

Recap of 6/5/16 (Matthew 16:1-12):

1. In Matthew 16:1-12, the Pharisees and Sadducees confront Jesus in order to test Him. They demand a sign “from heaven” to authenticate His claims, something along the lines of turning the moon blood red, or making the sun stand still, or calling down, hail, rain, thunder, or fire. They reject, out of hand, all of the miracles He has already done, such as: healing the deaf, mute, blind, and lame, raising the dead, casting out demons, and feeding the 5,000 and the 4,000, which already authenticated His claims. Jesus dismisses their demand.

2. What makes this incident even more odd, is that the Pharisees and Sadducees had little in common and in fact opposed each other. The Pharisees were legalistic, dismissing the great truths of the Old Testament while adding hundreds of minute rules and traditions to the Law. They were hypocritical and prideful. The Sadducees, on the other hand, were worldly minded, rejected the supernatural (angels, resurrection, future punishment), were rationalists and secularists. What united them (especially in Jesus’ subsequent statements in Matt. 16) was insensitivity to spiritual things, especially concerning Jesus and His claims, and unbelief born of a human-centered mentality.

3. Later in the boat, Jesus warns His disciples against the “yeast” of the Pharisees and Sadducees, yeast being generally in Scripture an evil influence which though small has far-reaching effect. Unfortunately the disciples respond with breathtaking insensitivity to spiritual things, not unlike the Pharisees and Sadducees, thus the necessity for Jesus’ warning. They thought Jesus was talking about literal bread, because they had forgotten to bring bread on the trip. They later understood that He was talking about the teaching of the religious leaders which was bereft of spiritual insight and understanding. Having observed Jesus’ miracles of feeding the 5,000 and 4,000, they should have understood that He could not be talking about physical bread.

4. Instead of telling them plainly His meaning, Jesus challenged them to think.

-“Instead of explaining the meaning of the metaphor of the yeast, Jesus repeats it.... This suggest that Jesus, ... is trying to train His disciples to think deeply about the revelation he is giving them and is not content to keep on spoonfeeding them.” (Carson)

-paraphrasing Matthew Henry, Jesus didn’t tell them expressly what He meant—He repeated what He said—obligating them to work through it to arrive at what He meant. “And those truths are most precious which we have thus digged for.”

5. Some ways that we, like the religious leaders, out of spiritual insensitivity, follow human-centered thinking: a contemporary emphasis upon happiness as the goal of Christianity; rejecting the hard work of spiritual growth looking for short-cuts instead; replacing Bible study with proof-texting; rejecting Biblical truth to accommodate culture, and rejecting the uniqueness of Christianity and the exclusiveness of the gospel and of Jesus Christ to provide salvation.