What 'leaven' (false teaching, worldly compromise) might be subtly permeating your thinking and community?
3. How does Jesus' warning about 'small' corrupting influences challenge tolerance of 'minor' doctrinal errors?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	διεστέλλετο	αὐτοῖς	λέγων,	Ὄρᾶτε	βλέπετε	ἀπὸ	τῆς	G3588
And	he charged	them	saying	Take heed	beware	of		
G2532	G1291	G846	G3004	G3708	G991	G575		
ζύμης	τῶν	Φαρισαίων	καὶ	τῆς	ζύμης	Ἡρώδου		
of the leaven	G3588	of the Pharisees	And	G3588	of the leaven	of Herod		
G2219		G5330	G2532		G2219	G2264		

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 16:6 (Resurrection): Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

Mark 12:13 (Resurrection): And they send unto him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, to catch him in his words.

1 Timothy 6:13 (Parallel theme): I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession;

Leviticus 2:11 (Parallel theme): No meat offering, which ye shall bring unto the LORD, shall be made with leaven: for ye shall burn no leaven, nor any honey, in any offering of the LORD made by fire.

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