

11. On what other occasions did people request signs of Jesus and what answers did He give them?
13. Explain the peculiar immorality of asking for signs in the spirit in which this was done by the Jewish theologians.

Section 40

JESUS WARNS DISCIPLES AGAINST INFLUENCE OF POPULAR LEADERS AND PARTIES

(Parallel: Mark 8:13-26)

TEXT: 16:5-12

5 And the disciples came to the other side and forgot to take bread. 6 And Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. 7 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, We took no bread. 8 And Jesus perceiving it said, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have no bread? 9 Do ye not yet perceive, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? 10 Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? 11 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. 12 Then understood they that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- a. How do you harmonize the apparently conflicting reports that the disciples "forgot to take bread," (Matthew) and "they had only one loaf with them in the boat" (Mark)?
- b. What was there that was so dangerous about the influence of the Pharisees, the Sadducees and Herod that Jesus needed to make so specific and so stern a warning to His disciples against it? Deal with the influence of each group separately.
- c. What "leaven" did Herod have? (cf. Mark 8:15) He was no religious teacher! Or was he, in a certain sense, one whose views

- affected the religious tenor of the Jews? If not, why not? If so, what religious influence did Herod wield?
- d. Because of their constant exposure to the contradictory and openly antagonistic views of the religious leaders, Jesus' disciples ran the risk of discouragement. Why do you think Jesus was willing to let His own disciples run that risk? Was not Jesus Himself risking the loss of some of His Apostles either to the Pharisees, Sadducees, Herod, or some other force active in Palestine at that time?
 - e. If you feel that there was great risk in the constant exposure to the harassing tactics of the enemies of Jesus, then what measures do you see in Jesus' method that were calculated to strengthen and protect the disciples against the psychological drumming on their minds that these attacks must necessarily cause?
 - f. How are we "leavened" in our world? Are there "leavens" in our world about which the Lord would probably warn us today? If so, what are the measures in Jesus' method of dealing with us, His disciples, that strengthen and protect us against the insidious dangers of these influences? If you feel there are no "leavens," then perhaps you have already been leavened!
 - g. What are some expressions used in the twentieth century for the same idea meant by Jesus when He warned against the "leaven of" certain leaders and parties? Think of the working and effect of yeast in dough as you answer. Why does Jesus compare doctrine to "leaven"?
 - h. Can you explain why the Apostles, having heard Jesus' somber warning, did not discuss the question immediately and directly with Jesus, but rather talked it over among themselves?
 - i. Can you see the apparent reasonableness in their (mistaken) conclusion that He was discussing food when He made that serious warning? Show the rationality of their conclusion, from a Jewish, human point of view, even if their conclusion is mistaken. They were reasonable men, even though wrong.
 - j. Was it possible for the Apostles, of all people, to have "hardened hearts"? How?
 - k. Why do you suppose Jesus brought up the two miraculous feedings, in order to deal with the Apostles' confusion of His meaning?

PARAPHRASE AND HARMONY

Jesus turned on His heel and left the Pharisees and Sadducees that had tried to put Him to the test by demanding that He show them a supernatural sign from God. He and His disciples reboarded the boat and sailed for the other side of the Sea of Galilee. When the disciples sailed, they forgot to bring along any bread with them. There was only one loaf in the boat.

Jesus began cautioning the men, "Keep your eyes open: watch out for the 'yeast' of the Pharisees, the Sadducees and Herod!"

Because they had brought no bread, they then began discussing Jesus' enigmatic words among themselves.

Jesus knew about it, so He asked them, "Men, where is your faith? Why all this discussion about the fact that you forgot to bring the bread? Don't you have the slightest idea about what I meant? Are you so slow to grasp it? You have eyes to see with, but can you not see? You have ears to hear with, but can't you hear? Have you already forgotten how many baskets of left-overs you men gathered up when I broke the five barley loaves of bread for the five thousand?"

Someone replied, "Twelve baskets."

"And how many baskets were there when there were but seven loaves to feed four thousand people?"

"Seven, Lord."

"Do you not understand it yet? How could you miss my point then? I was not talking about BREAD at all. I said, 'Be on your guard against the LEAVEN of the Pharisees, Sadducees and Herod.'"

Then the Apostles realized that He had not been talking about literal yeast for bread at all. Rather, He meant the psychological influence of the Pharisees, Sadducees and Herod.

SUMMARY

Jesus and the Twelve left the sign-seeking Jewish leaders and sailed northeast across the Galilean Lake. Under way, Jesus warned the Apostles about the leaven of popular leaders and parties. They took His word literally, hence misunderstood Him by thinking He referred to yeast and/or bread contaminated by contact with the proscribed leaders and parties. Since they had only one loaf, which they had already in the boat and had bought none from any of the offending parties, whence any of the danger of contamination supposedly would

come, they could not understand His point. They apparently also thought that the one loaf was insufficient to feed the entire group, because Jesus then rebuked them for their insufficient faith and their short memory that forgot the great miraculous multiplication of food for huge crowds on two occasions, facts that should have permanently removed any further worry about food! Then Jesus explained that His warning concerned the influence, views and opinions of those religious and political parties.

NOTES

A. SITUATION (16:5)

16:5 **And the disciples came to the other side and forgot to take bread.** **Came to the other side** (*elthōntēs . . . eis tò pēran*) need not mean more than "when they went to the other side," since the verb translated "came" means either "to come or go," depending on the point of view of the user. In fact, Mark connects "to the other side" with Jesus' departure.

If they had just sailed from Magadan-Dalmanutha, presumably on the western or south-western shore of Lake Galilee in the general vicinity of Tiberias, then they are sailing toward the eastern shore. Matthew's next geographical notice is in the district of Caesarea Philippi, north and east of the Galilean lake. Mark (8:22-26) records the intervening event of the healing of a blind man at "Bethsaida," which may easily have been the famous Bethsaida Julias located near the northeastern end of the lake and right on Jesus' route north toward Caesarea Philippi. (Cf. Lk. 9:10 and Jn. 6:1)

They had sailed hurriedly, as appears from the detail that they had left without purchasing a sufficient supply of bread. It is probable that the disciples' entire attention had been focused on the clash between Jesus and the clergy, causing them to **forget to take bread**. Mark, however, adds that "they had only one loaf with them in the boat." (Mk. 8:14) Although the chronological connections are not as tight as would be desired to make the conclusion certain, would that one loaf be a remainder from the miraculous feeding of the 4000? (Study Mt. 15:37 = Mk. 8:8; Mt. 15:39 = Mk. 8:10; Mt. 16:4f = Mk. 8:13f) If so, the particularly vigorous scolding Jesus gave the Twelve (Mk. 8:17f) becomes so much more comprehensible. (See on 16:8.) **They forgot to take bread:** was it their normal practice to

furnish themselves with picnic baskets full of provisions for their journeys? If so, at least part of the baskets used to collect the leftovers after the miraculous feedings may have belonged to the Apostles themselves. Further, since the Apostolic group had been only recently travelling through Gentile country (Phoenicia) or through more sparsely settled areas (Decapolis), and since they had deliberately sought privacy for study, it is quite likely that they had grown accustomed to providing their own food supply during this time. So, for these reasons and that given below, we conclude that the disciples literally were so distracted by the debate as to forget to refurnish their dwindled supply at Magadan-Dalmanutha.

Foster (*Middle Period*, 212) sees the consternation among the Apostles caused by Jesus' withdrawal from His enemies as the psychological explanation of this section: "It must have been with a heavy heart that the apostles saw Jesus retreat again from another encounter with His foes." Of course, as we have already seen, Jesus did NOT retreat out of fear or failure, but His disciples, longing for more decisive victories, must have interpreted His hasty departure in this way. Accordingly, Foster then connects Jesus' warning (16:6) with whatever unwholesome thoughts they might have had about it, whether "bitter disappointment over broken dreams, frustration and retreat." He imagines a venomous Pharisean sneer levelled at some Apostle: "I suppose you men will be disappearing again? Why does not your Master stand His ground?" And, because the Apostles had been embarrassed by His apparent indifference to the Pharisees' reactions in the debate over traditions (15:12f), He was now compelled to rebuke their kowtowing to those bigots.

B. JESUS' CRYPTIC WARNING (16:6)

16:1 **And Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.** This rebuke is intended to counterbalance the negative effects of the recent encounter over signs. **Leaven:** see on 13:33. Matthew explains the figurative meaning of yeast at 16:11, 12 as "teaching." **Take heed and beware of the leaven . . .** What is the main thrust of this warning?

1. Does He mean: "Beware of the corrupting influence the doctrine of these leaders exerts in your own lives and thinking"? In the sections which follow, the disciples amply demonstrate how deeply

affected they were by what would be thought acceptable to others or beneficial to themselves—an attitude which would have certainly guaranteed them some relative calm away from the tempests that would be hurled at them by the unbelieving clergy. But this attitude, arising out of compromise with Jesus' enemies, could only mean the loss of their eternal life, since it meant the end of their discipleship.

2. Or does He mean: "Beware of the deadly influence these leaders will exert in others to turn them against you, i.e. recognize who your real enemies are. Hitherto, as leaders of Israel, they have been religious guides far more dependable than any outside the circle of true religion. Now, however, you must consciously beware the secret and devious ways these politicians operate." Whereas the Twelve finally understood that He referred to "the teaching" of these popular groups and leaders, it would seem that it is not merely their official doctrines that were directly under fire from Jesus here. In fact, if "leaven" connotes every expression of their influence, then He is warning everyone to look beneath the doctrine itself to see the disparity between official pronouncements and real practice, and the hypocrisy of public doctrine in contrast with secret strategies.

Either way, He warns against their general drift and tendency that sways men's thinking.

The leaven of the Pharisees: hypocrisy in all its forms (Lk. 12:1), i.e. traditional religion that emphasizes outward purity regardless of the heart's condition, and substitution of human regulations for God's requirements, often involving outright cancellation of God's. (Cf. Mt. 15:1-20) They were notoriously greedy lovers of money. (Lk. 16:14f) They clung to their confidence in human righteousness as an adequate basis for God's approval.

The leaven of the Sadducees: a rationalism that refused to believe reliable testimony to the supernatural authentication of God's prophets, resulting in a materialistic philosophy in practice. (Cf. Ac. 4:1-6; 23:8) A mockery of all that was holy, all the high priestly family was Sadducean. From a comparison of the parallel text (Mk. 8:15), some have supposed that the "Herodians" were merely Galilean Sadducees, since Matthew repeatedly speaks of "Pharisees and Sadducees," whereas Mark, after "Pharisees," says not "Sadducees," but "Herod." If they are to be identified with each other, then they may have been Sadducees religiously, but Herodians politically,

which, considering the this-worldly concerns of each group, is not at all an unlikely combination. So we may have here a question of dominant emphasis, rather than one of real distinction. Barclay (*Matthew*, II, 146) comments:

(Sadducees) were wealthy and aristocratic, and they were deeply involved in politics. So Jesus may well have been saying, "Take care that you never identify the kingdom of heaven with outward goods, and that you never pin your hopes of bringing it in with political action." This may well be a warning against giving material things too high a place in our scheme of values, and against thinking that men can be reformed by political action. Jesus may well have been reminding men that material prosperity is far from being the highest good, and that political action is far from producing the most important results. The true blessings are the blessings of the heart; and the true change is not the change of outward circumstances but the change of the hearts of men.

"The leaven of Herod" (Mk. 8:15); if we should distinguish it from that of the Sadducees, then, may refer to the doctrine of Hellenism with its paganizing tendency to compromise pure Judaism with its faithfulness to Javeh and its necessary separation from paganism. The influence of the Herods was one of conscious innovation, intentionally attempting to make Jews over according to Greek models. Also, the Herodians, as a party, would reflect something of the Roman influence filtered through their puppet-kings, the Herods. Did Jesus also mean to expose the political maneuvering, the jockeying for power, so often characteristic of Herodian family politics? The disciples certainly proved themselves prime targets for this kind of influence, as they fought to decide who among them should consider himself the greatest, who should have the prime seats in the Kingdom, etc. This spirit renders partial judgments and vitiates the persuasiveness of men whose ostensible goal is to make all men holy and godly regardless of their former background or relative position or stature.

However, regardless of their superficial differences, they represent just one deadly influence, because there is one fundamental characteristic common to all: they were all obstinately hostile to the Kingdom of God. Their entire thinking—as this was revealed in their practice—was geared to this world. They were insensitive to truth. Bruce (*Training*, 154) scores their "ungodliness, blindness and deadness of

heart to the divine. They did not know the true and the good when they saw it; and when they knew it, they did not love it." They all demonstrated a common disgust for and distrust of anyone who sincerely dedicated himself to truth and righteousness. One common trait, shared by all these divergent philosophies, has just been illustrated in the previous section. Neither the Pharisees, Sadducees nor Herod could bring themselves to relinquish their pride, position, power and personal opinions long enough to admit the obvious significance of Jesus' Messianic signs. (16:1-4; 14:1 and par.) Their unwillingness to submit to the testimony of the evidence, if ever admitted as a norm by the disciples, would become a creeping, skeptical disease that would wither the spontaneous enthusiasm of true belief. ("Have any of the authorities or of the Pharisees believed in him?" (Jn. 7:48) There is always danger of being shifted into line with false principles and philosophies so subtle and so pervasive that we are unaware of their sway.

C. THE DISCIPLES' MISUNDERSTANDING (16:7)

16:7 **And they reasoned among themselves, saying, We took no bread.** Jesus' words were taken literally: "He must be talking about the leaven of bread." (Cf. 16:12) In this sense, their discussion may have gone something like this: "If bread is pure or unclean on the basis of the yeast's contact with contaminating objects or persons, then He is warning us against buying bread from the parties mentioned, due to its possible ceremonial defilement by them." If this correctly reconstructs their conversation, then **we took no bread** may mean:

1. "At least we are safe from contamination by the leaven of unfriendly leaders and parties, since we brought none of their bread with us."
2. Or, in the light of Jesus' further argument, this is their expression of anguished realization that, because of their preoccupation with His clash with the clergy, they had neglected to make the purchases necessary for their sustenance during their journey. It is almost as if, when Jesus mentioned "yeast" they thought of "bread," because they realized it was too late to provide themselves any.
3. Worse still, they deemed the one loaf they had with them in the boat to be insufficient for their total need. (Cf. Mk. 8:14) And, if there were danger that any bread they should buy in the future

be polluted by contact with the above-mentioned parties, then, by Jesus' warning (as they understood it), they would be forced to do without bread entirely.

Since apparently nothing had been said during the embarkation that would have linked His present warning with the previous clash with the hierarchy, the Twelve, themselves concerned with the mechanics of getting the boat under way, see no immediate connection between **the Pharisees and Sadducees** who asked for a sign and **the Pharisees and Sadducees** whose leaven is to be avoided. Hence, because they were on a different wavelength than Jesus, they did not receive His meaning.

D. JESUS' REBUKE (16:8-11)

1. The indignant accusation of inadequate faith.

16:8 **And Jesus perceiving it, said, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have no bread?** Had it been true that Jesus really meant literal bread yeast—as the disciples had supposed—, they still demonstrated a gross lack of genuine trust in the power of One who could turn stones into bread or multiply food endlessly for thousands! **Little faith:** although in verses 9 and 11 He scolds them for their inability to understand, there is no inconsistency involved, since their obtuseness is caused by their lack of faith. They did not understand, simply because they lacked the confidence in Him they should have had.

2. The reproach for limited spiritual insight. (16:9a)

Mark (8:17f) reports Jesus' battery of questions as follows:

Why do you discuss the fact that you have no bread?

Do you not yet perceive or understand?

Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear?

And do you not remember?

When I broke the . . . loaves, how many baskets did you take up? . . .

And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets . . .?

Do you not yet understand?

Their lack of spiritual perception lay in thinking that the one presumably "kosher" loaf remaining in the boat should somehow be thought inadequate to feed them indefinitely, although Jesus was present to multiply it if He so willed. Even if they could not fathom His creative power to turn even stones into bread, they should have at least reasoned: "With Jesus along, all we need is the one loaf we have here in the boat!" Thus, even their confusion about literal yeast should never have blinded them to Jesus' true meaning about the leaven of the Jewish leaders. That Matthew should have ignored the one available loaf, does not argue that he knew nothing about it, because, while Mark's reader might deduce the reasoning pattern suggested above, Matthew's reader, on the other hand, unaided by the notice of even one loaf, is led by its absence to imagine that Jesus could have sustained His men by creating food out of nothing! Either way, therefore, the readers are inexorably led to see Jesus' power as Creator.

Bruce (*Training*, 156) blames the disciples' confusion on their treating . . .

. . . the incident on the other side of the lake too lightly, and . . . their neglect to provide bread too gravely. They should have taken more to heart the ominous demand for a sign, and the solemn words spoken by their Master in reference thereto; and they should not have been troubled about the want of loaves in the company of Him . . . Their thoughtlessness in one direction, and their over-thoughtfulness in another, showed that food and raiment occupied a larger place in their minds than the kingdom of God and its interests.

Another motive for their hardness of heart (Mk. 8:17), or closed-mindedness, is the fact that their mind was still bemoaning His refusal of the Messianic crown and His steadfast refusal to baffle and wipe out His opposition by some majestic display of supernatural fire-power. With this kind of mentality in the disciples, it is understandable that they would not arrive at spiritual solutions that reflect a believer's heart and comprehension.

3. The reminder of two stupendous miracles in the very area of their doubts. (16:9b, 10)

This reminder is significant for the following reasons:

1. Both miracles had taken place in Herod's territory (see on 14:13b)

and on 15:29). So, the disciples' concern not to buy Herod's leaven would be ill-founded, since Jesus could have sustained them indefinitely at any place in Herod's realm without recourse to bread made impure by that king, had that been Jesus' real intent when speaking about Herod's leaven. And by reflection, the same could also be true of the leaven of the other parties.

2. This reminder serves also to distinguish the two great miracles for all future ages that might tend to confuse the two and doubt both. (See "The Critical Importance of This Account" before 15:29 where some differences between the two miraculous feedings are noted.) Beyond the obvious differences in numbers of people, bread, fish and baskets, the kind of baskets is different. The 12 baskets (*kòfinos*, v. 9) would have been of any size, but were considered typical of the Jews, i.e. suitable for carrying kosher food. The 7 baskets (*spùris*, v. 10) were large hampers for edibles and other purposes.
3. **How many baskets did you take up?** By pushing them to provide these numbers, He is impressing upon them the liberality of His supernatural ability when the occasion for its display requires. It really mattered not *how many*, because ANY left-over fragments is proof enough of His power. What mattered now was that "you took up so many baskets, and yet you now worry that you have no bread?!"

4. Jesus repeats His statement about leaven. (16:11)

Lest the result of these statements of Jesus come as a surprise to the unwary reader, to whom v. 12 seems not to follow from v. 11, let it be noticed that Jesus does not merely repeat His former statement about leaven. (v. 6) Rather, the two sentences in v. 11, taken together, form an antithesis: "NOT BREAD, BUT LEAVEN!" an antithesis confirmed by the disciples' conclusion. (v. 12) So, if *leaven*, according to Jesus, stands in contrast to *bread* which is usually made with leaven, then *leaven* must be understood in its figurative sense, rather than literally, as the Twelve had done earlier.

Jesus repeated His metaphor, because "leaven" conveys His meaning a bit better than does the literal word "teaching," since it carries the nuance of a corrupting spirit and example so subtle that the damage would be done before it could be recognized for what it was. Bruce (*Training*, 155) defines it:

The spirit of unbelief which ruled in Jewish society Jesus described as leaven, with special reference to its diffusiveness; and most fitly, for it passes from sire to son, from rich to poor, from learned to unlearned, till a whole generation has been vitiated by its malign influence. Such was the state of things in Israel as it came under His eye. Spiritual blindness and deadness, with the outward symptom of an inward malady,—a constant craving for evidence,—met Him on every side. The common people, the leaders of society, the religious, the skeptics, the courtiers, and the rustics, were all blind and yet apparently all most anxious to see, ever renewing the demand, 'What sign showest Thou, that we may see and believe Thee? What doest Thou work?'

E. THE DISCIPLES FINALLY UNDERSTAND (16:12)

Now they are doubly sure they needed His warning to realize that they are in a world which could so easily influence them as to leave them useless to Jesus.

1. In fact, they had been so blinded by their own thinking which had arisen out of their associations with Pharisean thought and practice, that this kept them from grasping instantly the simplest metaphor Jesus lay before them! Their hypothetical conversation reconstructed at v. 7, assumes this Pharisean mentality and ambient at every turn. Ironically, from this standpoint, then, they actually proved their deep need for His warning, even as they discussed its meaning! The leaven of the Pharisees was even then at work in their midst, because they argued like Pharisees!
2. He had patiently led them to the correct understanding not only of His warning, but also of their own blundering logic about bread. Sadducean unbelief in the supernatural had reared its ugly head in their little faith to trust Him to multiply food miraculously if necessary.

Since this verse indicates that the Twelve should have understood "**the teaching**" from the first, and not **the leaven of bread**, is McGarvey (*Fourfold Gospel*, 408) correct in thinking that "Jesus had resorted to metaphor because the word leaven better expressed his idea than did the word teaching"? Should we conclude that the disciples still missed something of His meaning, since they concluded

that He meant **the teaching**, and not the influence? No, because, as all great teachers know, the power of influence, spirit and example is as truly **teaching**, or doctrine, as all the dogmatic formulas pronounced in official, formal instruction. Although such is not "taught," it is "caught," just as truly and surely as if it had been taught.

APPLICATIONS

THE SUBTLE INFLUENCE OF EVIL

1. We too can be influenced by men of influence in our society who have such a subtle sway over our thinking that we may be unconscious of it at all.
 - a. Perhaps they never sit in the official seats of learning to diffuse their doctrines, but their corrupting power is nevertheless real. Life cannot be lived aright, if the beliefs which lie at the base of its moral character are mistaken, misleading or false. But these beliefs are none the less doctrines, regardless of their origin or method of propagation.
 - b. Again, there are other reputable gentlemen who are too clever to commit themselves publicly on the side of immorality or in favor of ideas tending toward apostasy from the living God. Yet, the spirit and essence revealed in their way of expressing themselves, and the imperceptible spell of their personal example, seduces the unaware into infidelity.
 - c. The persuasiveness of the peril is greater than it seems, because there is usually just a grain of truth in every mistaken concept which seems to depend upon it, just enough truth to make the whole mistake palatable.
 - d. The pressure to embrace the false or wrong-headed thinking is further enhanced by the prestige and apparent rectitude of those who hold such opinions.
2. Like the Apostles, we too can place such an emphasis upon the physical cares and concerns of this life, that the most solemn words of our Master upon problems of vastly greater importance fade into insignificance, be misunderstood and wrongly applied.
3. Now, as then, it will always be tempting to follow the modern religio-political scholarship and modes and moods popularized by men of note:
 - a. By supposing that the right rites, the correct phrases, and the

proper traditions can please God and bless mankind.

- b. By identifying the Kingdom of God with material wealth or by promoting its advancement by political activism, hoping to reform men by substituting social change for personal conversion.
 - c. By not caring about the paganizing propaganda that bombards us daily, threatening our separation from the world for God's use.
4. What is our salvation and protection from the ascendancy of these insidious inducements?
- a. We must never forget that it is JESUS who admonishes us against these infernal masteries. It is His word that defines the danger.
 - (1) Therefore, let His sure word penetrate every part of our being, so that His will might be the only power active in our lives. His truth in us can empower us to take the offensive against the malignant sway of evil. Look what His Word did to the early Christians as they launched their counterattack against all the heavens in their day!
 - (2) Let us choose our most intimate friends with great care, since even our own loved ones exercise an influence upon us that is not always edifying. (1 Co. 15:33; cfr. Mt. 16:22f!) Choose friends that love Jesus; let His Word be the norm by which our close companions are chosen.
 - b. It is the patience of Jesus Himself that can save us! Morgan (*Matthew*, 207) says it so well:

He Who turned His back in satirical scorn upon the Pharisees and Sadducees who had come for no other purpose than to tempt Him was very patient with the blundering disciples and waited for them. Oh He is a wonderful Master! He will say it again if we do not understand it the first time. If you are a Pharisee or a Sadducee with your animosity, and your criticism and your cleverness, He will laugh at you in high heaven, and He will turn His back upon you. But if you are a weak, trembling, foolish, frail child, thinking about loaves when you ought to be thinking about spiritual things, He will say it again . . .

- c. But we too must watch, standing guard against every influence in our life that could compromise our position in Christ and our usefulness in His hands!

5. WE CAN BE LEAVENED:

- a. By the attitudes of the church in which we grew up without ever realizing that its attitudes were not always necessary expressions of true Christianity. This is not to undermine the ancient merely because of its antiquity, but to challenge us to examine the positions and attitudes of fallible human beings, because they are human.
- b. By the atmosphere of the world which we absorb like the air we breath. The moral pollution is as real as the material sort, and often we are just as unconscious of the effect of the one on our spirit as we are unaware of the damage to our body of the other.
- c. By **OURSELVES!** Blessed is the man who is so alert that he cannot be fooled by the falsehoods he is tempted to believe true about himself! Blessed is the man who can not be deceived by his own self-righteousness!
- d. By men who walk with God: look at Moses and Abraham, David and Isaiah, Daniel and John the Baptist, Peter and Paul. They knew more about heaven than most, because they knew God. (Cf. 1 Co. 11:1; Phil. 4:9!)
- e. By the God who is the final, real satisfaction of the soul. When God who created a world full of so many satisfactions, calls us to what He says is far better, we must be willing to sacrifice all of earth's satisfactions for one day with Him. We must never compare the paltry interests of earth with the glories of a heaven we have never seen or have only heard about.

FACT QUESTIONS

1. What is "leaven"? Explain its literal and figurative uses. How is it used in our text?
2. State all the similarities and differences between the feeding of the 5000 and the 4000. Show how these two separate miracles become important in the context of this discussion about the Apostles' misunderstanding of certain words of Jesus.
3. Regarding the provision of bread for the traveling group of Jesus, what was their usual method of operation? How did they generally procure food on their evangelistic tours? Did this trip differ from their usual practice? If so, how? If not, why not?
4. How many loaves of bread were in the boat? Who tells us this? Of what importance is this fact?
5. When did the disciples discover that they had forgotten to buy

bread for the trip?

6. Define the "leaven of the Pharisees." Why was this dangerous to the Apostles?
7. Define the "leaven of the Sadducees." Why was this dangerous to the Apostles?
8. Define the "leaven of Herod." Why was this dangerous to the Apostles?
9. Explain why Jesus gave this warning at this particular time. What events led up to and called for this warning? What actions and attitudes in the Apostles' lives shortly *after* this proved the timeliness of this warning?
10. List three other retreats before this one, where Jesus deliberately left a public ministry to take His Apostles away for awhile.
11. From what and to what was Jesus withdrawing each time?
12. In what sense does Jesus intend the expression: "Are your hearts hardened?" Is this the same sort of hard heart found in a determined sinner? If so, explain how the Apostles themselves could be in danger of this condition. If not, explain how Jesus' words are to be otherwise interpreted.
13. Why did Jesus make reference to the two miraculous multiplications of food for the multitudes? What connection is there with Jesus' warning about leaven?

Section 41

NEAR CAESAREA PHILIPPI JESUS TESTS HIS DISCIPLES

(Parallels: Mark 8:27—9:1; Luke 9:18-27)

TEXT: 16:13-28

13 Now when Jesus came into the parts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Who do men say that the Son of man is? 14 And they said, Some say John the Baptist; some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. 15 He saith unto them, But who say ye that I am? 16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. 17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven. 18 And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter and upon