

## Daily Bible Study

### *“Symptoms of Unbelief”*

*Mark 8:11-21*

*October 3 - 9, 2010*

**THE LORD’S DAY & MONDAY** – We return this week to the Gospel of Mark and look at our text **Mark 8:11-21**. This lesson is entitled *“Symptoms of Unbelief”*. As the title suggests, we will take a look at some of the evidences and warnings that unbelief may be in the heart and mind of an individual. I also hope that we will see the fact all men fight unbelief. If total trust and belief in God and His Word was something that came naturally to us God would not command us to *“...repent and believe...”* (**Mark 1:15**). What is sad and tragic however is that men can be willfully ignorant, refuse and be stubbornly unbelieving as is the case of the Pharisees in our text. We also see that the disciples of the Lord Jesus were not exempt from unbelief and they too doubted, were “in the dark” or “spiritually blind” if you will for a time. We as sinful men must guard ourselves and make every effort to trust Jesus, learn from Him, and be observant to the reality of life that unfolds around us daily. Read our text **Mark 8:11 – 21**: *“Then the Pharisees came out and began to dispute with Him, seeking from Him a sign from heaven, testing Him. But He sighed deeply in His spirit, and said, “Why does this generation seek a sign? Assuredly, I say to you, no sign shall be given to this generation.” And He left them, and getting into the boat again, departed to the other side. Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, and they did not have more than one loaf with them in the boat. Then He charged them, saying, “Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.” And they reasoned among themselves, saying, “It is because we have no bread.” 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? Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember? 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.” “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.” So He said to them, “How is it you do not understand?”*

*(Meditate)What is God teaching me from His Word today? (Apply)How can I put it into practice?*

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*Suggestion for Prayer: Father God, I thank You so very much for Your Word which contains both warnings and instructions within it. Help me hear You speak from it and to Me this week.*

**TUESDAY** – **Mark 8:11 - 13** *“Then the Pharisees came out and began to dispute with Him seeking from Him a sign from heaven, testing Him. But He sighed deeply in His spirit, and said, “Why does this generation seek a sign? Assuredly, I say to you, no sign shall be given to this generation.” And He left them, and getting into the boat again, departed to the other side.”* These

three verses seem all the more incredible and shocking in light of all that we have seen so far from Mark's gospel record concerning the life and ministry of The Lord Jesus. We read from **verse 10** that Jesus has now returned to the western shore of the Sea of Galilee and who came out and began to dispute with Him?, none other than the Pharisees. They had no doubt heard of all the things Jesus had been doing and saw some of those things for themselves but nevertheless they come out and suzeteo, "to seek or examine together, discuss, dispute, question". They evidence a symptom of unbelief in that they will not merely accept and believe what they know to be true concerning Jesus. They must have a dispute and discussion in attempt to justify in their minds and convince themselves that what they know to be true concerning Jesus was not really true. It wasn't that they could say that the miracles themselves didn't happen; rather they must escape the reality of what it meant that Jesus was performing these things. They didn't want to admit who Jesus was. He had claimed to be God and called people to repent and believe and also told them their sins were forgiven. The Pharisees had accused Jesus of blasphemy and doing His miracles by the power of Beelzebub. Notice they are really quite good in their "*disputing*" (unbelief) because they ask Jesus to show them a sign from heaven. Driven by pride and envy, they wanted Jesus to attempt a feat and to fail and therefore be discredited before the people. These men were truly blinded by unbelief. They were willfully and willingly ignorant and bent on resisting Jesus, His teaching and miracles any way they could. Read **John 14:11** and see that Jesus even had to call His disciples to faith in Him by reminding them of the fact that His miracles alone brought proof to His claim of Deity.

(Meditate)What is God teaching me from His Word today? (Apply)How can I put it into practice?

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*Suggestion for Prayer: Father, thank You for helping me see who Jesus is. Open the eyes of those who are blind and prideful; resisting what they know to be true. Use me to reach out to them.*

**WEDNESDAY – Mark 8:11 - 13** “Then the Pharisees came out and began to dispute with Him seeking from Him a sign from heaven, testing Him. But He sighed deeply in His spirit, and said, “Why does this generation seek a sign? Assuredly, I say to you, no sign shall be given to this generation.” And He left them, and getting into the boat again, departed to the other side.” We are made aware of how Jesus feels concerning unbelief as we observe His reaction. *But He sighed deeply in His spirit...* Jesus knew that these men were not sincere, they were unbelieving and did not at all want Him or the truth and therefore Jesus sighs deep within. This sigh was on account of their hard hearts which although faced with many “*infallible proofs*” (**Acts 1:3**) would not humbly trust in Jesus. What a dramatic contrast between the hearts of the Pharisees and the heart of Jesus that we see. Pharisees: hard, proud, and cruel. Jesus: caring, compassionate and sorrowful. He truly was a *man of sorrows acquainted with grief*. Matthew records for us that Jesus exposed further their hypocrisy by explaining to them they can discern “signs” in the sky pertaining to the weather for the following day but they turn a blind eye to the God given “signs” all around them (**Matthew**

**16:2-3).** The problem was NOT that God didn't give evidence to them but rather that they did not want to receive it and believe. We read in Matthew's record that Jesus ended up telling them that they would be given *the sign of the prophet Jonah* yet we know that they would still refuse to believe even this, the resurrection of Jesus from the dead (**Matthew 12:38-40**). If you remember, they even mockingly asked Jesus for a sign while He was on the cross (**Matthew 27:40-43**).

(Meditate)What is God teaching me from His Word today? (Apply)How can I put it into practice?

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Suggestion for Prayer: *Father, help me be aware of the glory which is all around me and constantly displays Your greatness. Thank You also for opening my heart to believe in& see Jesus.*

**THURSDAY– Mark 8:14–17** “*Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, and they did not have more than one loaf with them in the boat. Then He charged them, saying, “Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.” And they reasoned among themselves, saying, “It is because we have no bread.” 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?”* The setting of our story now shifts for this next portion of our text. We were told at the end of **verse 13**, “*And He left them, and getting into the boat again, departed to the other side*”. Jesus moves on from the Pharisees and leaves them in their unbelief. What is interesting to note is Jesus now encounters symptoms of unbelief even in His disciples; not the permanent unbelief and blindness of the Pharisees who refused to believe in Jesus and the Gospel (even the Resurrection) but nevertheless unbelief; a slowness, sluggishness, dullness toward spiritual matters and thinking and in the end a lack of faith and total trust in Jesus. We almost cringe saying these men were demonstrating unbelief, but this is precisely what Jesus tells them in Matthews record of this event when He says, “*...O you of little faith*” (**Matthew 16:8**). They were in fact needing to have their faith strengthened and increased and have their ability to discern and understand sharpened. This all comes about because the text tells us they forgot to take bread when they left in the boat. This is a bit funny in itself; Jesus just makes enough bread to feed thousands of people and these guys forget to bring some along when they leave; Mark possibly for contrast adds the *one loaf* comment. Jesus then tells them to *beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod*. In Matthew's record Jesus mentions the Sadducees as well. The disciples heard Jesus talk about *leaven* and they are thinking Jesus is speaking about bread and their failure to bring it. Jesus asks them *Do you not yet perceive nor understand? Is your heart still hardened?* Because they missed the point He was making. Jesus is not speaking about *leaven for bread* but the leaven like influence of these three groups (*Pharisees, Sadducees, Herod*) who disagree with His teaching and are lost in unbelief. Lord willing we will see more in detail this Sunday but suffice to say for now the leaven of the Sadducees was liberalism and skepticism. The leaven of the Pharisees was their self-righteous legalism, traditionalism, and externalism. And the leaven of Herod was secularism and his misunderstanding of The Kingdom not being a political kingdom. Here Jesus gives the disciples and us a real warning.

(Meditate)What is God teaching me from His Word today? (Apply)How can I put it into practice?

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Suggestion for Prayer: *Father, give me understanding of truth through Your Word and Spirit. Protect me from the evil influence of things contrary to what You declare in Sacred Scripture.*

**FRIDAY & SATURDAY – Mark 8:18-21** “Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember? 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.” “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.” So He said to them, “How is it you do not understand?” As Jesus continues we find Him reminding the disciples of what they have just seen Him do in His miraculous feedings. They think Jesus is upset because they have no bread and Jesus has moved past warning them against *the leaven of the Pharisees* etc.... to address the real issue with these guys; their lack of faith in Him. What is so bizarre to think about is that even if their minds were bound to earthly things such as *bread* they still should have realized that Jesus could in fact create lunch for them if they need it and more than just providing for their needs, He would do so out of a love, compassion, and care for them that He has clearly demonstrated He possesses. If this was merely about lunch, even then Jesus would make food for them; but it wasn’t about lunch and they didn’t get the point; they had *eyes* that did not *see* and *ears* that did not *hear* as they should. They were exhibiting the very leaven Jesus warned them about. Thankfully for them and us we find Jesus patiently teaches them and according to **Matthew 16:11-12**, we read they finally got it. As God’s children, they were not permanently blind but merely temporarily blinded in unbelief which Christ’s patient and powerful truth remedied. In this text we have been given a needed and serious warning. As Christians, do we understand that the hardened heart is a problem for us? It is a problem for the religious crowd not the irreligious. People with no teaching don’t get hard against truth. It is those of us who hear it that are warned against hardening our hearts against it. Jesus was warning these men who were exposed to the greatest teacher of all time to *take heed* and *beware* of teaching (*leaven*) that is opposed to His. Both of those commands of **verse 15** are present imperative actives in the Greek which means they call for continuous and repeated future action. Jesus even ends our text with “*How is it you do not understand?*” He is reminding these men and us of the importance of taking to heart and pondering upon His words; The Word of Truth. We must not forget them but dwell on them, meditate on them, pray over them, and obey and do them. By doing this our faith will be increased.

(Meditate)What is God teaching me from His Word today? (Apply)How can I put it into practice?

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Suggestion for Prayer: *Father, help me to hear, understand, and obey Your Word. Thanks for Your patience in teaching me. Help me to beware and take heed of anything that is opposing Your Word.*