

## 28.59 Magadan and the Pharisees (Matthew 15:39; 16:1–12; Mark 8:10–21) [See 28.56 for Pharisees.]

✓ “Check” it out: opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows  
[. . .] indicates a remark to the teacher, not the student. It also indicates answers to questions.

### Visuals and Tools:

- Pictures and/or visual aids found at the end of this lesson. Please give credit to the sources of pictures.
- Check also “Activities” and “Handwork” below for additional suggested items.
- A bit of yeast; bread or homemade rolls
- Other types of leaven: baking powder, baking soda, cream of tartar

**Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach:** Vocabulary words are enlarged for flashcards at the end of this lesson. Print, cut out, and glue to card stock, or just print on colorful cardstock.

- *sign*: miracle to show someone is true and prophesying truth
- *Pharisees*: law-keeping Jewish teachers. They “sought [Jesus’] life, and were exceedingly corrupt in their doctrine and practice” (Barnes at <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/barnes/matthew/16.htm>).
- *Sadducees*: men of the priestly family who were also involved in the government. Why were they “sad you see”? [They didn’t believe in the resurrection.]
- *Herodians*: followers of Herod, the king; usually, they were enemies of the Pharisees
- *leaven*: yeast, baking powder, baking soda, cream of tartar, “sponge” (dough from a former leavened batch of bread); the ingredient in bread, by creating air pockets in the dough, that makes it rise. In Scripture leaven is usually, not always, a symbol of evil or wrong.

### Scripture: (ESV)

Matthew 15:38 Those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children. 39 And after sending away the crowds, he got into the boat and went to the region of Magadan.

16:1 And the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and to test him they asked him to show them a sign from heaven. 2 He answered them, “When it is evening, you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.’ 3 And in the morning, ‘It will be stormy today, for the sky is red and threatening.’ You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times. 4 An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah.” So he left them and departed.

5 When the disciples reached the other side, they had forgotten to bring any bread. 6 Jesus said to them, “Watch and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” 7 And they began discussing it among themselves, saying, “We brought no bread.” 8 But Jesus, aware of this, said, “O you of little faith, why are you discussing among yourselves the fact that you have no bread? 9 Do you not yet perceive? Do you not remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many baskets you gathered? 10 Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many baskets you gathered? 11 How is it that you fail to understand that I did not speak about bread? Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” 12 Then they understood that he did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Mark 8:10 And immediately he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the district of Dalmanutha.

11 The Pharisees came and began to argue with him, seeking from him a sign from heaven to test him. 12 And he sighed deeply in his spirit and said, “Why does this generation seek a sign? Truly, I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation.” 13 And he left them, got into the boat again, and went to the other side.

14 Now they had forgotten to bring bread, and they had only one loaf with them in the boat. 15 And he cautioned them, saying, “Watch out; beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.” 16 And

they began discussing with one another the fact that they had no bread. 17 And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, “Why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? 18 Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear? And do you not remember? 19 When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?” They said to him, “Twelve.” 20 “And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?” And they said to him, “Seven.” 21 And he said to them, “Do you not yet understand?”

### **Introduction/Review:**

We are going to review the story of Jonah. I will say something and you will fill in information. Here goes: Jonah was a prophet of God. God told him to go to \_\_\_\_\_ [Nineveh]. Nineveh was the capital of Israel’s enemy, \_\_\_\_\_ [Assyria]. Jonah knew God would be gracious to Nineveh, so he chose not to go but rather to take a \_\_\_\_\_ [ship] in the opposite direction. However, when a storm came up, Jonah knew God was chastising him. So he told the \_\_\_\_\_ [sailors] to throw him overboard. A large fish, likely a \_\_\_\_\_ [whale], swallowed \_\_\_\_\_ [Jonah]. Jonah was in the belly of the fish \_\_\_\_\_ [three] days and \_\_\_\_\_ [three] nights before the large fish spit him out on \_\_\_\_\_ [dry land]. Then Jonah went to \_\_\_\_\_ [Nineveh], and the people repented of their \_\_\_\_\_ [sins] when Jonah preached to them.

We told this story because in the story about Jesus today, He referred to Jonah.

Jesus’ power as God was once again super amazing as He fed a huge crowd (4000 men besides woman and children) with seven loaves and a few fish on the southeast side of the Sea of Galilee. When Jesus sent the people to go to their homes, He and His disciples sailed west across the sea to a town called Magadan and/or the district of Dalmanutha. Neither of these places is clearly identifiable, but Bible scholars think they were in the vicinity of either Gennesaret (on the northwest side) or Tiberias (on the west side) of the Sea of Galilee. [Locate on a map.]

### **Story:**

#### ***A heavenly sign***

In Magadan, as in every place, crowds made up of Pharisees and Sadducees and common people found and followed Jesus. Knowing the usual ways of the Pharisees, you probably can guess what they were up to when they argued with Jesus and said, “Show us a sign from heaven.”\* Yes, they wanted to test and trap Him somehow so that they could have a good reason to have Him slain.

These people were always asking for a sign. In fact, they had asked for one soon after Jesus had fed 5000 with five loaves and two fish. Wasn’t that miracle a sign? On another occasion, they had asked for a sign, and Jesus had answered almost exactly what He does in today’s story.

So Jesus sighed deeply in his spirit [Teacher, sigh as if sorely grieved]. Then He said, “When it is evening, you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.’ And in the morning, ‘It will be stormy today, for the sky is red and threatening.’”

Here we have some interesting weather tips that were commonly known even in Jesus’ time. Today we have a little rhyme that says the same thing Jesus said. This is the rhyme: “Red sky at night, sailors’ delight; Red sky at morning, sailors take warning.” The red sky was a sign that they all understood.

#### ***The sign of Jonah***

Jesus continued, “You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times.\*\* An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah.”

This is almost exactly what Jesus had said in this same vicinity ten months before (*The Reese Chronological Bible*, pp. 1293, 1318). Listen. “An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given

to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Matthew 12:39, 40).

So, students, tell me, what was the sign of Jonah? [As Jonah was three days and nights in the belly of the fish, so Jesus would be buried three days and nights.]

Earlier Jesus had expanded the sign by saying, “The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here” (Matthew 12:41).

✓I wonder if some of these same Pharisees had been present the first time Jesus denounced them for not believing in Him when He gave them the sign of Jonah. ✓Perhaps that is why Mark’s Gospel records Jesus’ words as, “Why does this generation seek a sign? Truly, I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation,” as if to say, ✓“You already have your sign, but you won’t believe. There are no more signs for you.”

### ***The leaven of bread***

✓Jesus was done with these people for now. He left them, and He and the disciples again got into a boat to cross to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, this time probably north to the area of Bethsaida.

✓“Oh, oh,” one of the disciples might have said. “We have forgotten to get bread. We have only one loaf for the thirteen of us.” (Remember, the loaves then were not one-pound loaves but dinner-roll size.)

When they reached their destination, Jesus taught His disciples, cautioning them, “Watch out; beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees and the leaven of Herod.”

The disciples agreed among themselves, “Jesus is talking about leaven because we forgot to bring bread with us.”

Jesus, aware of their discussion, said to them, “Why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread? Don’t you perceive or understand yet? Are your hearts hardened? Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear? And do you not remember?” What a rebuke to the disciples! Jesus continued, “Think about it: When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?” [Teacher, see if your students can answer these questions.]

They answered, “Twelve.”

“And when we had seven loaves for the four thousand. How many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?”

They replied, “Seven.”

### ***The leaven of Pharisees, Sadducees, and of Herod***

Jesus said to them, “How is it that you fail to understand that I did not speak about bread? Beware of the *leaven* of the Pharisees and Sadducees and of Herod.”

“Oh!” said the disciples. “Now we understand. You didn’t mean to beware of the leaven of *bread* but of the *teaching* of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”

Remember, in Scripture leaven is usually a symbol of evil. Galatians 5:9 states, “A little leaven leavens the whole lump.” How does that happen? One commentator tells us, “[Leaven] passes secretly, silently, but certainly through the mass of dough. . . . ‘None can see its progress.’ So it was with the doctrines of the Pharisees. They . . . instilled them secretly into the mind, until they pervaded all the faculties like leaven” (Barnes at <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/barnes/matthew/16.htm>).

When I make bread, I need only a teaspoon of yeast for a whole loaf of bread. In fact, even less than a teaspoon would leaven a loaf to some extent. Have you ever had bread that had air pockets in one end of the

loaf, and none in the other? No, because the yeast is completely distributed throughout the dough.

[Refer to the chart found at the end of this lesson.] Here are some ways the wrong teachings of the Pharisee, Sadducees, and Herodians were like leaven:

1. They are at first slight and unimportant in appearance, just as leaven is small in quantity as compared with the mass that is to be leavened.
2. They are assimilated into the soul unawares and silently, and are difficult of detection.
3. They act gradually.
4. They act most certainly.
5. They will pervade all the soul, and bring all the faculties under their control.

Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians.

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\*“A sign from heaven - Some miraculous appearance in the sky. Such appearances had been given by the prophets; and they supposed, if he was the Messiah, that his miracles would not all be confined to the earth, but that he was able to give some signal miracle from heaven. Samuel had caused it to thunder 1 Samuel 12:16-18; Isaiah had caused the shadow to go back ten degrees on the dial of Ahaz Isaiah 38:8; and Moses had sent manna from heaven, Exodus 16:4; John 6:31. It is proper to say, that though Christ did not choose then to show such wonders, yet far more stupendous signs from heaven than these were exhibited at his death” (Barnes at <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/barnes/matthew/16.htm>).

\*\*“[I]f they had not been blind, they might easily have discerned, that the signs of the time of the Messiah's coming were upon them, and that Jesus was the Messiah; as the departure of the sceptre from Judah, the ending of Daniel's weeks, the various miracles wrought by Christ, the wickedness of the age in which they lived, the ministry of John the Baptist, and of Christ, the great flockings of the people, both to one and to the other, with divers other things which were easy to be observed by them: but they pretend this to be a very great secret” (Gill at <https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/matthew-16-1.html>).

### **Lessons from This Lesson:**

- Jesus is God: Again, He predicted his burial and resurrection.
- Beware of leaven—sin—in your life. You can't include a little sin in your life without affecting your whole soul. Jesus warned His disciples that they couldn't be a little bit hypocritical. Any hypocrisy (not practicing what they preached) would make them unreliable and sinful (<https://sundayschoolsources.com/lessons/leaven.htm>).
- When the Lord rebukes us through His Word or another person, we should take notice and change our ways.
- Beware of the leaven of false doctrine. Know the Bible so well that you discern right from wrong teaching.

### **Activities:**

- Play dough: loaves; fish; boat; big fish
- Sing “Feeding 4000” found in Lesson 28.58 or on the Songs page at [teachingthebibletochildren.org](http://teachingthebibletochildren.org).
- Sing first two stanzas of the song, “Jesus Healed . . .” found in Lesson 28.57 or on the Songs page at [teachingthebibletochildren.org](http://teachingthebibletochildren.org).
- Review questions: (Game: Print the photo of an unleavened loaf found below. Back with flannel or flocked scraps. Cut into ten pieces like a puzzle. Students may place a puzzle piece for each correct answer. Idea and questions #4–10 from <https://sundayschoolsources.com/lessons/leaven.htm>.)

True or false. Correct the false statements.

1. Jesus was delighted when the Pharisees asked Him for a sign from heaven. [False; grieved.]
2. Jesus repeated the sign of Jonah for the Pharisees. [True.]
3. The sign of Jonah is, “As Jonah was two days in the belly of the fish, so Jesus will be buried two days.” [False; three days.]
4. A little bit of sin doesn't hurt. [False; a little leaven leavens the lump.]
5. God hates all sin. [True.]
6. We can tell what's right from what's wrong. [True when we know the Bible.]
7. As long as we do more good than bad we'll be all right. [False; we need to confess our sins and repent of them.]
8. Sin spreads and grows when given the chance. [True.]
9. It's okay to sin as long as you ask forgiveness afterwards. [False; God hates all sin.]
10. Everyone will sin. [True.]

**Handwork:**

- Color the picture of the woman with leaven found below. In this picture the leaven, like the kingdom of heaven, is good.

**Memory Verse:**

- Matthew 12:40—“For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”

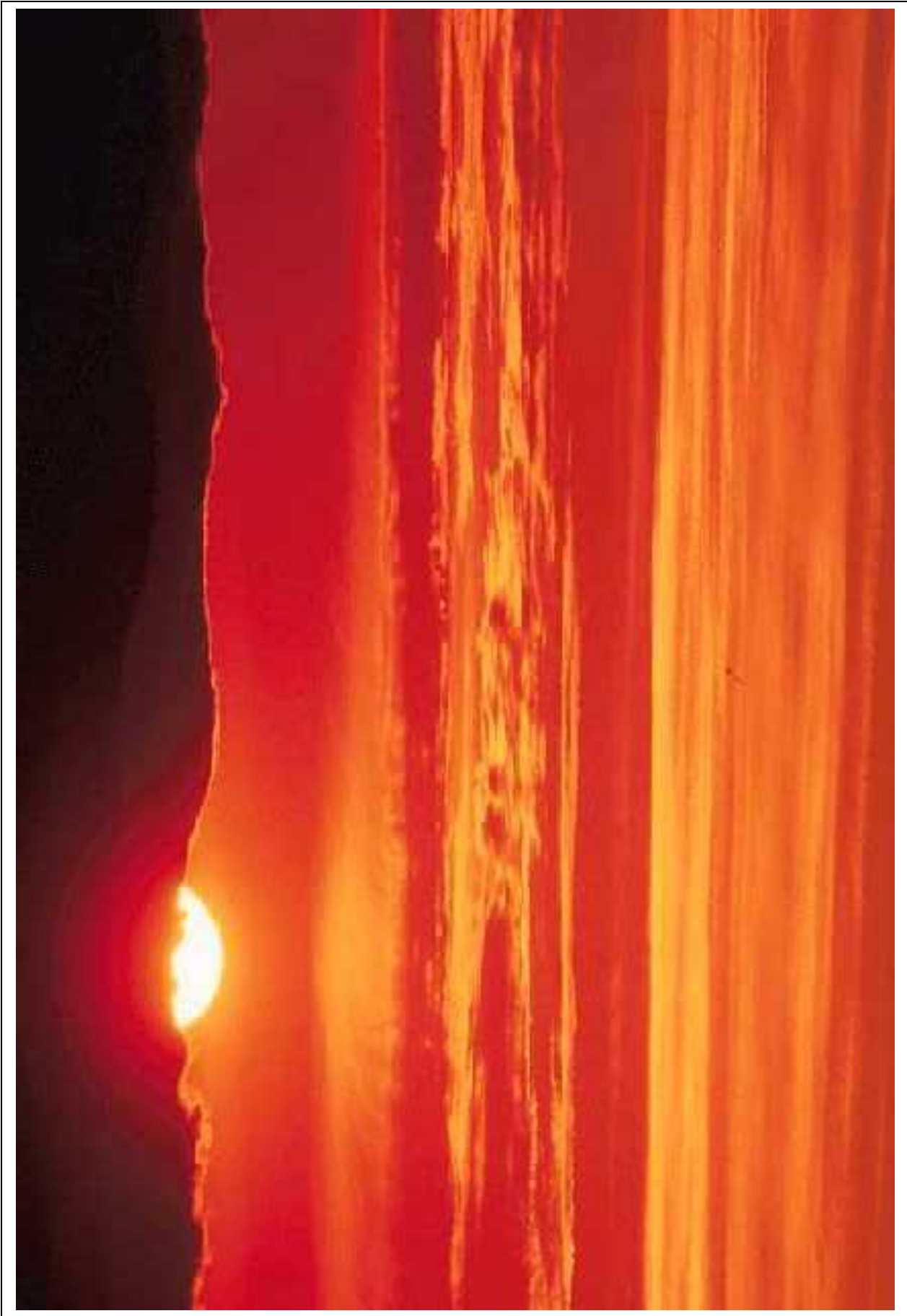
**sign**

**Pharisees**

**Sadducees**

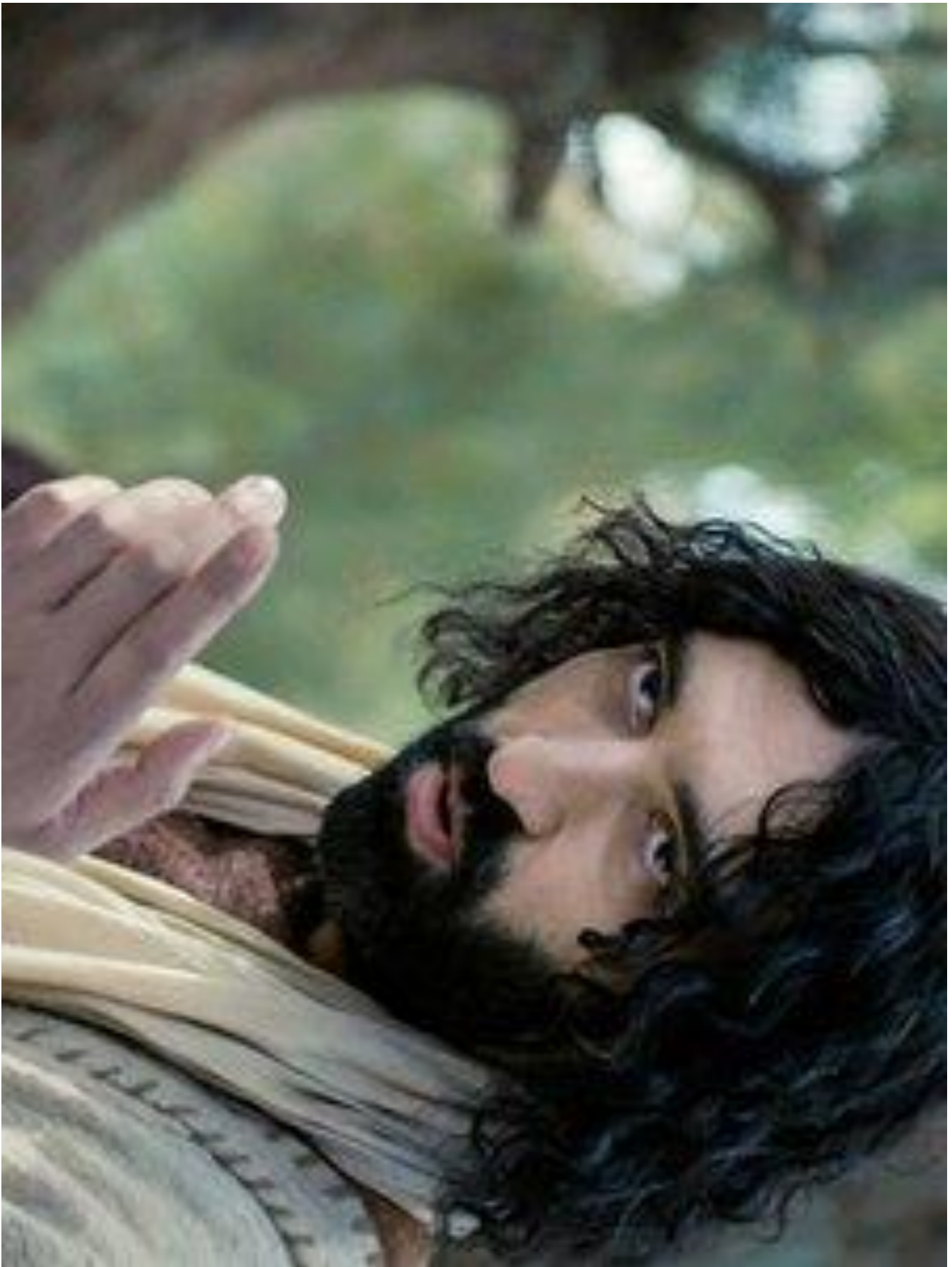
**Herodians**

**leaven**



<http://www.sundayeducation.com/2011/11/11/sailors-delight-matthew-161-12-daily-devotional/>









<https://www.findshepherd.com/leaven-of-pharisees-and-sadducees.html>

# **Ways in Which Wrong Teachings Are Like Leaven**

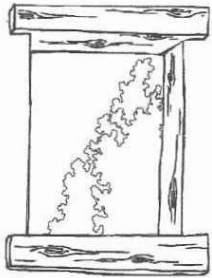
- 1. They are at first slight and unimportant in appearance, just as leaven is small in quantity as compared with the mass that is to be leavened.**
- 2. They are assimilated into the soul unawares and silently, and are difficult to detect.**
- 3. They act gradually.**
- 4. They act most certainly.**
- 5. They will pervade all the soul, and bring all the faculties under their control.**





<https://www.yellowpages.ca/tips/3-ways-to-enjoy-unleavened-bread/>

# The Kingdom of Heaven is Like...



## A Little Leaven

**Luke 13:20-21**

And again he said, "To what should I compare the kingdom of God? It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened."

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"Each day there was bread to be baked. This was usually done by women. They mixed the flour that they had milled with a little water. If the bread was to rise, they added a little dough from the previous day's bread, to act as yeast or 'leaven'. Then the dough was left to warm by the fire, so that the leaven could work its way through the dough. Finally the bread was ready to bake on the hot stones of a hearth."



**Adapted from The Kregel Pictorial Guide to Everyday Life in Bible Times  
by Tim Dowley**

**Sunday School Sources <http://www.eBibleTeacher.com/children> 2002**

**RED SKY AT NIGHT, SAILORS' DELIGHT;  
RED SKY AT MORNING, SAILORS TAKE WARNING.**