

Do You Understand?  
Mark 8:11-21

Review/Introduction

Most of us have claimed that we “understand” something even when our understanding is incomplete. Most of the time, this partial understanding does not necessarily come at a high cost. As we come to Mark 8:11-21, however, we are reminded that a partial understanding of Christ comes at the greatest of costs. As we examine the interaction first between Christ and the Pharisees and second between Christ and the disciples, we are reminded that true disciples must come to a complete understanding of Christ if they truly seek salvation.

**I. Jesus Condemns Willful Blindness/Defiance (8:11-13, Psalm 95:8-11)**

A. The Pharisee’s Statement: Sign Requested (Judges 6:36-40, II Kings 20:8-11, Is. 7:10-12)

- i. The Request: Proof of Yahweh’s Favor
- ii. OT Background (Gideon, Ahaz, Hezekiah, etc)
  - Their request, then, could have easily been disguised as a request similar to those made by people of faith in the Old Testament.

B. The Pharisee’s Heart (Deuteronomy 13:1-5, Mark 3:6)

- i. They Hope to Destroy Christ
- ii. They Hope to Justify it through the Law.

Knowing their ultimate desire regarding Christ and in light of passages such as Deuteronomy 13:1-5, it is likely that this request is an attempt to display Christ as a sort of false prophet worthy of execution under the Mosaic Law. In the minds of the Pharisees, it is likely that any sign offered by Christ would have been enough of a reason to “justly” place him under arrest.

C. Jesus’ Response (Psalm 95:8-11)

- i. Prophetic Sigh
- ii. Immediate Refusal (II Kings 6:31)
  - The language of Christ here is the language found in the Old Testament when individuals are taking an oath. Jesus is clearly letting the Pharisees know that there will be no sign given whatsoever.
- iii. Exposure of Hearts (Psalm 95): “This generation...”
  - But using language like this, Jesus is demonstrating that he ultimately understand what is at work in the hearts of these Pharisees. These men were not like any Old Testament hero of the faith. They were, instead, like those who grumbled in the Wilderness who were denied entrance into the Promised Land.

Summary: In response to this careful attack intended to preemptively frustrate the Kingdom, Jesus demonstrates his Kingly authority.

Jesus understands the hearts of these Pharisees...and he understood what was at stake...

Transition: Thus, Jesus walks away...

Once on the boat, Jesus because to address what just happened. He speaks of the Kingdom, of the dangers that will persist of which the disciples must be made aware.

At first glance it would be easy to assume that the faith of the disciples is the type of faith we are meant to emulate. As the story unfolds, however, we are quickly reminded of the fact that their faith remains dangerously incomplete, as well.

## II. Jesus Exposes an Incomplete Faith (8:14-18) (here is a threat far closer to us all...)

### A. The Disciples' "Faith"

- i. Witness to Various Miracles
- ii. Following Jesus through intense ministry (and obeying their calling)
- iii. STILL with Jesus on the boat
- iv. YET...still focused on earthly matters...

### C. Jesus' Response (Part I)

- i. Severe: WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!?!?!? (Psalm 95, Jeremiah 5:20ff, Is. 6:9-10)
  - a. Language of the Prophets
  - b. Language of Judgment
  - c. Language Similar to Pharisees
- ii. Gracious
  - a. Necessary Warning
  - b. Ultimately Temporary Hardness ("Do you *not yet* understand?")

Summary: Jesus here speaks harshly but it is not the way he speaks to the Pharisees. Jesus speaks sharply out of necessity. But Jesus stands with them. Jesus is pushing them along. Jesus is trying to force them to see...

- And as he does so, we see Jesus interacting with these disciples in a surprisingly gracious manner...

## III. Jesus Calls for Total Understanding (8:19-21)

### A. Step #1: Remembering Events (Mark 8, Joshua 4:1-7)

- i. Remembering the Promised Land (Joshua 4:1-5)
- ii. Remembering the Feeding of the 5,000/4,000

Point: There is, of course, importance in knowing history (particularly your history). But the ability to spout off "historical facts" is never the end goal. Rather, the goal was always...

### B. Step #2: Understanding the Ultimate Meaning (Joshua 4:6-8)

- i. Understanding Yahweh's Faithfulness (Joshua)
- ii. Understanding Christ's Identity (Mark) (I Cor. 10, Hebrews 3:7-14)
  - The sign was given...but did they understand?

Final Question: Do you not yet understand the meaning of all of this?

**IV. Conclusion/Application (Step #3)**

- A. Unbelievers: Do not seek out signs
  - i. Be Humbled
  - ii. Believe
  
- B. Believers
  - i. Remember everything
  - ii. Remind one another (Hebrews 3:7-14)
  - iii. Follow Your King