

- 1) As we concluded last time, Jesus and the disciples were in the area of the Decapolis.
- 2) Mark opens this next incident in his narrative of Jesus' ministry with a time reference – "During those days".
- 3) One must assume that he is referring to the days in this area.

**Mark 8:1-10 (NIV)**

- 4) It is most likely that this crowd was made up of Jewish and Gentile folks. I would assume primarily Gentile considering the area.
- 5) By the question one of the disciples asks, they are in a remote area – not in or near any of the towns in the area.
- 6) Still in Gentile territory but obviously gathering quite a following.
- 7) Of course, there are many differences in these two feedings of a large gathering.
- 8) The two major things are:
  - a) here the crowd had been with Him for 3 days and ...
    - i) Comment on what might have occurred
    - b) it was Jesus who came to the conclusion that they needed food rather than the disciples.
- 9) In the previous feeding of the 5000, it was the disciples that started the ball rolling.
- 10) The question the disciples asked here is a perfectly normal question for them as normal people to have asked.
- 11) As disciples, it should not have been.
- 12) Jesus doesn't even bother to answer their question – instead, He simply asks them what they have and proceeds to deal with the issue at hand.
- 13) Once the 4000 are fed, Jesus and the disciples get in a boat and sail to the to the region of Dalmanutha.
- 14) Dalmanutha is a mystery.
  - a) Although there are possible locations, no town has ever been found by that name.
  - b) In Matthew's gospel, he refers to Magdala – the home of Mary Magdalene.
  - c) One scholar has put forth that this was not the name of a town at all but a reference for Mark's readers referring to the battle around Magdala during the Jewish Revolt.
- 15) Dismissing these details, the consensus is that they sailed back across the Sea of Galilee and were again in Jewish territory.
- 16) This incident and the one that follows really and truly highlight the "hardness of heart" of the disciples.
- 17) I use the term because it is truly a biblical term

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- 18) In fact, it is the term Jesus uses many times to refer to them.
- 19) The question always comes to my mind about the negative connotation it brings –
  - a) Is the condition of their hearts a deliberate thing or simply an unchanging mindset?
- 20) As I have mentioned before, in asking myself why can they not see the obvious it occurs to me that it is not their belief or the disbelief that is in the spotlight.
  - a) Instead, it is their way of thinking.
  - b) This could also be God's way of showing us how we don't necessarily have to get it immediately – just a thought!
- 21) Keep this in mind as we read these next sections of Scripture and see what conclusion you draw.

### **Mark 8:11-13 (NIV)**

- 1) There is a lot happening in the 3 short verses.
- 2) First, the Pharisees as it seems, are becoming desperate.
- 3) In this case, they don't ask questions trying to trip Him up they ask for a miraculous sign.
- 4) We must remember at this point, the Pharisees have accused Jesus of performing His miracles under the power of Satan.
- 5) That being said, I think we can safely assume that their asking for a sign was not so they could change their minds and believe in Jesus.
- 6) According to one commentator, a popular Jewish superstition was that demons could mimic earthly miracles.
- 7) But only God could work wonders in the sky.
- 8) This is perhaps the reason Jesus was accused by the Pharisees of doing His miracles by the power of Satan.
- 9) This request for a sign then becomes an ultimate test.
- 10) Jesus failing to be able to provide a miracle from heaven would be the final proof they needed to condemn Him as doing His miracles by the power of Satan.
- 11) In the parallel passage in Matthew, this is more apparent as well as Jesus' showing that He sees thru their deception and puts it right back on them.

### **Matt 16:1-4 (NIV)**

- 12) Here, they can recognize the coming storm from something as subtle as a sky color yet, they fail to recognize the coming of the Messiah in spite of the abundant evidence that was right in front of them.
- 13) In Mark's account, Jesus leaves them and says no sign will be given – meaning of course that He would not grant their request.

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- 14) In Matthew's account, Jesus also does not perform for them but, He does tell them that there will be a sign – that of Jonah.
- 15) Of course, that referring to this death, burial and resurrection in the not too distant future.
- 16) At this point Jesus leaves the Pharisees and Sadducees probably standing there with their mouths hanging open.
- 17) There are a couple of other points to consider here before we move on.
- 18) **First**, this leaving is more than a temporary separation.
- 19) This exchange is the last open conflict with the religious leadership in Galilee.
- 20) Of course, once he reaches the temple in Jerusalem for the last time, there will be confrontation with those leaders.
  - a) Assuming here that the Galilean leaders are, for the most part, different from those in the Jerusalem temple.
- 21) From this point onward, Jesus' miracles and His teaching would primarily be for His disciples not the crowds or the religious leaders.
- 22) **Second** point here sort of goes with our discussion at the conclusion of the last section – “hardness of heart”.
- 23) The hard heartedness of the Pharisees and Sadducees was different than that of the disciples.
  - a) It is what one commentator calls “permanent”
- 24) These religious leaders were so set against Jesus that they were unable to return to any real consideration or belief in Him as the real Messiah.
- 25) Of course there are exceptions - Nicodemus one of only a few leaders that did recognize the self-evident truth that Jesus' power was divine.
- 26) As he said to Christ as recorded in John 3:2, “Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him”.

***In our sharing Jesus with others, there are a couple of questions we need to consider here:***

***First, how do we tell if someone is hard hearted beyond turning – i.e. permanent hard heartedness as the Pharisees and Sadducees were? – or, can we make that call????***

***A second question is when we run into someone who we may think is in this state how do we handle the situation?***

- 1) Moving on to the next section of Mark, we see another type of hard heartedness – that of the disciples.
- 2) Again, remember the question at the beginning of these two sections;

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### ***How do we describe the hard heartedness of the disciples – mindset, dullness of mind, or willful – where are they?***

#### **Mark 8:14-21 (NIV)**

- 3) Mark begins this section with an explanation that, without context seems a little off the wall.
- 4) Since we do not know if this is part of an on going conversation, it is like he is explaining something that doesn't need explaining until Jesus speaks and sets the context.
- 5) Even with Jesus' words, the comment and the disciples discussion still appear to be a little out of place.
- 6) Lets talk for a minute about Jesus' statement;

"Be careful watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod."

### ***In your mind, what is Jesus talking about? What is the yeast of the Pharisees? What is the yeast of Herod?***

- Yeast in this passage symbolizes evil.
  - Just as only a small amount of yeast is needed to make a batch of bread rise, so the evil teachings and hypocrisy of the religious and political leaders could permeate and contaminate the entire society.
  - Jesus used yeast as an example of how a small amount of evil can affect a large group of people.
  - The wrong teachings of the Pharisees were leading many people astray.
  - Jesus warned his disciples to constantly watch out for the contaminating evil of the religious leaders.
- 7) Mark mentioned the yeast of the Pharisees and of Herod.
    - a) Matthew wrote about the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matt 16:6,12).
    - b) Mark's audience, again assumed to be mostly non-Jews (perhaps the church at Rome), would have known about Herod, but not necessarily about the Jewish religious sect of the Sadducees.
    - c) Thus Mark quoted the part of Jesus' statement that his readers would understand.
  - 8) This reference to Herod may have also meant the Herodians, a group of Jews who supported the king.
  - 9) Many Herodians were also Sadducees.
  - 10) They were known for their skepticism, materialism, and political opportunism.
  - 11) The Pharisees were self-righteous, maintaining a form of religiousness without inner strength and spiritual insight.

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- 12) In your wildest thought would you make the connection the disciples did? – probably not yeast is the only word connected to bread
- a) they must have thrown the rest of the sentence away in their minds.
- 13) As a human, Jesus must have been frustrated with them on two levels.
- a) First, that they would not be open and thinking enough to understand what He was talking about.
- b) Second, that they would have so quickly forgotten the miracles that they themselves participated in – feeding 5000 and 4000 people – which would of course made them realize that regardless of their forgetfulness, the situation was easily remedied by Jesus.
- 14) Notice, He choses to address the latter (more important point) not the fact that they completely missed what He was talking about.
- 15) I know Jesus is not weak like us but I can truly almost hear the frustration in His voice as He asks these questions and reminds these men of what again, they themselves had participated in.
- 16) And, by the way, one point to make here is that Jesus is not telling these men these things – He is asking them –
- 17) Trying to get them to think more kingdom and Son of God Messiah than earthly and deliverer Messiah.
- 18) Along with hearing the frustration in Jesus’ voice, I think I can hear the timidity in disciples voice as they answer His questions – correctly but, realizing His displeasure with them.
- 19) Another point here I think is important to note – He asks the question “do you not understand” twice.
- 20) I’m sure that He was hoping for an answer or a discussion that would show that they did – however, none is given here.
- 21) Two questions...

***First, we are not told, but, what are the disciples being asked if they understand? – yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees or Herod or who He Jesus is?***