"A REFUSAL TO BELIEVE DESPITE THE EVIDENCE"

Matthew 15:29 - 16:12

6/3/2018

INTRODUCTION:

The undeniable, overwhelming, irrefutable evidence (15:29-39)

***Beware of a stubborn refusal to believe; Beware of a weak reluctance to believe!**

Two wrong responses:

I. *No Faith* - Requires SIGNS in order to believe (16:1-5)

II. *Little Faith* - Fails to REMEMBER God's past faithfulness (16:6-12)

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V. 30

By this time, Christ's fame had spread so widely that He did not have to come to the multitudes; rather, they came to Him!

Although Jesus had recently been to the Galilean region (14:34-35), many people had not had the opportunity to have Him heal their loves ones. So now they hear He has come back!

They swiftly gather their ailing relatives and friends and bring them to the miracle worker of Nazareth.

Their response was probably the result of a deaf and dumb man's testimony of a miracle Jesus did for him (Mk. 7:31-37).

They collected everyone they cared about and either led them, carried them, or assisted them to Jesus. They then ***"cast them down"*** (lit. in haste, speedily or quickly) - placed them in front of Jesus.

They brought to Jesus. . .

"the lame" - those who couldn't walk
the ***"blind"*** - those who couldn't see
the ***"dumb"*** - those who couldn't hear
the ***"maimed"*** - those who couldn't function normally
(the cripple who had limbs that were deformed and incapable of use)

V. 31

Although the multitude had enough faith to believe their loved ones could be healed, they ***"wondered"*** with amazement when they witnessed the immediate, complete, supernatural miracles take place before their very eyes! Such amazement resulted in God being glorified (not just any God . . . but the God of Israel as opposed to the pagan deities that were impotent to do the wonders Jesus did).

V. 32

"Compassion" - deep feelings, whereby His heart went out to the hungry multitudes.

V. 33
Such a question reveals how hardened their hearts must have been when Jesus fed the 5,000 with 5 loaves and 2 fish.

This miracle (of reproducing food, turning scraps into a banquet feast, turning 5 lbs. of food into 10,000 lbs) was repeated because the disciple's hearts did not get the impact of the first miraculous feeding (*"For they considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their heart was hardened"* - Mk. 6:52).

V. 34
"Seven, and a few little fish" - This is more to work with than Jesus had at the prior miracle.

V. 36
Again, Jesus meets the needs of the multitude through the instrument of His disciples (just as He reaches multitudes with the Gospel through the witness of His saints).

Each time the disciples reached into their basket, more bread and fish appeared.

V. 37
"Seven baskets full = seven large baskets

The ***"four thousand men"*** who were fed along with women and children may have totaled anywhere from 10,000 to 15,000.

V. 32-38
Several of the same principles from Matthew 14:14-21 (the feeding of the 5,000) are re-emphasized here: Six truths to realize:

1.Jesus has compassion for people (even their material needs burden Him) (v. 32)
2.We are not adequate in ourselves to meet the needs of the multitudes (v. 33).
3.With Jesus, nothing is insignificant (v. 34-35).
4.What Jesus does, He often does through His servants (v. 36).
5.Little becomes much when given to Jesus (v. 36-37).
6.The incredible is not impossible for Jesus (v. 38)

***Beware of a stubborn refusal to believe or a weak reluctance to believe!**
***Beware of two wrong responses to Christ and His miracle-working, life-changing power!**

When are we stubborn, mule-headed, or unyielding to the evidence God has revealed?

What is a sick, infirm, weak faith?

Two wrong responses:

I. *No Faith* - Requires SIGNS in order to believe (16:1-5)

V. 1

"Tempting" - Since Christ is God, He could not be *"tempted with evil"* (Ja. 1:13) from inside Himself (Ja. 1:14). All attempts to trap Him came from an external source.

Their temptation came in the form of a test. A test for Him to prove Himself (just as their father, the Devil, attempted - Matthew 4).

"The Pharisees also with the Sadducees" -

The Pharisees were the religious self-righteous (who believed in the supernatural, in miracles, in spiritual power).

The Sadducees were the religious liberals (who did not believe in the supernatural, miracles, nor spiritual power).

The Pharisees believed in miracles, but denied Christ's deity; therefore they did not believe Jesus could perform miracles.

The Sadducees did not believe in miracles and therefore did not believe Jesus could perform them.

It is interesting how these two groups of totally different theological beliefs (Acts 23:8) could come together (find common ground, converge, unite) to attack Christ!

The world's different philosophers, different religions, different world views, etc. all find a common bond in attacking Christianity. They all can unite over a shared antagonism toward Christ (EX: Pilate and Herod, who were enemies became *"friends"* over their mutual unjust dealings with Jesus [Lk. 23:12]).

"A sign from Heaven" - lit. a sign out of the Heaven

At their bidding, they wanted Christ to send a lightning bolt down from Heaven, or alter the constellations.

After all the signs that Christ had done, these religious leaders had the audacity to demand more!

They saw His miracles (mt. 9:1-8; 9:32-34; 12:9-13). They heard the testimony of others who experienced His miracles (Jn. 9:19ff). They no doubt heard about the multitudes who were just miraculously cured and fed on the other side of the Lake (Mt. 15:30-39).

Yet rather than believing, they want more evidence.

V. 2
By looking at the sky and sun at sundown, they were able with some accuracy to determine tomorrow's weather.

"Those sayings correspond to the age-old mariner's ditty: 'Red sky at night, sailor's delight; red sky in the morning, sailors take warning'." (MacArthur, p. 5-6).

V. 3
In the morning, the appearance of the sky and clouds could serve as an accurate gage for the day's forecast.

"Hypocrites" - play actors; two-faced religious pretenders.

"You cannot discern" - People can discern only what they want to discern. If they don't want to believe, they keep their head in the sane and avoid the obvious, compelling evidence (evolutionistic thinking is one example of deliberate ignorance).

"The signs of the times" -

"Signs" = the objective, <u>miraculous indicators</u> or evidences validating Christ (signs always vindicate God's message and messenger).

Christ had for two years performed hundreds of signs up and down Palestine. They had more than enough testimony and proof of His credentials

"Of the times" - the seasons in which Christ walked the earth.

They had the privilege of living at a moment of history when signs were dispersed with convincing abundance and authenticity.

"Why did our Lord talk about the weather? To reveal to His enemies their own dishonesty and stubborn blindness. They could examine the evidence in God's world and draw valid conclusions, but they would not examine the evidence He had presented" (Wiersbe, p. 56).

Nothing is wrong with signs; however, something is desperately wrong with seeking them.

1) Those who seeks "signs" demonstrate a lack of faith (they <u>disbelieve</u> God) (rather than believing God's Word, they want evidence that will satisfy the carnal senses)

   Examples:
   --Gideon and the fleece (Judg. 6:37ff)
   --the rich man in hell (Lk. 16:30-31)

   "We walk by faith not by sight" (II Cor. 5:7)

2) Those who demand signs ask God to lower Himself and stoop down to their level to do what they say when they say to do it (they <u>dethrone</u> God).

   God sends signs at His will not at the will of man!

3) To seek a sign is to be dissatisfied with the <u>evidences</u> God has already given (Ps. 19:1; SEE: Rom. 1:18-22).

In this context, Christ has given more than enough signs to prove Himself!

V. 4

"Wicked" = morally evil

"Adulterous" = spiritual adultery with the world (Ja. 4:4) (not faithful to God; but buying into the world's philosophy that "seeing is believing")

To be worldly is to be carnally-minded. To live life based on the 5 senses. Such a mentality reasons: "If I can't touch it, taste it, see it, smell it, or hear it, I won't believe it. It must be "sensational" for it to impact me.

Many have a "Show me" attitude! Prove it to me! Convince me with the evidence I demand.

The wicked always demand signs because to them "Seeing is believing."

The evil mob that surrounded the cross of Christ again chided Him for a sign. They demanded, *"If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross"* (Mt. 27:40; Mk. 15:30).

If it is evil and spiritually adulteress people who seek after signs, should we be seeking after signs today?

Do we need authenticating signs from God for Him to prove to us that He is real, or that His Spirit is real, or that His Word is true? NO!

To demand God to prove Himself by giving a sign is "Satanic theology." Satan demanded that Christ prove His Messiahship by two spectacular signs (Mt. 4:5-7).

NOTE: Signs and sign gifts were given by God's sovereign discretion, at the Holy Spirit's will (I Cor. 12:11). Such sign gifts came upon God's people without the recipient seeking such; it wa automatic, uninvited, unsolicited.

If ***"a wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign"***, what does this tell you about people who seek signs and sign gifts? (EX: tongues which are a *"sign"* - I Cor. 14:22).

It is interesting to note that as this age draws toward a close, people will demonstrate how wicked they are by an increased desire to see "signs and wonders." Such a thirst will play right into the hands of Satan who will (via the Antichrist) performs powerful *"signs and lying wonders"* (II Thes. 2:9). These Satanic eschatological miracles will seem so real (since they are called *"great signs and wonders")* that they will deceive everyone except the elect (Mt. 24:24).

V. 1-4

Folks, you don't need the "sign gift" of tongues to:

1) prove you have <u>salvation</u> (Ti. 1:2; I Jn. 5:11-13)
2) prove you have the <u>Holy Spirit</u> (Rom. 8:9)
3) prove you have the <u>baptism</u> of the Spirit (I Cor. 12:13)

Just believe God's Word! Trust His promises! You are complete in Christ! (Col. 2:10)

Example: How people want "signs" today:

--"Lord, if you don't want me to marry this unsaved man, break us up" (God's will has already been revealed - II Cor. 6).

--"Lord, if you want me to witness, make him/her bring up the topic of conversation.

--"Lord, if you want me to give to you through my local church, give me a raise in pay"

--"Lord, if you don't want me to get a divorce, take my boyfriend/girlfriend out of my life"

*God has already spoken on these matters!

V. 4

"Shall no sign be given unto it" - Christ did perform more signs and wonders, but not for the Pharisees and Sadducees to see.

"The sign of the prophet Jonas" - Just as Jonah was 3 days sin the great sea creature's belly and then expelled, so Christ would be 3 days in the tomb and then resurrected (cp. Mt. 12:40).

(This sign was also rejected, and a lie was invented - Mt. 28:11-15)

"And He left them and departed" - Christ just turned around and left them hanging, with none of the sign proofs they had demanded.

He confidently departed, not worried about the fact that they remained unbelievers.

Note: One mark of insecurity is a feeling that you have to "prove yourself" to people. The insecure are always defending themselves, trying to prove themselves.

Christ knew who He was and had proven it by His spotless life, His soul-stirring messages, and His undeniable miracles. He did not have to succumb to the existential, carnal wishes of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

V. 4b

Even if Jesus gave a sign from Heaven which they could not refute, they would simply attribute it to Satan like they had done earlier (Mt. 12:24).

"The French atheist Voltaire declared, "Even if a miracle should be wrought in the open marketplace before a thousand sober witnesses, I would rather mistrust my senses than to admit a miracle." Unbelief will always find a way to reject the truth." (MacArthur, p. 5).

II. ***Little Faith*** **- Fails to REMEMBER God's past faithfulness (16:6-12)**

V. 5

"They had forgotten to take bread" **-** They intended to bring a supply of food over to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, but it slipped their preoccupied minds.

V. 6

"Take heed" **-** look out; keep your eyes open, stay alert.

"Beware" **-** hold onto this, hold your mind or attention to this; be on guard against this.

"Leaven" **-** the false teaching (v. 12) of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

1. Pharisees - their false teaching was a works righteousness based on the tradition of the elders (they added to the authority of scripture).

2. Sadducees - their false teaching was a skeptical, liberal, humanistic denial of spiritual realities (they denied the authority of Scripture).

Jesus also warned to beware of the leaven of:

3. "Herod" - (Mk. 8:15) - this false teaching was worldly secularism)pleasure seeking, living to please the flesh, indulgence, sensual living - cp. Mt. 14:1-10) (he ignored the authority of Scripture).

V. 7

Because Jesus warned against ***"leaven"***, the disciples--because they had bread on their mind--thought He was warning them not to eat the physical bread that a Pharisee of Sadducee might offer them! They thought He was warning them not to eat that bread, which may have been laced with poison.

They no doubt argued and fought over someone's failure to remember to pack the bagels, challah, or pita!

V. 8

"O ye of little faith" **-** contrast with the Syrophoenician woman's *"great faith"* (15:28).

Why should they have worried about bread when they had the "Wonder Bread" bakery walking right next to them!

Why would they need to fear hunger when the "Tastee" bakery, or better yet General Mills, Quaker Oats, and every other granary and produce company at their disposal!

"***"Little faith"*** was one of our Lord's favorite names for His disciples (Mt. 6:30; 8:26; 14:31). Of course, 'little faith' is better than no faith" (Wiersbe, p. 57).

V. 9

They failed to:

1) ***"Understand"*** - realize who Jesus was!

2) ***"Remember" -*** They forgot what Jesus could do!

"Baskets" - (v. 9) (*kophinos)* a wicker basket (perhaps like a picnic basket size)

"Baskets" - (v. 10) (*spuris*) a big round, circular, plated reed basket; the size of a hamper, large enough to hold a man (Acts 9:25).

Jesus is saying: "If I were concerned about our having bread, I would simply create some Myself. . ." (MacArthur, p. 13).

V. 11

How often we are like the disciples in soon forgetting how great our God is! We fail to remember His faithfulness of the past!

We, like O.T. Israel, experience the great Exodus, then we worry about the Red Sea; we experience the Red Sea, then worry about drinking water; we experience manna, then worry about meat; we experience victory over Pharaoh's army and concern ourselves with the Philistines!

Our Lord, who took care of us in the past, will not abandon us in the present!

He who met our needs will not suddenly forsake us!

Phil. 1:6 - *"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ"*

What God starts, He finishes.
What God begins, He completes.

--He who taught you His plan of salvation will teach you the whole counsel of God (Col. 1:9).

--He who fed you will not let you starve to death (Mt. 6)

--He who protected you will not let Satan prevail against you (Mt. 16:18)

--He who lives in you via His Spirit will not abandon you (I Cor. 6:19; Heb. 13:5)

--He who called you to Himself and His work will equip you for every task He calls you to (Phil. 4:13)

--He who loves you will not ever stop (Rom. 8:31-39)

--He who redeemed you from sin and Satan will sanctify you (I Th. 5:24 - *"Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.")*

--He who saved you will keep you saved (Rom. 5:9-10)

--He who satisfied our concerns about life after death and gave us eternal life will satisfy your needs in this temporal life (I Tim. 6:17 -*"Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who given us richly all things to enjoy"*

CONCLUSION:

Let His faithfulness to you in the past sustain you in the present and future!

SEE: Deut. 8:1-18

How big is your faith? How hungry are you for God's truth?

"The story is told of a blind French girl who was given a copy of the gospel of Mark in braille. As she read and reread the book, she came to have faith in Christ, and the book became more precious with each reading. She read it so much that she developed callouses on her fingers that eventually prevented her from feeling the raised dots. She was so determined to read God's Word that she peeled the skin off the tips of her fingers to make them more sensitive, but in doing so she permanently damaged the nerves. Devastated, she picked up the book to kiss it farewell, only to discover that her lips were even more sensitive than her fingers." (MacArthur, p. 16).