

Leaven

(Matthew 16:6) Jesus said to them: “Keep your eyes open and watch out for the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”

There, in verse 6, Jesus told his 12 disciples to watch out for the **leaven** of the Pharisees and Sadducees. But they thought he was talking about the leaven of bread. So he clarified:

(Matthew 16:11, 12) How is it you do not discern that I did not speak to you about bread? But watch out for the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”¹² Then they grasped that he said to watch out, not for the leaven of bread, but for **the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.**

So it is the **teachings** of the Pharisees and Sadducees that they are to watch out for.

Luke's account adds a bit more:

(Luke 12:1) In the meantime, when a crowd of so many thousands had gathered together that they were stepping on one another, he started by saying first to his disciples: “Watch out for the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.”

So watch out for their teaching because it is **hypocrisy**. In the temple Jesus called them “*hypocrites!*” six times. (Mt 23:13-27)

Mark's account adds-in another person:

(Mark 8:15) And he warned them in no uncertain terms: “Keep your eyes open; look out for the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.”

Herod was the political ruler over the Jews at the time.

But why would Jesus warn them about the hypocritical teachings of the Pharisees and Sadducees? His disciples were no longer Jews. They were Christians. They followed Christ's teachings. They no longer followed the teachings of those Jewish sects. So the apostles weren't listening to the teachings of the Pharisees and Sadducees anyway.

It would be like me warning you not to believe what Catholics teach. Of course you don't. You're not Catholic. It would be pointless for me to give you that warning.

So why did Jesus say it? Because as Paul points out, “*all the things that were written beforehand were written for our instruction.*” (Ro 15:4) No, Jesus' warning was not for his apostles, but is a

warning for us today. **We are to watch out for the hypocritical teachings of modern day Pharisees and Sadducees.**

How do we identify the modern day Pharisees and Sadducees? By seeing who is doing the same thing that they did.

(Matthew 23:2) The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the seat of Moses.

Moses was the spokesman for God. They seated themselves in his seat by claiming to be God's spokesman, and therefore the God-ordained interpreters of the Law.

For Christians today, the equivalent of taking the seat of Moses is taking the seat of Christ.

(Matthew 24:4, 5) In answer Jesus said to them: "Look out that nobody misleads you, ⁵ for many will come on the basis of my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many.

Today we too have to watch out for the leaven of those who claim to be God's spokesman and God-ordained interpreters of the Bible, effectively taking the seat of Christ.

Does their "*leaven*" include everything that they say? Jesus explains that in the next verses.

(Matthew 23:3-4) Therefore, all the things they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds, for they say but they do not practice what they say. ⁴ They bind up heavy loads and put them on the shoulders of men, but they themselves are not willing to budge them with their finger.

So not everything they teach is leaven. They also teach the basic truths of the Bible such as the condemnation of murder and stealing. But they go beyond that and put heavy loads on the sheep, loads that they themselves refuse to bear.

(Matthew 11:30) For my yoke is kindly, and my load is light.

Yes, the yoke that Jesus puts upon us is not burdensome, but is refreshing. (Mt 11:29) In contrast, the load that the Governing Body (GB) place upon the flock under their care is oppressive and one-sided. For instance the sheep are required to hold down a job and support themselves while also performing all of the duties and requirements placed upon them by the GB. Yet the GB live completely off the sheep because they don't think they should have to support themselves like Paul did by being a tent maker.

(Acts 18:3) and because he had the same trade, he stayed at their home and worked with them, for they were tentmakers by trade.

(Acts 20:34) You yourselves know that these hands have provided for my own needs and the needs of those with me.

(1 Thessalonians 2:9) Surely you remember, brothers, our labor and toil. We were working night and day, so that we would not put an expensive burden on any one of you, when we preached the good news of God to you.

(2 Thessalonians 3:8) nor did we eat anyone's food free. On the contrary, by labor and toil we were working night and day so as not to impose an expensive burden on any one of you.

(2 Thessalonians 3:10) In fact, when we were with you, we used to give you this order: "If anyone does not want to work, neither let him eat."

Their self-declared positions of power have gone to their heads and their conduct shows their *"hypocrisy"*. (Lu 12:1)

(Matthew 23:5-7) All the works they do, they do to be seen by men, for they broaden the scripture-containing cases that they wear as safeguards and lengthen the fringes of their garments. ⁶ They like the most prominent place at evening meals and the front seats in the synagogues ⁷ and the greetings in the marketplaces and to be called Rabbi by men.

Is there a way for us to avoid all of that? Yes.

(Matthew 23:8-12) But you, do not you be called Rabbi, for one is your Teacher, and all of you are brothers. ⁹ Moreover, do not call anyone your father on earth, for one is your Father, the heavenly One. ¹⁰ Neither be called leaders, for your Leader is one, the Christ. ¹¹ But the greatest one among you must be your minister. ¹² Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

We avoid their dictatorial rulership by simply not accepting their claim to power. They only have the power that their followers give them. Jesus tells us that we are all on equal footing because we are all *"brothers."* (Mt 23:8; 2Co 1:24) We have only one teacher and leader, and no human or earthly organization sits in that seat between us and our Father. (1Ti 2:5)

The Governing Body also use leaven to try and silence those who would point out their deception. One example is Stephen Lett's talk in the September 2022 JW Broadcast. Here is a quote:

"Jesus fully trusts the faithful slave. And all of us, even individual members of the Governing Body, should do the same. But what does the voice of strangers say on this subject? "Don't trust the faithful slave. He will mislead you!" And who often have the loudest voice promoting this false message? Apostates. Hebrews 13:9 labels false messages as "strange teachings." Yes, they are the teachings of strangers. Acts 20:30 says that apostates "speak twisted things." They do this in order to draw God's sheep away and make them followers of themselves. Something that's twisted is bent out of shape, or distorted. They speak twisted things by leaving out vital details, taking things out of context, or in some other way manipulating a truth into a lie or into a misleading half-truth."

Let's look at those two verses that Stephen references.

Here is the first one, in context:

(Hebrews 13:7-9) Remember those who are taking the lead among you, who have spoken the word of God to you, and as you contemplate how their conduct turns out, imitate their faith. ⁸ Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, and forever. ⁹ Do not be led astray by various and strange teachings, for it is better for the heart to be strengthened by undeserved kindness than by foods, which do not benefit those occupied with them.

Paul is telling them to scrutinize those who are taking the lead and not to be led astray by any strange teaching coming from them, because "*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today*," so any teaching coming from those taking the lead that is "*strange*", that is to say different from what Christ taught, should be rejected. Here is how the New Living Bible puts it:

(NLB) Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. ⁹So do not be attracted by strange, new ideas

We are to contemplate their conduct because "*it is better for the heart to be strengthened by undeserved kindness (fine conduct) than by (strange) foods.*" (Mt 13:9)

As you can see, it is the GB who are taking out of context Paul's reference to strange teachings by those taking the lead, and twisting (distorting) it to refer to the words of strangers.

The second verse that Stephen references is in Acts. Here it is, also in context:

(Acts 20:28-30) Pay attention to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the holy spirit has appointed you overseers, to shepherd the congregation of God, which he purchased with the blood of his own Son. ²⁹ I know that after my going away oppressive wolves will enter in among you and will not treat the flock with tenderness, ³⁰ and from among you yourselves men will rise and speak twisted things to draw away the disciples after themselves.

Paul is speaking to those which the holy spirit had appointed as overseers. Oppressive wolves would enter in among them. Only overseers could treat the flock either with or without tenderness. Yes, from among the overseers themselves, "*men will rise and speak twisted things to draw away the disciples after themselves.*"

So in both accounts Paul is warning us about those taking the lead, not about strangers. We are not to listen to those taking the lead when they speak strange and twisted things that Christ did not teach. (He 13:8)

And they truly do "*speak twisted things*", taken out of context, "*to draw away the disciples after themselves.*" (Ac 20:30) Yes, they want you to believe their teachings and obey their directions.

I, on the other hand, want you to believe Christ's teachings, and follow no one but him. (Jn 14:6)

They have set up an organization with themselves in charge and want you to believe and say only what they teach.

"...we would not want to say anything that could cause disunity in the congregation.... we need to keep up-to-date with the latest published information. When we base our discussions on material published by Jehovah's organization, we help the congregation to remain united "in the same line of thought." [w23.2 p. 16 par. 5]

Recently the GB even said that they believe that they are going to receive instructions from God, and when they pass on those instructions, although those instruction may "*seem strange, impractical, or illogical*", they say: "*that will hardly be the time to second-guess the direction or to view it with skepticism.*" [w22.02 p. 6 ¶15, see also ws13 11/15 p. 20 ¶17]

That categorically and unequivocally contradicts the directions given to us in the Bible, which tell us to "*make sure*" (Php 1:10) and to "*test the inspired statements to see whether they originate with God*" (1Jo 4:1; 1Th 5:21), just like Gideon did. (Jg 6:36-40) We are NOT to unquestionably accept directions! We should follow the advice at Hebrews 13:9.

(Hebrews 13:9) Do not be led astray by various and strange teachings,

The GB try to cancel any who speak out against their deception by treating them the same way that the Pharisees treated Jesus, by making false accusation against him. When he expelled demons they claimed: "*It is by the ruler of the demons that he expels the demons.*" (Mt 9:34; 12:24) In the same way, when someone tries to dispel the false teachings of the GB, they accuse them of being apostates on the side of Satan.

If someone within the congregation voices his rejection of GB teachings, the elders will inevitably quote Peter at John 6:68 and ask them: "*Whom shall (you) go away to?*" They instill in their followers that to go away from the GB is the same as going away from Jehovah, which is yet another example of the Leaven from the GB and their misappropriation of Christ's seat as mediator. (Mt 23:2)

When Peter asked "*whom shall we go away to*" he was referring to Christ. He was not referring to a group of men who have positioned themselves between God and men.

It is true that they have performed many powerful deeds in his name (Mt 7:22), but just as Christ does not accept their good deeds as cover for their bad, neither should we. (2Co 11:14)

Consider the prophet Agabus. (Ac 21:10-14) He was a prophet of God, but his actions were in contradiction to what God wanted Paul to do. He was influenced either by Satan or merely by his own desires. Should Paul have listened to him because of his position as a prophet of Jehovah?

(Ac 11:27, 28) No. Paul recognized that although Agabus was a prophet, his warnings and their consequences ("*weaken my resolve*") were in opposition to God's will, so he ignored his warning.

As for John 6:68, that is a very good scripture to consider.

(John 6:68) Simon Peter answered him: "Lord, whom shall we go away to? You have sayings of everlasting life

Are you following the false teachings (leaven) of men? If so, then whom should you go away to? That answer is clear: to Christ, our teacher. (Mt 23:8)

Yes, Christ is the one we should follow to reach his Father Jehovah, not any human organization. The GB are not our spiritual leaders.

(Matthew 23:10) Neither be called leaders, for your Leader is one, the Christ.

Nor are the GB between ourselves and God.

(1 Timothy 2:5) For there is... one mediator between God and men, a man, Christ Jesus,

The GB are our equals in Christ.

(Matthew 23:8) But you, do not you be called Rabbi, for one is your Teacher, and all of you are brothers.

(2 Corinthians 1:24) Not that we are the masters over your faith, but we are fellow workers for your joy, for it is by your faith that you are standing.

They have admitted it in the past:

[w20.01 p. 28 par. 5] (The GB) know that Jehovah does not necessarily give anointed ones more holy spirit than he gives his other servants. They do not feel that they have a deeper understanding of Bible truths than anyone else.

[w16.01 p. 23 par. 6] (The GB) do not claim to have special knowledge or revelations.

[w16.01 p. 20 par. 15] "Jehovah's spirit works with equal force in those who have the hope of living forever on earth"

Even though they have said such things about themselves, if you dare to contradict them you are labeled an apostate and enemy of God. Jesus is so right about our modern day Pharisees and Sadducees:

(Matthew 15:12-14) Then the disciples came and said to him: "Do you know that the Pharisees were stumbled at hearing what you said?" ¹³ In reply he said: "Every plant that my heavenly Father did not

plant will be uprooted. ¹⁴ Let them be. Blind guides is what they are. If, then, a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit.”

(Matthew 23:23, 24) “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because you give the tenth of the mint and the dill and the cumin, but you have disregarded the weightier matters of the Law, namely, justice and mercy and faithfulness. These things it was necessary to do, yet not to disregard the other things. ²⁴ Blind guides, who strain out the gnat but gulp down the camel!

(Matthew 23:25-28) “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because you cleanse the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of greediness and self-indulgence. ²⁶ Blind Pharisee, cleanse first the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may also become clean. ²⁷ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because you resemble whitewashed graves, which outwardly indeed appear beautiful but inside are full of dead men’s bones and of every sort of uncleanness. ²⁸ In the same way, on the outside you appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

(Mark 7:6-8) Isaiah aptly prophesied about you hypocrites, as it is written, ‘This people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far removed from me. ⁷ It is in vain that they keep worshipping me, for they teach commands of men as doctrines.’ ⁸ You let go of the commandment of God and cling to the tradition of men.

(Luke 16:15) You are those who declare yourselves righteous before men, but God knows your hearts.

We do not need to go to some other false religion if we reject the hypocritical leaven of the GB.

(1 Corinthians 3:16) Do you not know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that the spirit of God dwells in you?

(1 Corinthians 6:19) Do you not know that your body is the temple of the holy spirit within you, which you have from God? Also, you do not belong to yourselves,

(2 Corinthians 6:16-18) We are a temple of a living God; just as God said: “I will reside among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.” ¹⁷ “‘Therefore, get out from among them, and separate yourselves,’ says Jehovah, ‘and quit touching the unclean thing’”; “‘and I will take you in.’” ¹⁸ “‘And I will become a father to you, and you will become sons and daughters to me,’ says Jehovah, the Almighty.”

It is Jehovah and His Son that we should put our full trust in. All others should be continually inspected, examined, and tested. (Job 7:18; Ps 17:3)

(Acts 17:11) Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thes·sa·lo·ni·ca, for they accepted the word with the greatest eagerness of mind, carefully examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.

(Philippians 1:10) that you may make sure of the more important things, so that you may be flawless and not stumbling others up to the day of Christ;

The GB know that the truth is out there about their leaven, so to keep them from finding out the truth they forbid their followers from reading any literature that questions their teachings. But in the end, their efforts will fail.

(Luke 12:1-5) Watch out for the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. ² But there is nothing carefully concealed that will not be revealed, and nothing secret that will not become known. ³ Therefore, whatever you say in the darkness will be heard in the light, and what you whisper in private rooms will be preached from the housetops. ⁴ Moreover, I say to you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body and after this are not able to do anything more. ⁵ But I will show you whom to fear: Fear the One who after killing has authority to throw into Ge·hen'na. Yes, I tell you, fear this One.

Those truths that are being whispered (out of fear) will be *"preached from the housetops."*

Now don't forget that at Mark 8:15 we are also warned about *"the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod."* The religious leaders and the politicians will tell the same lie. The fake COVID pandemic is a good example of that. The GB aligned themselves with Satan's governments in pushing that lie and promoting the harmful so-called "vaccine", and many have paid the price for believing their leaven and taking the shot.

How do you say *"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me"* without saying *"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me"*? Here is how the GB do it:

[w15 2/15 p. 7 par. 10] "Above all, we can show humility by our obedience. It takes lowliness of mind to "be obedient to those who are taking the lead" in the congregation and to accept and follow the direction we receive from Jehovah's organization."

[w14 11/15 p. 10 par. 9] "Loving what Jehovah loves and hating what he hates, as well as constantly seeking his guidance and doing what pleases him, means obedience to his organization and to those he is using to advance his purpose for the earth."

[w10 4/15 p. 10 par. 12] "By being obedient and loyal to the direction received from the earthly part of God's organization, you show that you are keeping pace with Jehovah's celestial chariot and are working in harmony with his holy spirit."

[w97 11/15 p. 18 par. 20] "Wisdom from above is "ready to obey," promoting obedience to divine teaching and cooperation with Jehovah's organization."

So keep on the watch for those who claim the seat of Christ. And don't let their powerful works blind you to their leaven.

(Matthew 7:15) “Be on the watch for the false prophets who come to you in sheep’s covering, but inside they are ravenous wolves.

(Matthew 24:5) for many will come on the basis of my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will mislead many.

(Matthew 24:11) Many false prophets will arise and mislead many;

(Matthew 24:24) For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will perform great signs and wonders so as to mislead, if possible, even the chosen ones.

(Mark 13:5, 6) So Jesus began to tell them: “Look out that nobody misleads you. ⁶ Many will come on the basis of my name, saying, ‘I am he,’ and will mislead many.

Do you ask: How can we make sure that we are not following a false prophet?

That's easy: **Don't follow anyone!**

(Isaiah 2:22) For your own sakes, quit trusting in mere man, Who is only the breath in his nostrils. Why should he be taken into account?

It doesn't say to quit trusting in certain men. It says to quit trusting in “*man*”, meaning any man.

(Psalm 146:3, 4) Do not put your trust in princes Nor in a son of man, who cannot bring salvation. ⁴ His spirit goes out, he returns to the ground; On that very day his thoughts perish.

That verse says the same thing: “*Do not*” trust men. (see my article “Do Not”)

(Matthew 15:14) Let them be. Blind guides is what they are. If, then, a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit.”

Men cannot see what God sees, and in that sense, they are blind. If you follow them, instead of what you read in the Bible, you will fall into a pit.

Jehovah has provided everything you need: The Bible, and Christ as your mediator. (2Ti 3:17; 1Ti 2:5)

You are no longer a lamb or little sheep that needs milk. (Jn 21:15-17; 1Co 3:2) You have already been taught. (Ac 8:31; Ro 10:14) You don't need a preacher, or a pastor, or a priest, or any other human religious leader.

(Matthew 23:10) Neither be called leaders, for your Leader is one, the Christ.

(John 14:6) Jesus said to him: “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

Do you understand what that verse is saying? If you try to 'come to the Father' by following anyone else, you will not get there. He is "the way".

Now you don't have to be alone. You can associate with other Christians for encouragement and fellowship.

(Hebrews 10:24, 25) And let us consider one another so as to incite to love and fine works, ²⁵ not forsaking our meeting together, as some have the custom, but encouraging one another, and all the more so as you see the day drawing near.

(Matthew 18:20) For where there are two or three gathered together in my name, there I am in their midst.

Feel free to email me.

What do *you* think?

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Last edited 04-16-2023 (date created 01-18-2023)