Both the disciples, and pharisees and sadducees, struggled to discern the messages of Christ.

Example of the disciples struggling to comprehend the deeper, spiritual truth of the message of Christ. You will often see that it was not just the pharisees and scribes who often failed to understand the deeper truths, but even His own disciples.

Christ often used things from nature, from the physical kingdom, to draw people's attention over to His spiritual kingdom.

"When they went across the lake, the disciples forgot to take bread. “Be careful,” Jesus said to them. “Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”

They discussed this among themselves and said, “It is because we didn’t bring any bread.”
Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked, “You of little faith, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread? Do you still not understand? Don’t you remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? How is it you don’t understand that I was not talking to you about bread?

But be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” Then they understood that he was not telling them to guard against the yeast used in bread, but against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees."

Matthew 16:4-12

So we see that both the disciples and the Pharisees and the Sadducees, who all claimed to serve the true God (the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) were categorically immature in the beginning after new light was revealed to them.

All the groups struggled to understand the spiritual significance of Jesus' teaching. But there were still significant differences.

The disciples had a teachable spirit, and recognized that they did not have all the answers and quickly fell short, so that they were humble enough to be able to accept the higher truths, from Christ.

While the Pharisees and Sadducees refused to move, they were stuck to their limited truth and did not accept the more mature, deeper truths.

It required a cross to receive them, to be able to move upward and inward, toward the kingdom of God. Among other things, swallowing one's own pride and inadequacy. Their strong need to over-control everything according to the limited truth they had been given, so that they remained legalists, and permanently attached to the old, immature law, covenant and order (the earthly temple). And daring to stand up and join the unpopular side, without others taking the step before them.

Most of us go through different phases. Most have had a Pharisaic phase and many other phases. Even a Nebuchadnezzar phase.

But then it is important to jump on the right train (then I refer mostly to a mind set and belief, rather than necessarily church membership), when the call is made, and not wait too long, so as not to get stuck on a train that does not have the kingdom of God as a final destination.

We need a ticket to heaven, not a ticket to Rome.