

# **Beware of the Leaven of the Pharisees, Sadducees and Herod**

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Good afternoon, everyone. It's nice to see you all together here on the First Day of Unleavened Bread. And I'd like to give a nice warm welcome to all of you out there in what I like to call "DVD Land" who will be watching this later on DVDs or on CDs or seeing it on the website.

Brethren, over the last couple of weeks, we've all gone through a tradition that we do every single year, not only through that time but throughout the rest of this coming week that I think the world around us would find very strange. I'm sure if you spoke to a lot of your friends or neighbors or maybe even your unconverted family and mentioned, "Every single year I go to great effort to clean out all the leavening in my home and scrub and clean everything around in my car and in my space at work. I clean all the bread crumbs out of that and throw that away. Not only that but for an entire week, I don't eat anything leavened." They would probably look at that and go, "Why would you do that? That's kind of a strange custom. That's kind of odd. I've never heard of that." Well, it can certainly seem unusual to people who have never kept this, but, as you know, we go through this history and tradition every single year as a part of our religion.

In fact, what we're going to do today is take a look at "Why do we do this?" What are the Biblical instructions behind this particular command? What's the logic behind this? And we're also going to specifically look at several types of leaven that Jesus Christ specifically warned us about during His ministry because we're going to see there are several types where leaven in general is used as an analogy of sin. There are several types of leavening specifically pointed out and warned us about. And we're going to take some time specifically looking at those and see what that can mean for our lives today.

So, if you would like title for this sermon today, it's:

**Beware of the Leaven of the Pharisees, the Sadducees and Herod**

Let me just repeat that to make sure everyone gets this title. It's:

**Beware of the Leaven of the Pharisees, the Sadducees and Herod**

As I mentioned, we keep what a lot of people today would consider a rather strange custom. We go through all this de-leavening cleaning. We even do this when it's not convenient or life is stressful or trials are hitting us. We still make this effort to do all of this every single year. Why do we do this?

Well, let's take a look initially at what the Bible tells us as to why we do this. Let's turn to Exodus 12 and we'll see where the Bible first tells us to do this. It's Exodus 12 and we'll start reading in verse 15. It says:

**Exodus 12:15.** *Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses. For whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel.*  
16) *And on the first day there shall be a holy convocation, (NKJV)*

That's today. That's why we're having this service today.

**Exodus 12:16b.** *... and on the seventh day there shall be a holy convocation for you. No manner of work shall be done on them; but that which every one must—that only may be prepared by you.*  
17) *So you shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for on this same day I will have brought your armies out of the land of Egypt. Therefore you shall observe this day throughout your generations as an everlasting ordinance.*  
(NKJV)

In other words, they were to do this continually.

**Exodus 12:18.** *In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty-first day of the month at evening.*  
19) *For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses, since whoever eats what is leavened, that same person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is a stranger or a native of the land.*  
20) *[You] shall eat nothing leavened; in all your habitations [and you shall eat] unleavened bread. (NKJV)*

Now notice there are two different things here. One is leaven has to be put out and no one can eat leaven during that time frame. And the other is you have to eat unleavened bread. There are two different things here and we're going to look at what the meanings of these are as we go along.

But let's turn over to the next chapter here, to chapter 13, and let's see why Ancient Israel did this because we are going to see there are some parallels here. There were physical reasons why they did this and there are spiritual reasons today why we continue this same tradition. It's Exodus 13 and verse 3.

**Exodus 13:3.** *And Moses said to the people: "Remember this day in which you went out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand, the LORD brought you out of this place. No leavened bread shall be eaten.*  
4) *On this day you are going out, in the month Abib.*  
5) *And it shall be, when the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, which He swore*

*to your fathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, that you shall keep this service in this month.*

*6) Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a feast to the LORD.*

*7) Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days. And no leavened bread shall be seen among you, nor shall leaven be seen among you in all your quarters.*

*8) And you shall tell your son in that day, saying, 'This is done because ...'  
(NKJV)*

And we're about to read here why Ancient Israel was doing this.

***Exodus 13.8b.*** ... *because of what the LORD did for me when I came up from Egypt.*

*9) It shall be s a sign to you on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, that the LORD'S law may be in your mouth; for with a strong hand the LORD has brought you out of Egypt.*

*10) You shall therefore keep this ordinance in its season from year to year.'*  
(NKJV)

Now notice, this is telling us this is much more than just a tradition or a custom that we go through. This is a commandment. This is something God tells us we must do, but we see here the reason Ancient Israel was doing this. It was a picture to them of being brought out of slavery, of what God had done to deliver them from being enslaved by the Egyptians.

To realize this, I'm going to summarize some of the details here that we won't go through specifically reading it. But I'm sure if you are familiar with the story, you realize when God delivered them from this, it required Him performing a good number of miracles. It wasn't just that Israel packed up all their bags and decided, "Hey, we're leaving. We're tired of this," and they all left. It wasn't that simple. They didn't do that on their own power. God performed a number of miracles. He performed a number of plagues upon the Egyptians, which basically totally wiped out the power of the Egyptians.

And even then, when they [the Ancient Israelites] were able to leave, He was still performing miracles for them. They get all the way up to the Red Sea. They have the sea in front of them. They have mountains on each side of them. They have a pursuing army behind them. And then God parts the Red Sea and performs another miracle, enables them to get through. Of course, He then encloses the sea and drowns Pharaoh's armies pursuing them. Then, as they are journeying beyond that, He rains manna down upon them. There were numerous miracles that were performed here.

My point in all of this is: They could not have done this on their own power.

Physically they were not capable of their own ability, to be able to come out of slavery with this. This required God's intervention and His help to do this. You'll see later why I'm making a point of this.

But as I mentioned, there are a lot of parallels between what they did physically and what we today do spiritually, because we're not just looking at coming physically as a nation out of physical slavery, we have a totally more spiritual purpose as to why we do this.

So, to understand this, let's turn over to 1 Corinthians 5 and we can see the purpose as to why we do this today. It's 1 Corinthians 5 and before we get to the part here of exactly explaining the symbols of Unleavened Bread and such as we keep today, it's important to understand the context of what Paul is addressing here in this chapter because that's going to help us really understand the meaning here.

Starting here in verse 1, he says:

**1 Corinthians 5:1.** *It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you and such sexual immorality as is not been named among the Gentiles—that a man has his father's wife. (NKJV)*

In other words, they had a guy here attending the congregation that was involved in an adulterous affair with his stepmother, basically the wife of his father. And as Paul is saying here, "This is scandalous even by Gentile standards." In other words, this isn't even reported among them. And Corinth was a pretty... Corinth was kind of like Las Vegas to compare it to today's world. And he's saying basically, "This is even scandalous amongst their culture, let alone in the Church of God." That's what he's addressing here.

And notice in verse 2:

**1 Corinthians 5:2.** *And you are puffed up and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you. (NKJV)*

Notice that they were being very tolerant of this. A common theme in today's society, especially amongst, you might say, the more staunchly liberal minded individuals, we hear a lot about tolerance. We should be tolerant and open minded, lots of lifestyles and lots of perspectives and such.

Don't get me wrong. There is a place for tolerance. I mean just getting along with each other as Christians. We all have our faults. We all have our shortcomings and there is a certain amount of tolerance we have to have just putting up with each other. That's inherent in marriages. You have different personalities and different quirks and to successfully get along with each other, there is a certain amount of tolerance in just putting up with each other's shortcomings that takes place.

What was happening here was the Church at Corinth was just openly tolerating a man who was basically living a double life. He's coming to services and representing himself as a Christian, as a member of the Church of God and he's openly, blatantly violating one of the Ten Commandments. He's not trying to come out of it. He's basically living a double life. He has his life in the Church and he has his life he's doing on the side and he's openly living in an adulterous relationship.

So, Paul is basically correcting them saying, "Look! You're being too tolerant here." As one of my professors at Ambassador used to love to joke, he goes, "You can be so open-minded your brains fall out." And that's basically what was happening here. They were just being, "Well, we'll just be totally accepting of him. We kind of know it's wrong, but you know, hey, maybe if he's around us maybe some good will rub off on him." And that's the perspective they were taking of this. Paul is being very corrective of this.

So, let's just continue reading here in verse 3.

**1 Corinthians 5:3.** *For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) [concerning] him who has so done this deed.*

4) *In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,*

5) *deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. (NKJV)*

Basically what he's saying is, "Don't allow this guy to attend services." He's saying basically, "Disfellowship him and as long as he is in this mindset and is actively taking part in this behavior, don't allow him to attend. Don't have him as part of the fellowship."

Now, if you are familiar with the story in the second letter to the Corinthians (in 2 Corinthians), the guy has repented at that point and changed from this lifestyle. And Paul reverses this decision. He says, "The guy has repented. Give him a break. Take him back into the congregation now."

But he's getting on to them saying, "You shouldn't be allowing this to take place in the congregation. This is bad." Why is this? Let's notice the next couple of verses here. And this will explain to us the whole analogy of leaven here. He said. This is verse 6.

**1 Corinthians 5:6.** *Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leavens the whole lump?*

7) *Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ our Passover, was sacrificed for us.*

8) *Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. (NKJV)*

Now, he's explaining here basically what the symbols mean of taking out leavening and eating unleavened bread.

But before I get to that, let me just notice one point here. Notice he says here, "Therefore let us keep the feast." The reason I point that out, there's a popular idea today (and you might say in the Protestant and Catholic oriented worlds of popular Christianity today) that these holy days are no longer valid today. That basically these were old Jewish traditions. They were relevant in the Old Covenant and once Jesus Christ came and died for our sins and was nailed to the cross, all this was... He freed us from this and this was all done away with.

Well this reason I point this out is this is coming from the apostle to the Gentiles.

This is coming from the apostle Paul who was not even converted until Acts 9. In other words, Christ had already come to earth, died, been resurrected, and all that was done before this man was even converted. He's the apostle to the Gentiles and he is writing to a predominately Gentile congregation. What he's saying to them, is "Therefore let us keep the feast." He's teaching them to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread. So, obviously these holy days are still valid and in effect for us today.

Let's notice the analogies he's making here. Notice he's talking about leaven and he refers to leaven as malice and wickedness, and to unleavened bread as sincerity and truth. We see here basically what these two aspects are about.

Notice when we went through Exodus, we mentioned that there were two major aspects to this whole season. One is getting rid of leaven and the other is eating unleavened bread. Leaven is a picture of sin. As he mentioned, it's malice and wickedness. In other words, it's sin. It's the violation of God's Law. It's evil. And basically it's used as a symbol for that. The unleavened bread is used as a symbol for righteousness. That's why he tells us. You need to put away the sin. You need to take on the righteousness. That's basically what we're doing here in picturing this in the New Covenant.

But also notice here when he talks about "Because Christ has been your Passover, you indeed are unleavened."

Notice when I talked about in the Old Covenant when Israel physically came out of Egypt that to do that required numerous miracles. They didn't just decide, "Do you know what? We want to get out of here. We're tired of this place. We're tired of all this work. We're going to pack our bags and leave." It didn't work quite that easily. God had to step in and perform numerous miracles to allow this to be possible for them. They could not have done it on their own power.

Well, there is a very similar lesson here when we look at it from our standpoint spiritually. We use a lot of analogies around leavening this time of year.

Think of a big loaf of leavened bread. You go to the store and you get a big loaf of bread. It's big and fluffy and it's full of leaven. There is no physical way possible to de-leaven that bread. That is not possible. The only thing you can do is throw that away and make some unleavened bread. You can't de-leaven that bread.

But yet he talks about we are "unleavened." It requires a miracle to make that happen. That's the whole need for why Jesus Christ had to die for our sins, why that sacrifice happened, why that has to be applied for us. When we were baptized and our sins are wiped away, then we receive His holy spirit because it requires that spirit for us to follow this way of life and to follow a life of being unleavened. We aren't capable of doing it on our own. And that's a very important point to realize with this.

To also realize kind of what leaven is about and why Paul is using this example in this setting. You understand the physical qualities of leaven. Leaven basically puffs bread up. It also spreads very easily. You can take a small amount of leaven and a lot of dough. Put that little bit of leaven in there, give it a little bit of time and it will spread through the whole thing. You can make dough, leave it out exposed to the air and just do nothing else—not put any leaven in it—and the yeast spores in the air will get absorbed into the dough and can leaven that bread. He's basically playing off of that analogy when he says "Don't you know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?"

Because follow the logic of what was happening here. This was a man involved basically in... Not just having a few faults, not just having his shortcomings. He was actively involved in an adulterous relationship. He has to know this is wrong. He's blatantly violating one of the Ten Commandments. So, he's obviously in a rebellion against God in his lifestyle.

But the congregation is talking the point of view of "Well, as long as we have him here and we're nice to him. Yeah, we know it's wrong, but as long as we're nice to him, maybe we'll kind of rub off on him and we'll help unleaven him." And Paul is saying no. The opposite is what is going to happen because if you allow him into the congregation what's going to happen is his current behavior is going to leaven everybody else.

Because things like this are going to happen: He's going to set an example to the rest of the congregation who look at this and say, "Well, hey. If it's not that bad for him, and he's still allowed to come, and God hasn't struck him dead, I kind of really like my girlfriend. We're talking about marriage and we're in love with each other. And, hey my girlfriend's not married to somebody else like the girl he's making out with. So, it can't be that bad if we start having sex because we're counseling for marriage." And you kind of see the logic of what's going to happen. And this is going to start to spread.

This is why a little leaven leavens the whole lump because the point Paul's getting at here is: You're not going to unleaven him. He's going to leaven the congregation is what's going to happen.

And that's why he's basically saying, "Don't allow him to come." That's the whole idea because leaven is a picture of sin. And if we allow sin in one part of our lives and we don't actively try to get rid of it... We never become completely unleavened in this lifetime. We all have Christ's sacrifice applied to us, but we'll for the rest of our lives be trying to get all the sin out of lives because that's just who we are. But if we're not actively fighting it, that little bit of leaven starts to grow and it grows more and more and it starts taking over our lives just like leaven does with bread. That's why it's used as that analogy.

Why is it that we are so vulnerable to this leavening process? Why is that the case? We're going to spend a little bit of time today really understanding why we are so vulnerable to that. To kind of introduce that I just wanted to share a story with you. This is a story that my math teacher at Ambassador College used to tell all the time. I'll give you the disclaimer ahead of time that I have no idea whether this is actually historically accurate or not. So understand that. That's not my point in telling this. I just like the moral to the story. But the way my math teacher always told it was supposedly at some point in Albert Einstein's life he was asked this question.

And he said he was asked the question, "If you had a very difficult math problem to solve and you had only five minutes to do it in and your life depended on it, what would you do?" Supposedly Albert Einstein's answer was, "I would spend three minutes reading the question." In other words, I would make sure I completely understood what the problem was and what I'm trying to address before I exhausted the effort to deal with it and make sure that I know what I'm taking on here.

Well, I'm going to take a similar approach to that because I think it's important for us to spend three minutes reading the question. If we're going to de-leaven our lives here, we need to understand what we are up against and really what the problem is that we're trying to solve. To do that we really have to look at what the heart of human nature is about, who we are inside and how we are inherently wired because that's what we're up against.

And it's important to realize we live today in a society heavily influenced by the field of psychology.

Understand, when I mention that, I'm not by any means suggesting everything about psychology is bad because just like the physical sciences, they've come up with a lot of good things. But there are a number of physical sciences that, when they formulate various theories about things, will reason from the standpoint of assuming evolution to be a fact. And they will base theories upon that. And when you do that, you come up with flawed reasoning.

The field of psychology has affected our society in similar ways. The reason I say that is because most psychological perspectives come from the viewpoint that basically human beings are essentially innately good. Deep down inside human beings are innately good. And, as a result of that, that means your solution to the problem is you



have to get people back in touch with that innate goodness inside themselves and that is the solution to their problems. This is a very, very flawed idea and we have to realize that problem to realize what we are up against.

So, let's look Biblically at the idea of what the Bible tells us about human nature. Turn with me over to Jeremiah 10 verse 23. We're just going to spend a little time here looking at what the Bible tells us about human nature. It says:

**Jeremiah 10:23.** *O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his [paths]. (NKJV)*

In other words, the answers are not inside us. A lot of times we think we just have to get in touch with that innate goodness inside us and that's going to guide us in the way. That's not true. We don't have the answers inside of us. We're not capable of knowing the right way to go.

And why is that? Turn over to Jeremiah 17. It's Jeremiah 17; we're going to start in verse 5. It says:

**Jeremiah 17:5.** *Thus says the LORD: "Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the LORD.  
6) For he shall be like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see when good comes, But shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land which is not inhabited. (NKJV)*

Notice it didn't say here, "Good will never come to this guy." That's not what it said. It said, "When good comes, he won't see it." In other words, we're blinded. Our human nature, we are inherently delusional. We do not see things appropriately. The best choices can be right in front of us and we won't see it if we're trusting in our own ability.

Continuing in verse 7:

**Jeremiah 17:7.** *Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, and whose hope is in the LORD.  
8) For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, which spreads out its roots by the river, and will not fear when heat comes; but its leaf will be green, and will not be anxious in the year of drought, nor will cease from yielding fruit. (NKJV)*

Notice it doesn't say that the guy trusting in God that adversity and bad things won't ever come his way. No, it says it will but he'll be able to endure through it. He won't be destroyed by it.

But why is this that the man who trusts in himself just won't do well at all? Continue in verse 9.

**Jeremiah 17:9.** *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;*

*10). I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings. (NKJV)*

See we are not inherently good inside. We're inherently evil. Basically when you get down to the core of us, we're inherently inclined to go towards destructive behavior, destructive to ourselves and destructive to others around us. We don't make good decisions on our own.

The deceptive part is like you see the example in the Garden of Eden. There was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. When man goes his own way, it's a combination of good and evil. There is some good in there in how it's done. And we can deceive ourselves thinking, "Well, there are good examples here. There are good things that people do." Yes, there is. And it's all combined with evil as well. It's like Mr. Armstrong used to always say, "You can put a little bit of arsenic in a good thing of orange juice. The orange juice is great for you but the arsenic will kill you." We just have to realize that is the case. And that's why we oftentimes get deceived with this.

I was discussing with my niece yesterday about a paper that I had written while I was in graduate school. I did a Master's Degree in Counseling and I had to write a paper basically espousing what your theory of counseling was about, kind of how you saw human nature and how you would go about solving people's problems.

I had this one professor. He was a really tough grader. I had to work my tail off to get an A in this man's class. And at the end of the class, kind of the capstone assignment we were given was a paper we had to write basically espousing our theory of counseling. When he graded it... I'd worked my tail off on doing this paper and he gave me an A on it. He was very complimentary on it. But the one thing he took great exception to was my theory of human nature because the number one source that I quoted... If you got to my bibliography, we ranked all of our sources by how often we used them. The number one source on my paper was the New King James translation of the Bible. So, I had actually used a number of scriptures on human nature to say "This is my view of human nature and we're innately evil." He couldn't understand how I could come up with that conclusion. Personally, I couldn't really understand how you could look at world history and watch the news and come up with the alternate conclusion.

But really here is the core of the issue.

I chose not to engage him in this discussion because he gave me an A. I thought, "Why argue about it further?" I thought it was just wiser to shut up and move on.

But if you engage someone like that in a discussion like this, what will come out is, yes, they can acknowledge there is lots of evil in the world. And, yes, those crazy terrorists that strap bombs on themselves and bombs on their children and do this, yes, that's evil, but me and my family are good. There's lots of good around.

What it comes down to is if you believe that human nature is evil, that means it has to be me too because it is me too. We have to realize the problem is in the mirror. It's us.

Let's continue to look at this idea. Turn over to Romans 8 and verse 5.

**Romans 8:5.** *For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.*

6) *For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.*

7) *Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; ... (NKJV)*

Now, a better translation of that is "hostile." We are literally hostile against God's Word.

**Romans 8:7b.** *... for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.*

8) *So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. (NKJV)*

In other words, it's not possible.

**Romans 8:9.** *But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.*

10) *And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.*

11) *But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. (NKJV)*

Now notice it says in here the carnal mind is not capable, it is inherently hostile to God's Law; it is inherently hostile to His way; and it's not capable of being subject to it.

Notice when I mentioned when Ancient Israel came out of slavery in Egypt, numerous miracles had to be performed to make that happen. They were not capable of doing that on their own physical power. We're not capable of coming out of sin on our own power either. It's not a matter of just having morals and having willpower and trying to go the right way. When it's all said and done, we brought a knife to a gunfight, which is what we're about to see here in a minute with what we're up against. We have to have reinforcements. We have to have God's spirit to change our nature to enable us to do this because we cannot do it on our own.

And why is that? What are we really up against? Let's turn over to Ephesians 6. It's Ephesians 6 and we're going to start in verse 10 because what we need to understand here is the power that is behind what we call human nature. Ephesians 6:10. It says:

**Ephesians 6:10.** *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.*

11) *Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. (NKJV)*

Notice that we're up against the devil. And particularly take note of verse 12.

***Ephesians 6:12.*** *For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.*

13) *Therefore take up the whole Armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. (NKJV)*

Notice it says what we're up against is Satan and his demons who are broadcasting and affecting our minds. That's the heart and core of where this evil human nature comes from.

Now, notice he says to deal with this you need to put on the armor of God. In other words, you ain't capable of handling this battle on your own. You brought a knife to a gunfight if you're doing this on your own. And if you bring a knife to a gunfight you should expect to lose. That's not a battle you're going to win.

Just to follow the same idea, turn over to Ephesians 2:1.

***Ephesians 2:1.*** *And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, 2) in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, (NKJV)*

Referring to Satan the devil here and his demons and that spirit winds up, like I said, inherently in us and affecting our minds. That's why it's called "sons of disobedience.

***Ephesians 2:3.*** *among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature... (NKJV)*

Notice that. What is our nature?

***Ephesians 2:3b.*** *... children of wrath, just as the others. (NKJV)*

In other words, that was us too. Before we we're converted we are inherently "children of wrath," but even after we're converted we have to constantly fight that because if we stop that it's just like leaven. If you don't fight it, it's going to take over the bread. And that's what... We're in that same situation.

But continuing on here in verse 4:

**Ephesians 2:4.** *But God, who is rich in love and mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,*  
5) *even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),*  
6) *and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,*  
7) *that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*  
8) *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,*  
9) *not of works, lest anyone should boast.*  
10) *For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. (NKJV)*

Again, it seems the miracle is required for us to be unleavened. It requires us receiving Christ's sacrifice to cover our sins, but it also requires us receiving His holy spirit and continuing to yield to that going forward on a regular basis to continue to become unleavened because, if we stop that, the leaven starts to take over.

But we have to realize what we're up against is not just changing from "Yeah, I've made some mistakes in my past. And, yeah, I want to turn away from some of that behavior and I'm repenting just of those mistakes." No, we are repenting of who we are because we are the problem. It's not just "I've done some bad things in my life." It's "I'm inherently evil. And if I don't have Jesus Christ's not only His sacrifice but His spirit to help me to change out of that, then I'm just going to stay evil because I am the problem." We have to realize it's not just "I've made a few bad decisions" or "I've made a few mistakes in my life." It is "I am the problem and it's yielding to this that is going to solve that problem."

Again, it's very important. I think sometimes when we look at this subject to spend three minutes reading the question, realizing what is it we're trying to overcome. We're trying to overcome not just what we've done; we're trying to overcome who we are in our own inherent nature. That's what we have to fight everyday.

And when we look at the spiritual side of de-leavening our lives, that's what we're up against. That's the battle that we're fighting. And if we try to do that on our own, we brought a knife to a gunfight. We should expect to lose because we're outgunned.

As I mentioned, what we're going to do today is also specifically look at several types of leaven that Jesus Christ made a point of pointing out to us. As we have seen, leaven in general pictures sin and sin is the transgression of God's law. Sin is evil. Sin is something we want to avoid and get out of our lives as a general rule. But Christ made a point of pointing out specific types of leaven and making examples of those. Because He made a big deal out of this, I think it's meaningful for us to take a look at these and understand what He was referring to and also try to see what areas this might apply to us today in our world, in our lives.

So, to do that, turn over to Mark 8. It's Mark 8 and we're going to start in verse 13.

**Mark 8:13.** *And He left them, and getting into the boat again, departed to the other side.*

14) *Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, and they did not have more than one loaf with them in the boat.*

15) *Then He charged them, saying, "Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod. (NKJV)*

Now this is two of the three that we're going to look at today.

**Mark 8:16.** *And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "[Is it] because we have no bread [?]"*

17) *But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, "Why do you reason because you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive nor understand? Is your heart still 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 fragments did you take up?" They said to Him, "Twelve."*

20) *"Also when I broke the seven for the four thousand, how many large baskets full of fragments did you take up?" And they said, "Seven."*

21) *So, He said to them, "How is it you do not understand?" (NKJV)*

He doesn't explain here what He is referring to. And we're going to see the parallel account. But just notice what's happening here. They're focusing on the physical aspect of this and going, "He's talking about leaven. Is He upset that we didn't bring bread with us?" They're not getting it that He's talking about a spiritual analogy and He's playing off the spiritual symbols that we've already talked about here.

But this is only part of the story here. If you would, turn over to Matthew 16. We're going to see another account of this same event. Now, what we're going to read here in Matthew 16 is Matthew's account of the exact same event. In other words, this is the exact same conversation and the exact same series of events that played out. So, to get the entire picture what we have to do is put both of them together.

It's kind of like two people heard a conversation. One of them tells you some and leaves a few pieces out. And you talk to somebody else and they give you more. They kind of mention some of the pieces that somebody else didn't mention. But if you put them together, you get a better idea what was said. It's kind of a similar idea here. We have to put together both accounts to get exactly what happened. And if we do that, we get a clearer understanding of what He's referring to. So, it's Matthew 16:5.

**Matthew 16:5.** *Now when His disciples had come to other side, they had forgotten to take bread,*

6) *Then Jesus to them, "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." (NKJV)*

Now notice He mentions... Before He said the Pharisees and Herod; this time He says the Pharisees and Sadducees. When we put them together what we realize is what He fully said in this conversation was "beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and of Herod. That's why I gave this as the title because we're going to talk about all three of these types of leaven as to what we're referring to.

Picking up in verse 7:

**Matthew 16:7.** *And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "[Is it] because we have taken no bread [?]"*

8) *But Jesus [perceived it and He said], "O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread?"*

9) *Do you not yet understand, or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets you took up?*

10) *Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many large baskets you took up?*

11) *How is it that you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread?—but [you should] beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. (NKJV)*

Now notice in verse 12 because this gives us some understanding as to what He's talking about.

**Matthew 16:12.** *Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees. (NKJV)*

This gives us a clear idea of exactly what He's referring to. The Pharisees and Sadducees were both religious groups in the time that Jesus Christ was walking on the earth. And when He is saying, beware of their doctrines, He's referring to their teachings, to the ideas that they espoused and taught. By calling them leaven, He's saying, these ideas lead people into sin. That's really what He's getting at here because leaven is a picture of sin. So, He's saying that their ideas, their doctrines, their philosophies that they teach tend to lead people into sin.

So, what exactly is He referring to here? And, more importantly, what does that mean to us? Well, to understand that first of all we need to clear up some misunderstandings.

The reason I say that is in regards to the teachings of the Pharisees, having grown up in the Church of God ever since, literally, since I was born (all my life), there were a number of times growing up I heard the idea taught that the problem with the Pharisees that was really just hypocrisy. It wasn't that there was anything wrong with their teachings. It's just they said one thing and they did another. And they didn't follow through with what they practiced. There are a couple of scriptures that idea is based

upon. As you can imagine, the logic of that is directly contradictory to what we just read here. So, let's address that first of all and clear that up to understand what these scriptures are referring to and then we'll come back and explain what the doctrine of the Pharisees is referring to here.

For starters here, let's turn over to Luke 12 and let's see that the Pharisees definitely had a problem with hypocrisy and Christ is very direct about that one. Luke 12 and verse 1, it says:

**Luke 12:1.** *In the meantime, when an innumerable multitude of people had gathered together, so that they trampled one another, He began to say to His disciples first of all, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. 2) For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known. 3) Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops. (NKJV)*

Now notice here, He refers to the leaven of the Pharisees as hypocrisy. Remember that leaven is a picture of sin and we're talking about a group of people here. They can definitely have more than one sin. If you just think of us as individuals, we all definitely have more than one sin that we're guilty of. We can have numerous faults. So, when He's referring to leaven, He's referring specifically to their sins. But He mentions here that they are hypocrites. And if you read through the gospels, Christ blasts them numerous times for this. He's very severe too at times in His chastisement of them. And being hypocrites is one of the big things He beats them up for. It's because they put on a front of righteousness but they didn't live up to a lot of the things that they said. They were truly hypocrites.

With that in mind, turn over to Matthew 23 because here is the key scripture that oftentimes causes some people some misunderstandings here. Matthew 23:1.

**Matthew 23:1.** *Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, 2) Saying, "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. 3) Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works, for they say, and [they] do not do. (NKJV)*

Now, notice He's referring to their hypocrisy here. They teach one thing but they don't follow through on their own teachings.

But he's saying here "They sit in Moses' seat and what they tell you, you need to do that." So this is where this idea comes from of "Okay, then, their teachings were okay. It was just that they didn't live with that." Well, as we know, that directly contradicts what we just read about the leaven of the Pharisees being their doctrines.



So, how do we understand this? To understand what He's referring to here, we need to understand what is meant by the seat of Moses and what directly is being referred to here. If we look back in the Old Testament here at Exodus 18, we can understand what is being referred to here as the seat of Moses. This will clear this subject up. It's Exodus 18 and verse 13.

**Exodus 18:13.** *And so it was on the next day, that Moses sat to judge the people, and the people stood before Moses from morning until evening. (NKJV)*

Now just notice one detail here. Moses is sitting down doing the judging of them. The people are standing before him.

**Exodus 13:14.** *So when Moses' father-in-law saw all that he did for the people, he said, "What is this thing that you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit, and all the people stand before you from morning until evening?"*

*15) And Moses said to his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me to inquire of God.*

*16) When they have a difficulty, they come to me, and I judge between one and another; and I make known the statutes of God and His laws. (NKJV)*

Now I just read this out of the New King James Translation. And if you have a similar translation, you'll notice when the word "difficulty" here, it says "When they have a difficulty," you'll see a little <sup>1</sup> next to it. In the margin it says "dispute." And if you read the context here, you'll see he's judging between one and another. Obviously, we're talking about people having a dispute. He's making civil judgments. That's what's happening.

He's running a nation here and people are coming before him. Let's just make up an example here. Say you have a dispute with your neighbor over a tree in your yard or a property line or whatever the civil issue is. And they're arguing over this and they're coming before Moses saying, "Well, I think I'm right because of this." And the other person, "I think I'm right because of this." And they're disputing over this and Moses is being the judge making civil judgments to administer these types of things.

We won't take the time to read all the rest of this account, but what Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, tells him is "Look, you're one person and you've got this huge nation. This is not going to work." He's basically saying, "Look, Moses. Do the math. This is not going to work. You're one person. You've got all of them. You're wearing yourself out; you're wearing the people out. This is not a successful scenario. You need to delegate this."

So what Moses winds up doing is he sets up a hierarchy of people with various responsibilities in making civil judgments and appoints them to handle a lot of this. And, basically, just the most complicated issues are then brought up to him.

The point I'm getting at here is when Christ referred to the Pharisees as being in the Seat of Moses, this is what He's talking about. He's talking about that they were in a position in the governmental structure that existed at that time where they are making civil judgments. They're a civil authority in the area.

And He's saying, "When they are in this authority and they are making appropriate judgments, you should be subject to the governing authorities (which we're going to look at later in the Bible). That's basically what He's teaching them there.

He is not telling them, "Hey, their doctrines are all great and you should do whatever they say. Just don't do as they do." Because if you read through the rest of that chapter, Matthew 23, one of the things He calls them is blind guides. He calls them vipers. He calls them snakes. He calls them whitewashed tombs. He blasts them throughout the rest of that chapter. So, even in the context of that chapter, it wouldn't make sense for Him to be saying, "Hey, all their teachings are great. Just don't do as they do," because He directly chastises that. This is what He's referring to—civil judgments.

Just to back this up, let me quote from an article I pulled off the internet specifically on this subject. It's an article entitled Do As The Pharisees Say?" And I'm sure I'll butcher the man's name who wrote this, but it's Avram Yehoshua. I'm going to quote just a paragraph out of this article. He says:

The Scribes, Pharisees and Rabbis, etc., had authority to adjudicate, or to judge legal matters in the bet din, the courts of Israel. They could also act as legislators and enact laws for the community. It's these positions of authority that [Jesus] was speaking of for His followers to obey (adjudicative and legislative), not their doctrines.<sup>1</sup>

So that's what He's referring to when He refers to the seat of Moses.

Now this is consistent with exactly what Paul tells us over in Romans 13. It's Romans 13 and we'll start reading in verse 1. It says:

**Romans 13:1.** *Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.*

2) *Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.*

3) *For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same.*

4) *For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on who practices evil.*

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<sup>1</sup> Avram Yehoshua, "Do As The Pharisees Say?!", <http://www.seedofabraham.net/doas.htm>

- 5) *Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath, but for conscience' sake.*
- 6) *For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing.*
- 7) *Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor. (NKJV)*

So, see what Paul is saying here is again very much backing up exactly what Christ was saying. It's our job as Christians to be subject to the governing authorities. We are to be obedient and follow along their rules unless, of course (and we're going to see this in just a moment), they directly tell us to disobey God. That's an exception where you don't follow that. But he's saying our job is not to be fighting authority. It's not to be rebelling against the government. Even when you don't like their policies, our job is to be as obedient and submissive to that authority, again, as much as possible as appropriate unless, of course, they're telling us to directly disobey God.

Now just to cover that point, turn over quickly to Acts 5 because we're going to see an example here where the apostles did directly tell the authorities, "We're not going to submit." But we're going to see what the example was. It's Acts 5 and we'll start reading in verse 17.

**Acts 5:17.** *Then the high priest rose up, and all those who were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation, 18) and laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison. (NKJV)*

Now notice that they've quite frankly unjustly taken the apostles, they've seized them and they've thrown them in jail. But you notice through all of this the apostles aren't violently resisting them. They're submitting to this. This is unjust in how their being treated but just notice how they're handling this.

**Acts 5:19.** *But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, 20) Go stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life." 21) And when they heard that, they entered the temple early in the morning and taught. But the high priest and those with him came and called the council together, with all the elders of the children of Israel and sent to the prison to have them brought. (NKJV)*

Now notice when the angel came and picked them up, he told them "Go teach." So this has come directly from God.

**Acts 5:22.** *But when the officers came and did not find them in the prison, they returned and reported,*

23) saying, "Indeed we found the prison shut securely, and the guards standing outside before the doors; but when we opened them, we found [nobody] inside!" (NKJV)

You can just imagine their surprise at this. All of a sudden, "Where did they go?"

Verse 24:

**Acts 5:24.** Now when the high priest, the captain of the temple, and the chief priests heard these things, they wondered what the outcome would be.

25) So one came and told them, saying, "Look, the men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people!"

26) Then the captain went with the officers and brought them without violence, for they feared the people, lest they should be stoned.

27) And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest asked them,

28) saying, "Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!"

29) But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men. (NKJV)

Now notice what happened here is the governing authorities were directly telling them not to do what God had directly told them to do. In that case, they said, look, God trumps you. I've got to obey God rather than men. Sorry. You can throw me in prison. You can try to kill me for doing this, but I'm going to have to submit to God regardless.

But notice they didn't violently resist when they were being thrown in prison. They were as submissive and as respectful as they could be to the authorities who were doing this. Now they told them what they were doing was wrong.

But at the same time my point is they're [the apostles] are not fighting against them [the council] in that regard. This is the whole point of what Christ was getting at when He said, the Pharisees here sit in Moses' Seat.

So in other words, when they make a civil judgment, when they are making a ruling in this regard, you should be cooperative; you should listen to this. But let me warn you. Don't do what they do. Don't follow their example. They're horrible examples. Don't follow their doctrines that lead people into sin, but they are in civil authority over you. So, you should work with them. That's what He's saying. So understand when He said they're in the seat of Moses and do what they say, He's not saying follow their doctrines.

So, now, what was the problem with their doctrines? What is the issue here? Turn over to Mark 7. It's Mark 7 and we're going to start reading in verse 1. It says:

**Mark 7:1.** *Then the Pharisees and some of the scribes came together to Him, having come from Jerusalem.*

2) *Now when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is, with unwashed hands, they found fault.*

3) *For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders. (NKJV)*

Notice what they're judging them on is based on the tradition of the elders.

**Mark 7:4.** *When they come from their market place, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other things which they have received and hold, like the washing of cups, pitchers, copper vessels, and couches.*

5) *Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, "Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?" (NKJV)*

In other words, they're kind of looking at them in judgment and going, "Well, you're not doing the right thing. You're not being righteous. You're not washing like we think you should."

And notice in verse 6:

**Mark 7:6.** *He answered and said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me.*

7) *And in vain they worship Me, teaching... (NKJV)*

And notice what they taught.

**Mark 7:7b.** *... teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'* (NKJV)

What we're going to see here in a minute what these guys did. What they considered the traditions of the elders, they basically equated that not only equal with scripture; they basically held that higher than scripture.

Let's continue reading here.

**Mark 7:8.** *For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men—the washing of pitchers and cups and many other such things you do."*

9) *He said to them, "All to well you reject the commandment of God that you may keep your tradition.*

10) *For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.'*

11) *But you say, 'If a man says to his father or mother, "whatever profit you might have received from me is Corban"—(that is, [dedicated to the temple]),*

12) *then you no longer let him do anything for his father or his mother,*

*13) making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do.”*

*14) When He had called all the multitude to Himself, He said to them, “Hear Me, everyone, and understand:”*

*15) There is nothing that enters a man from outside which can defile him; but things which come out of him, those are the things defile a man.*

*16) If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear!” (NKJV)*

Now notice what He’s getting onto them for. These guys are judging Christ and the apostles here. And the basis on which they’re doing it is “You’re not following the traditions of the elders.” Then Christ’s reply to this is “You’re taking this tradition of the elders. You’re making it equal with scripture. You’re holding it higher than scripture and you’re nullifying the word of God. You’re teaching as your doctrines the commandments of men. That’s what you’re doing.” This is really the problem.

What had happened here is over time various teachers throughout their history had started traditions and maybe speculated opinions and different ideas that had come up. This over time becomes not just someone’s opinion or tradition that someone’s doing. It becomes now doctrine and it now becomes something that we’re required to do. You can imagine over time this now becomes not only equal with scripture; this becomes greater and becomes something they have to look forward to, they have to be doing. Well, if you look at that, they were basically adding to God’s law and, in a sense, taking away from it in that regard.

Let’s look at this from a standpoint of what does this mean for our world? Today, this washing of cups and things is not really an issue today. But where is there a similar idea today? Well, think about this. They were taking traditions that the various teachers had taught and equating that with scripture and making it basically a salvational issue. How is that very similar to today?

There are a lot of people today; there’s a common movement in the Church of God today of many people that look at every opinion, every speculation, every idea that Herbert Armstrong ever taught. And now, basically they equate that with scripture or make it greater than scripture.

Please understand. I’m not in any way attacking Herbert Armstrong or taking anything from that. But if you remember Herbert Armstrong, something you’re probably familiar with hearing is “Don’t believe me! Believe your Bible.” There was a reason for that. This book trumps everything because this is the word of God. We don’t add to nor take away from it.

And again, I’m not attacking Mr. Armstrong. But there are groups in the Church of God today that literally take the idea that when they say the teaching that Herbert Armstrong might be the Elijah to come and make that a condition upon which you can’t attend church unless you espouse that. You can’t be baptized unless you espouse that idea. That is literally raising Herbert Armstrong to the level of Jesus Christ. That’s absolute

heresy. That is the leaven of the Pharisees. That's basically what that is. And understand I'm not in any way attacking Herbert Armstrong. I'm just saying, as Mr. Armstrong always taught us, "Don't believe me; believe your Bible." There's a reason for that because we're not to add to or take away from this Book.

Turn with me over to Deuteronomy 12. It's Deuteronomy 12 and verse 29.

**Deuteronomy 12:29.** *"When the LORD your God cuts off from before you the nations which you go to dispossess, and you displace them and dwell in their land,*

*30) take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, 'How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.'*

*31) You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way; for every abomination to the LORD which He hates they have done to their gods, for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods. (NKJV)*

Now notice verse 32.

**Deuteronomy 12:32.** *"Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it. (NKJV)*

In other words, we don't take someone who taught God's Law and take everything he ever said and say, "Now that trumps scripture." That's the leaven of the Pharisees. We don't teach as doctrines the commandments of men. That's why Mr. Armstrong always said, "Don't believe me. Go back to the source. Go back to the Bible. Go back and prove everything out of here. Don't just take my word for it." Unfortunately, too many people today say, "Well, he said this. Therefore, that's the basis for it." No. He said this and if I can find this also in the Bible, we're good, because this is the source.

Now what does He mean by the doctrine of the Sadducees? Let's turn over quickly to go to Acts 23 and verse 8. We'll see what the Bible tells us about the teachings, the doctrines of the Sadducees. It's Acts 23 and verse 8. It says:

**Acts 23:8.** *For Sadducees say that there is no resurrection—and no angel or spirit; but the Pharisees confess both. (NKJV)*

Now notice when we read in Deuteronomy, it said whatever God commands, the word of God, you don't add to it and you don't take away from it. Now, generally speaking the Pharisees added to it. They took their traditions of men. They essentially wind up taking away from it because they made this tradition more important than scripture, but they tried to add this to scripture. Generally speaking you could say the Sadducees took away from it.

Because think about this. The Sadducees were a Jewish sect at the time that Christ lived. Obviously they had a lot of fundamental aspects of the truth. They probably kept

the Sabbath and the holy days and things of that nature. But they also didn't believe in the resurrection. Now think about that. If there is no resurrection, you have just gutted the plan of God. Because the plan of God, as we know it, what is the whole basis of Christianity? This life is a training ground of testing and proving to ultimately get your reward when you're resurrected. If there is no resurrection, you just gutted the plan of salvation. That's what you've done.

In addition to that if you think about that, if there are no angels, that means there are no demons and there is no Satan either because what are they? They're fallen angels. That means there is no evil presence to overcome in our personal lives. You just gutted Christianity by those two beliefs.

The reason I bring that up is it's a common belief today with all the fragmentation that's happened in the Church of God that as long as a teacher, or an organization, as long as they keep the Sabbath and the holy days, then we're all on the same page. Right? We have the same core beliefs. Not necessarily.

Understand I'm not by any means defining the Church of God by corporation boundaries. First Corinthians chapters 1 and 3 are pretty strong about that whole issue.

But the point is just because someone is teaching the Sabbath and the holy days doesn't mean that they are a valid source to be taught by and we should follow their teachings.

Because that logic has led a lot of people into Messianic Groups and there are some of them that teach the trinity. Once you have changed on the whole idea of who God is, as one of my friends—actually one of my professors at Ambassador used to say—teaching anything less than man becoming God is compromising on the Gospel. Because what is the good news? The good news is that man can become God and be born into God's family and become part of that family reigning and part of the Bride of Christ. If you're teaching the trinity or things of that nature, that's a closed system. You can't have salvation as we understand it. So I think it's important to realize that.

And again, understand I'm not by any means defining any of this by corporation boundaries. I'm just saying we have to be careful who we look to as to who our teachers are and whose ideas we espouse, because just because someone keeps the Sabbath and the holy days—hey, the Sadducees fit that definition. And Christ directly said, "Beware of their teachings. They lead people into sin." So that's something we definitely want to be aware of when we're evaluating who we listen to and who we're taught by because some individual's doctrines can be leavened and can lead people into sin.

Well, just to wrap up before I run out of time here.

What is then the doctrine, the leaven of Herod? The Bible didn't directly define that one for us as clearly as it did the Pharisees and Sadducees. We have to speculate a little



bit on this one and I'll definitely give you the disclaimer. I'm speculating here but let's remember that all of this was covered in the exact same conversation in the exact same context. So, what we're going to do is apply a very similar logic to the whole thing here.

The Pharisees and the Sadducees were religious sects and Christ directly said the leaven He was talking about was their doctrines. It was their teachings, their philosophies, the ideas that they espoused forward.

Now, who was Herod? Herod was a political leader at the time Jesus Christ and the apostles were walking the earth. He was basically over the geographical area that they were in. And we know he was responsible for the death of John the Baptist. He was definitely an evil political leader, but in addition to there just being a Herod, there was also a group called the Herodians. They were basically a political party.

You could give a similar analogy. Today our President is Barak Obama but he's a Democrat. There is a Democratic Party. There's a whole political party that espouses similar viewpoints and ideas that he does. Well, the New Testament tells us that there was a group called the Herodians that were the supporters of Herod like the Democrats are supporters of Obama.

Let me just briefly read to you what the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia tells us about the Herodians.

A party twice mentioned in the Gospels (Matthew 22:16 parallel Mark 12:13; Mark 3:6) as acting with the Pharisees in opposition to Jesus. They were not a religious sect, but, as the name implies, a court or political party, supporters of the dynasty of Herod. Nothing is known of them beyond what the Gospels state. Whatever their political aims, they early perceived that Christ's pure and spiritual teaching on the kingdom of God was irreconcilable with these, and that Christ's influence with the people was antagonistic to their interests. Hence, in Galilee, on the occasion of the healing of the man with the withered hand, they readily joined with the more powerful party of the Pharisees in plots to crush Jesus (Mark 3:6); and again, in Jerusalem, in the last week of Christ's life, they renewed this alliance in the attempt to entrap Jesus on the question of the tribute money (Matthew 22:16). The warning of Jesus to His disciples to "beware of the leaven of Herod" (Mark 8:15) may have had reference to the insidious spirit of this party.

So, again let's take a similar view of this. If you are a religious group—because you know Christ specifically said "There are these two religious groups and the leaven I'm referring to is their doctrines, their teachings." Religions in general tend to have some basic things in common. They always espouse in one way or another some idea of salvation, or you might say the answer to mankind's problems, because people in general tend to get attracted to religion of one sort or another when they're looking for answers in life.

If you're a political party and you're not religious, what is your, you might say, equivalent of that? Your view of the answer to mankind's problems if you're a political party that's getting our guy in office. That's getting the right dogmatic leader, charismatic guy with our viewpoint, with the right political power behind him and the support to put into practice the policies that we think are the right ones. That's the answer to mankind's problems.

Well, if you look at this, if this type of viewpoint and this political involvement is an accurate view of the leaven of Herod (And, again I will certainly qualify that as speculation.), then I think it's obvious that the leaven of Herod has infected the Church of God today.

And to verify that all you really need today is a Facebook account. Because if you get on Facebook and you look at and you connect with other Church of God members, over time connected as the Church of God can be, you can easily connect with hundreds of people in numerous different organizations because of how many people know each other.

I was surprised, looking at this past year in the national election in the U.S., at how many... I mean I'm talking baptized for decades individuals in the Church of God not just express some viewpoints or opinions on things. Basically they were just about campaigning with their Facebook page in support of candidates. Arguing politics with each other, basically trying to get out the vote type of thing.

And I'm looking at this going, "Have we gotten to the point in the Church of God where we think salvation is getting a Republican president in to support that idea?" Because literally after Barak Obama got re-elected what happened there was a number of people were making posts of "We've lost the country. We've lost this battle." I'm not a supporter of the man's viewpoints either, but I'm looking at this going "If that's losing the country, did we think that if Mint Romney got elected that was going to save us and that was going to turn things around?"

As Greg Gaetzman pointed out to me when we were having a conversation about this, he said, "As Church of God members, we fervently pray for God to bring about His kingdom and to speed up the return of Jesus Christ. And we know prophetically that between now and when that happens some ugly things have to take place. The world has to go down. Some ugly things have to come about to make that happen. And we know when we pray and ask that that we're getting there."

In looking at all of this, we pray and ask for God to do all of this. And then He gives us a president that will speed that about. And we complain about it and want to stop it. Does that make sense?

The point is as Church of God members, we're not supposed to be a part of politics because what will happen is we won't unleaven the system. The system will leaven us. That's why the Bible teaches us to stay out of it.

Well, I'm about out of time at this point. So, I'll wrap up in saying not only should we be aware of these three specific types of leaven as we go forward, but, as we know, leaven is a picture of sin. What we should be dedicating not only this coming week to, but the rest of our lives to, is finding, identifying that sin in our lives and getting rid of it.