

LESSON 12



JESUS WARNS OF FALSE LEAVEN

Scripture Text: Mark 8:1-21

Pain, hunger, sickness, grief, or any need always drew compassion from Jesus. He felt love, care, and deep concern for the people. As He felt for them then, He feels for us now. As Jesus felt compassion for the needs of those around Him, so should we in our day. We will if we have the same Spirit within us that Jesus had.

Unfriendly Jewish leaders demanded some special sign from Jesus to prove God had sent Him. Although Jesus had done many miracles before their eyes, they were blinded by unbelief and could not see.

MEMORY VERSE: *O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?*

Matthew 16:3

Jesus Meets Two Needs

Mark 8:1-9 The multitude of several thousand was so intensely interested that they stayed with Jesus three days, even with nothing to eat. There is something about Jesus that draws honest, hungry hearts to Him. Jesus laid the problem before His chosen disciples: (1) if they kept the people here, there was no food, (2) if they sent them home, some a great distance, they would faint from hunger. Jesus gave His disciples the opportunity to suggest a third and better plan. They should, for they had seen Him feed five thousand. But they did not. They looked only at their natural resources and found them totally inadequate. These people had proven their desire for spiritual food was greater than that for natural food. The hunger in their souls was being satisfied. Jesus used His power to do by a miracle what the disciples could not do by natural means. He fed them, **they did eat, and were filled.** He **sent them away.** Jesus never sends any soul away empty. Through this He also taught the disciples a lesson in faith and about another kind of bread. How quickly we sometimes forget—when an immediate need arises—what God has already done for us in the past (verse 4).

Seeking Signs Is Sin

Mark 8:10-13 Jesus and His disciples moved to the other side of the sea. Now we see a people with a different kind of heart coming to Jesus. The Pharisees came and **began to question with him.** Their purpose was not to learn or to believe. They were **seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him.** Jesus **sighed deeply in his spirit.** He was sad. Unbelief always makes Jesus sad. He had come to bless, but these would not accept, would not believe. **There shall no sign be given . . .** Are we showing ourselves any better in reading the signs of the times? (Matthew 16:1-4). Jesus had given signs from Heaven continually.

He had forgiven sins. He had proven He could see inside their hearts and read their very thoughts. He had healed their sick. He had given miracle powers to the disciples. He had shown great wisdom and authority in His Words. He had walked on the water and calmed the storm and wind. Demons had given testimony of His Deity. Demons obeyed His command. He had multiplied food. God had witnessed to them when Jesus was baptized of John, yet they believed Him not. What additional sign could He give to these scoffers? Jesus called them **hypocrites** and **an adulterous generation** (Matthew 16:1-4)—adulterous because of having taken their love from their one rightful Lord and given it to others. **Generation** here means people born of a certain spirit, or having a certain type of spirit in them. These had a **wicked** and **adulterous** spirit. Matthew tells us that Jesus said only **the sign of the prophet Jonas** would be given

them. This meant Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection (Matthew 12:40), which the Pharisees disbelieved also when it occurred.

The Leaven of the Pharisees

Mark 8:15-21 Take heed—be very careful—**beware of the leaven of the Pharisees.** Leaven begins as a little thing hidden in the flour. Gradually it grows and spreads until it changes the character of the whole loaf. Doctrine is like this. It begins as something small—maybe a suggestion. It grows and spreads until it controls the life. The action of yeast in dough was a thought frequently used by the Jewish teachers as illustrating the power of an evil influence, either in the life of an individual or in society. The thought was the fact that the yeast changed the character of the dough, and that the dough fell an easy prey to the yeast. The Apostle Paul gives us some warning along this line in 1 Corinthians 5:6-8.

In Jesus' mind the influence of the teachings of the Pharisees and Sadducees were bad, and He warned His followers against them in all seriousness. This was a shocking charge because they were supposedly respectable, the elite, and the righteous people of the nation. The Pharisees had convinced themselves that they were well-nigh perfect, and that God could not possibly expect more from them than that which they were already giving. The sale of doves, sheep, and oxen and the changing of money (at a good profit) inside the temple were only a small part of the unethical system the Sadducees had set up. Jesus saw something terrible working in the lives of these people.

Over on the other side of the lake the disciples discovered that no one had laid in needed provisions. They thought about it when Jesus began to talk about leaven. They assumed that Jesus was rebuking them for their carelessness, **Have ye your heart yet hardened?** Hard hearts, blind eyes, and deaf ears caused them to fail to remember the previous occasions that He had met the emergencies with an abundance of food.

In the midst of the crisis of the present day we will do well to remind ourselves that God has allowed the world to survive other crises. Many times God has bared His arm and stayed the despoiler. In no case has He saved men from the necessity of sacrifice and struggle, but in every instance in which truth and justice were at the point of ruin, He has come to the rescue. The disciples found out that Jesus was not talking about literal bread. In the blindness and hardness of heart they forgot that Jesus could supply every need. Are we like them, or does our faith trust Him fully?

JUST A THOUGHT

**Life is a grindstone, and whether it grinds a man down
or polishes him up depends on the stuff
he's made of.**

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