

- D. The disciples misunderstood: "And they reasoned one with another, saying, We took no bread" (16).
1. They supposed his rebuke was for not bringing a food supply.
  2. His figurative use of leaven may have been new to the disciples.
- E. Why reason ye: "And Jesus perceiving it saith unto them, Why reason ye, because ye have no bread" (17a)?
1. According to Matthew 16:8, Jesus said, "O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves"?
  2. Having been with him so long, their faith should have been strong enough to trust his ability to meet any need.
- F. Don't you remember? "Do you not yet perceive, neither understand? have ye your heart hardened? Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember?" When I brake the five loaves among the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces took ye up? They say unto him, Twelve" (17b-19).
1. A factual reminder of how he met a similar but greater need (Mark 6:34-44; Matt. 14:15-21).
  2. As recent witnesses of such power their dullness of faith was inexcusable.
- G. Or the seven: "And when the seven among the four thousand, how many basketfuls of broken pieces took ye up? And they say unto him, Seven" (20).
1. Compare Mark 8:1-9.
  2. We too sometimes forget very important facts which were repeated; and our weakness of faith is also often unjustified.
- H. "And he said unto them, Do ye not yet understand" (21)?
1. According to Matthew 16:11, he asked, "How is it that ye do not perceive that I spake not to you concerning bread? But beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees"?
  2. The spiritual meaning and lesson of those miracles should have expanded their faith.
  3. Worry about bread is inconsistent with genuine faith in Jesus as Lord (Matthew 6).
- I. Leaven of teaching, not of bread: "Then understood they that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees" (Matthew 16:12).

"Then they understood" his concern for their faith and the danger of false teaching. As we listen to teaching, let us remember the Lord's lesson on the power of leaven: Fluency or smoothness of speech is no guarantee a teacher speaks truth (Acts 17:11; 18:25).

STUDIES IN MARK--LESSON TWENTY-TWO  
Warning Against the Leaven of the Pharisees  
Mark 8:11-21; Matthew 16:1-12

INTRODUCTION -

- I. ALMOST EVERYTHING IN THE UNIVERSE MAY BE CONTRASTED WITH ITS OPPOSITE.
- A. God and Satan; Christ and Belial; Good and evil; heaven and hell; etc.
  - B. The true and the false are discussed on almost every page of the Bible.
    1. Deuteronomy 11:16-28: "A blessing and a curse..."
    2. The value of the true and the danger of the false is a constantly recurring scriptural theme.
  - C. God blesses the obedient soul and punishes the disobedient person in this life.
    1. Adam and Eve (Genesis 2 & 3).
    2. Cain and Abel (Genesis 4; Hebrews 11:4).
    3. Noah and the flood (Genesis 6:9; Hebrews 11:7).
    4. Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10:1-11).
    5. King Saul (1 Samuel 13:8-14; 15).
- II. JESUS LOVES RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HATES INIQUITY (Hebrews 1:9).
- A. He loves the sinner while hating his sin (John 15:12, 13; Romans 12:9).
  - B. Because he loves truth he despises and opposes error: "Woe unto you;" "Woe...woe...woe..." etc.
  - C. Because he hates false teaching and its effect upon people, Jesus warns against it over and over (Matt. 7:15-20; 15:1-9; 24:4,5).
  - D. This lesson is the study of a loving rebuke showing that the love of the true includes and requires warning against the deceitful nature & cruel effect of false teaching.
- III. MATTHEW 7:15 IS TRULY A GOLDEN TEXT: "BEWARE OF FALSE PROPHETS."
- A. Compare with 2 Corinthians 11:13,14; Romans 16:18.
  - B. Similar Bible admonitions: 1 John 4:1; 2 Pet. 2:1,2; 2 John 9-11; Acts 20:28-32.
  - C. This charge was given and is needed because only the truth can save (John 8:31,32).
    1. No one can live right and go to heaven by wrong teaching (Galatians 6:7,8).
    2. The effect of false teaching is eternally fatal both to him who teaches it (Gal. 1:6-9), and to him who believes and follows it (2 Thes. 2:10-12; 2 Pet. 2:1-12).

#### IV. THE DISCIPLE OF JESUS MUST OPPOSE AND CONDEMN ERROR AS HE FOLLOWS CHRIST.

- A. Every disciple loyal to his teaching must adopt the Lord's policy toward error which wars against human souls (Matthew 7:15-27; 1 John 4:1).
- B. The Lord's attitude toward error requires honesty, courage, forthrightness, compassion and tenderness (2 Timothy 2:24-26; 4:1-5; 1 Tim. 6:11,12).
- C. The spirit of compromise with error is the spirit of Satan (Matthew 16:21-23).
- D. It makes a difference what we believe and teach (Luke 8:11).

#### DISCUSSION -

##### I. A SIGN FROM HEAVEN REQUESTED (Mark 8:11).

A. Their motive: "And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, trying him."

1. Matthew reports that the Sadducees joined them in this, the only occasion recorded when these two sects acted together in opposing Jesus. (Matthew 16:1).
2. Almost invariably opposed to each other, they found common ground in their opposition to the miracles of Jesus.
3. "Trying him:" They were testing the nature of his miraculous power.

B. Their request: "A sign from heaven."

1. Though Jesus had performed many signs, these enemies had not acknowledged the true nature and source of his power.
2. The reason for this rejection must lie in the weakness of human nature, in blindly fighting that which conflicts with personal desires (Matthew 26:41).
3. They evidently had in mind some mighty visible sign which came directly from heaven such as the manna given Israel (John 6:30,31), the sun standing still (Joshua 10:12); the drouth of three years (James 5:17,18).

##### II. THE REPLY OF JESUS TO THE REQUEST (Mark 8:12,13).

A. He sighed deeply: "And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek a sign" (12a).

1. The depravity displayed by their demand for a visible miraculous sign "from heaven," while refusing to consider the many undeniable proofs of his deity already given, moved Jesus deeply.
2. "Why doth this generation seek a sign," in the midst of many overwhelming demonstrations of his divine power? They were evidently like many today who ask for and demand new miracles from heaven to confirm the gospel which was

"once for all" confirmed to Israel and all mankind by Jesus by undeniable "mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by him in the midst of you, even as ye yourselves also know" (Acts 2:22; 2 Peter 1:3,4; John 20:30,31; Acts 1:3).

B. No such sign as requested shall be given: "...verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation" (12b).

1. According to Matthew 16:4, he repeated what he said earlier (Matthew 12:38-40), which meant that only one sign of the kind they requested, "the sign of Jonah," would be given.
2. In this he referred to his resurrection "on the third day according to the scriptures," which would be the final proof of his mission.
3. Though his generation was more evil in some respects than Nineveh (Matthew 12:41), "adulterous" here is likely meant to be more spiritual (faithless) than literal.
4. He had given them many signs, and would give many more. But their spiritual blindness (Matt. 13:15; 15:14; 23:3-39) led them into a perverseness of heart which rejected the evidence God gave to prove the deity of Christ and which prostituted the blessings God had bestowed upon them.

C. So he left them: "And he left them, and again entering into the boat departed to the other side" (Mark 8:13).

##### III. JESUS WARNS AGAINST THE LEAVEN OF FALSE TEACHERS (8:14-21).

A. Having left the vicinity of Magadan (Matt. 15:39), and Dalmanutha (Mark 8:10), where the events just described occurred, they crossed the sea to the other shore, "probably near the northern extremity," as they journeyed to Caesarea Philippi (Matt. 16:13).

B. They forgot to take bread: "And they forgot to take bread; and they had not in the boat with them more than one loaf" (8:14).

C. Beware of the leaven: "And he charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod" (Mark 8:15).

1. Leaven has both a good and a bad meaning, both in its literal and in its figurative use.
2. Because of its quiet, gradual way of penetrating meal and causing it to rise, leaven is a truly fitting illustration of the pernicious influence of false teaching, which sours human hearts with pride and other heart diseases. Those who receive their chief joy from observing frivolous human traditions, while making void God's word, become inflated with conceit of their self-righteousness.
3. Those not much concerned about the doctrinal purity of the church need to study the words of Jesus much more carefully.