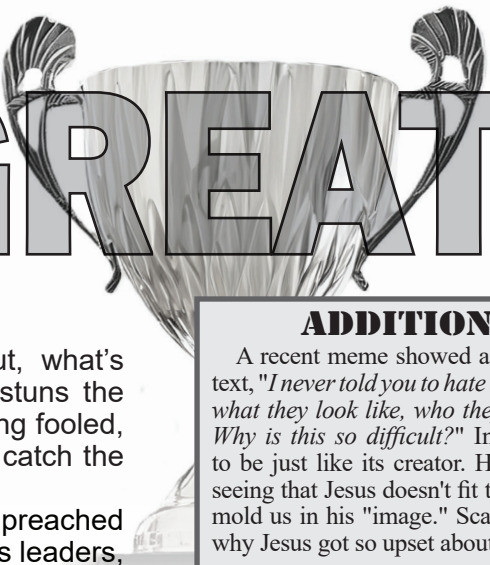


# THE GREATEST



## DO IT AGAIN

Everyone loves a good magic trick. But, what's the first thing we say when a magician stuns the spectators? "Do it again!" People love being fooled, but they also can't stand it. They want to catch the magician in the act.

Over the past eight Weeks, Jesus has preached God's truth, confronted the Jewish religious leaders, and worked many miracles. Everything he has done or said has served to identify him as The Greatest, the Jewish Messiah. He has proven himself greater than the most powerful people, forces, and traditions of this world.

In Mark 8, we see more signs and miracles. Here again, Jesus fed the crowd—this time with seven loaves and a few fish he fed 4,000. However, even with to-go containers in hand, doubters existed. Like so many today, skeptics insisted Jesus perform signs for them before they would believe. Such doubts led Jesus to not only perform more signs of his choosing, but to rebuke those who refuse to believe.

What sign would it take for you to fully trust and obey the Lord? Our passage today challenges us to consider this question. Everything we pursue and trust apart from Christ is foolish. He is more and better than anything we can achieve through sin.

### MARK 8:11-21

<sup>11</sup> The Pharisees came and began to argue with him, seeking from him a sign from heaven to test him. <sup>12</sup> And he sighed deeply in his spirit and said, "Why does this generation seek a sign? Truly, I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation." <sup>13</sup> And he left them, got into the boat again, and went to the other side.

<sup>14</sup> Now they had forgotten to bring bread, and they had only one loaf with them in the boat. <sup>15</sup> And he cautioned them, saying, "Watch out; beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod." <sup>16</sup> And they began discussing with one another the fact that they had no bread. <sup>17</sup> And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? <sup>18</sup> Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear? And do you not remember?"

<sup>19</sup> When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?" They said to him, "Twelve." <sup>20</sup> "And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?" And they said to him, "Seven."

<sup>21</sup> And he said to them, "Do you not yet understand?"

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

A recent meme showed a picture of a painting of Jesus with the text, "I never told you to hate anybody. I don't care where they're from, what they look like, who they're in love with, or who they worship. Why is this so difficult?" In other words, this meme makes Jesus to be just like its creator. Hopefully, in our study you're seeing that Jesus doesn't fit this mold. In fact, he wants to mold us in his "image." Scan the QR-code to understand why Jesus got so upset about this with the Pharisees.



## DISCUSSION

If you could be granted one wish by a genie, what would it be?

ICEBREAKER

1. How did Jesus respond to the Pharisee's request? (12-13)

2. What was the major concern for...

-The disciples? (14, 16)

-Jesus? (15)

3. What two miraculous events did Jesus ask if the disciples remembered so that they might understand? (19-20)

OBSERVATION

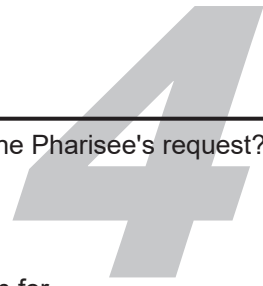
4. What was the leaven of the Pharisees? (11, 17-18)

INTERPRETATION

5. Take a moment to yourself and consider the question, "Is there anything more that Jesus could prove to make me follow him more completely?" Then, discuss what he's already accomplished to earn your trust.

APPLICATION

Jesus has done everything necessary so that we can partake in his inheritance. However, sin corrupts our hearts from following him. Need help. Talk to your Coach today!



# THE GREATEST

## STUDY NOTES SKYWRITING

Imagine looking up and seeing your name written in the clouds with a message just for you. Scan the QR-code to see one such message for a very lucky Amy.



Despite every prophecy-fulfilling thing that Jesus has done, **the Pharisees came and began to argue with him, seeking from him a sign from heaven to test him.** They were looking for a heavenly sign, perhaps like the sun staying 24-hours in the sky for Joshua (Joshua 10:13), or Elijah calling down fire from heaven (2 Kings 1:10, 12). More generally, most ancient people, including the Jews of this time, believed that signs in the heavens could predict future events. Unusual signs could predict the death of a ruler, the fall of a city, and so forth.

Jesus had healed the lame, deaf, and blind. He had brought a young girl back from death, he had expelled demons, and he had fed multitudes with only relative scraps—and now these guys have the gall to ask for more? Closed eyes see nothing! They didn't want to believe because it would cost them their power and position. Jesus **sighed deeply in his spirit and said, "Why does this generation seek a sign? Truly, I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation."** More literally, it reads, "May I be accursed of God," if a sign is to be given to this generation."

## JESUS IS GREATER THAN SIGNS

It would seem that the disciples sent all the leftovers from feeding the 4,000 home with the crowd because **they had forgotten to bring bread. They had only one loaf with them in the boat.**

This thought of bread sparked Jesus' thought—**And he cautioned them, saying, "Watch out; beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod."** It's like the disciples heard Jesus, but just didn't grasp the topic change, so they reverted back to their primary concern; **and they began discussing with one another the fact that they had no bread. Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread?"**

Jesus needed them to understand the point he was making. Their temporary hunger paled in comparison to the damage done by the Pharisees, Herod, and everyone else corrupting true faith for power. Their corruption creeps, expands, and eventually permeates everything like the leavening of yeast in dough. Jesus pressed, **"Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts**

**hardened? Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear? And do you not remember? When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?" They said to him, "Twelve." "And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?" And they said to him, "Seven.""** Seemingly exasperated, Jesus asked, **"Do you not yet understand?"**

What were the disciples to understand? John's gospel may spell it out even more clearly when Jesus said, **"I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe"** (John 6:35–36). The leaven of the Pharisees begins with the rejection of Jesus as God's Messiah. The issue with the disciples wasn't so much that they didn't understand his warning. It was that they didn't understand his presence.

## SIGNS ARE LESS VALUABLE THAN FAITH

All of us fall into the trap of, "If the Lord would just \_\_\_\_\_, then I would \_\_\_\_\_." If you're waiting on the Lord to do something beyond what Christ has already accomplished on the Cross, then you're mistaken. That doesn't mean all of us won't have doubts, uncertainties, and questions at times.

We can take some comfort that the disciples stood on the mountain with the resurrected Christ and had doubts. Moments before Jesus ascended into heaven, just as Jesus was about to deliver the Great Commission, Matthew 28:17 says, **"And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted."** If they had doubts, it's no wonder that we have doubts. It's OK to have doubts, but it's not OK to *live* in doubt. Certainly, their doubts passed as every one of them would soon be persecuted and most martyred for their faith.

Following Christ isn't a blind faith. There's a great deal of historical evidence to validate the claims of the Bible. Further, there's experiential evidence that believers encounter when they surrender their lives to Christ, come into a relationship with him, and receive the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation. Yet, full faith and obedience is hard.

Every sin we commit must first deny the Lord's character, goodness, and power. By God's grace, although he doesn't give signs, he does provide you with comforts and assurances along the way. He's not a magic genie and prayer isn't rubbing the lamp. He's done enough. The only question is, "Is it enough for you?"