

Leaven of the Pharisees  
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Matthew 16:1-12

Mark 8:11-21

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Matthew 12:38, 39

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Luke 11:29

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Luke 12:1

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Summary of the Synoptic Problem in Mark 8:11-21  
by Mark Rubin

In this small pericope following the events of the feeding of 5,000 and 4,000 the topic of bread resurfaces in the disciples' moment of hunger and only one loaf of bread. Luke gives a very meager parallel of the asking for a sign (by the Pharisees), and Matthew actually gives this asking for a sign twice! In the pericope of Mark, 38 words are exactly the same (counting articles, words --word order was not a factor in this count) and 8 more are only slight grammatical changes (mostly case).

An interesting note in this study is that Matthew includes the same statement concerning a sign twice (12:38, 39 and 16:4, 5) and the wording is exactly the same except that 12:39 says concerning Jonah. Matthew's material is most closely a parallel of Mark's including the discussion of a sign and the disciples' discussion over bread. Luke's material is only a parallel of the sign (11:29) and the warning of the leaven of the Pharisees (12:1).

Mark contains a statement by Jesus that Matthew does not, appearing to be an Old Testament quotation of Jeremiah 5:21 and Ezekiel 12:2, μ  
(Mark 8:18). This is the most unique piece in this pericope by Mark because Matthew and Luke do not include it here. Mark's material could be considered more lengthy because of this, and in light of the fact that Matthew's last bit in verses 11 and 12 contains quite a bit of repetition of his previous statements (compare Matt. 16:11 with 16:6).

In this study it would be hard to say that Marcan priority is the case, but the OT quote may give a hint at that. One definitely can see verbal agreement and a literary borrowing or sharing between Matthew and Mark. Luke can be seen to have a part in the literary sharing also, but his material is much closer to Matthew's than to Mark's. However, Luke does include a few words exactly like Mark's: ... μ  
(Luke 11:29; Mark 8:12). In this little pericope alone, this writer observes that a

case could be made for Matthew-Luke dependence (not necessarily in that order). But in seeking to make a safe conclusion, it appears hard to establish Marcan priority from this study. It must also be said that "it's as plain as day" that there is similarity in the accounts of Mark and Matthew, not only in exact words, but also procession of the events. This fact leaves some thoughts in the reader's mind as to who was the borrower and who was the lender? This pericope should not be the conclusive material to seal one's position.