

The Power of Unbelief

Mark 6:1-6a

March 17, 2013

Introduction

Unbelief is a powerful thing. In fact, unbelief is so powerful that it extends throughout eternity. It is unbelief that brought down humanity under the domination of sin through Adam and Eve. It is unbelief that flooded the world. Unbelief activates divine judgment. The Bible has much to say about unbelief because it can and will lead us to eternal hell.

John 3:18 *Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.*

John 8:24 *I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am the One I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins.*

Believe Me or perish. That is what Jesus tells everyone and us. We must believe in Jesus Christ or we will die. Unbelievers cannot enter heaven.

Revelation 21:8 *But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.*

Here in Mark, we learn that Jesus was amazed at their unbelief at the face of such powerful revelation. There are only two times that the gospels record Jesus' amazement: here in **Mark 6** and in **Luke 7** where the centurion shows his faith in Jesus' ability to heal no matter where He is. This is interesting because when we find accounts of amazement, it is usually people being amazed at Jesus' teaching or display of power.

Mark 5:20 *So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed.*

Mark 6:51 *Then He climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down. They were completely amazed,*

Mark 15:5 *But Jesus still made no reply, and Pilate was amazed.*

However, Jesus is amazed at the people's unbelief at Nazareth. This is a picture of ultimately the rejection of Jesus by Israel even though He is the promised Messiah, the Son of God who became flesh so that men might live through His death and resurrection.

John 1:11 *He came to that which was His own, but His own did not receive Him.*

Sinners are guilty for their unbelief. By refusing to come to Jesus, they must bear the responsibility of their unbelief.

John 5:39-40 *You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about Me,⁴⁰ yet you refuse to come to Me to have life.*

People do not need more information or signs to prove that Jesus is God. He has given much evidence (John states that there are much more that Jesus has done that is not stated in the gospels).

Matthew 12:38-39 *Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to Him, "Teacher, we want to see a miraculous sign from You." ³⁹He answered, "A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.*

Matthew 11:20-24 *Then Jesus began to denounce the cities in which most of His miracles had been performed, because they did not repent. ²¹"Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. ²²But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you. ²³And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths. If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. ²⁴But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you."*

Consider Judas Iscariot. Never a man had such a prominent role with Jesus, yet he thoroughly rejected Christ. Unbelief.

Mark 6:1-6 *Jesus left there and went to His hometown, accompanied by His disciples. ²When the Sabbath came, He began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard Him were amazed. "Where did this man get these things?" they asked. "What's this wisdom that has been given Him, that He even does miracles! ³Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph (or Joses), Judas and Simon? Aren't His sisters here with us?" And they took offense at Him. ⁴Jesus said to them, "Only in His hometown, among His relatives and in His own house is a prophet without honor." ⁵He could not do any miracles there, except lay His hands on a few sick people and heal them. ⁶And He was amazed at their lack of faith.*

Note: Parallel passage is in **Matthew 13:53-58**.

I. Nazareth

- Jesus left there
 - Capernaum—(**Mark 5:21-43**)
- Went to His hometown
 - Where is Nazareth?
 - 25 miles south and west of Capernaum
 - Small town—about 60 acres in size
 - 500 people lived there
 - Jesus could have known everyone there
 - This is the second and final visit to Nazareth
 - Interestingly enough the crowd receives Him again (curiosity)
 - First visit recorded by **Luke (4:14-30)**
 - He went by Himself
 - He had a reputation as being a teacher, so invited to speak on Sabbath
 - He reads from Isaiah and tells people that He is the Messiah

- He also tells them that He knows that they want Him to do the same things He did at Capernaum—healings, exorcism
- He tells them that they will not receive healings because of their unbelief (like previous generations)
 - Elijah—could stay with any widows in Israel, but stays with a Gentile woman in Sidon
 - Naaman healed (Elisha could have healed any in Israel)
- People are mad and tried to kill Jesus!
- Accompanied by His disciples
 - o Lesson about rejection
 - o In preparation for His sending the disciples in pairs to do the work (**Mark 6:6b-13**)
 - o Trial run—they will experience rejection
- They were blown away by His teaching
 - o He teaches with authority (**Matthew 7:28-29**)
 - o He teaches with knowledge (**John 7:15-16**)
 - o He teaches with power (**Luke 4:32**)
 - o His teaching is unmatched by any others (**John 7:46**)
- Yet they rejected Him

II. Unbelief

- Four characteristics of unbelief
 - o Unbelief clouds the obvious

"Where did this man get these things?" they asked. "What's this wisdom that has been given Him, that He even does miracles!"

Note: "this man" is "this fellow" which is an expression of disdain.

- They could not see the source of Jesus' teaching (or accept it)
- Where did this man get this wisdom?

John 7:15 *The Jews were amazed and asked, "How did this man get such learning without having studied?"*

- Is His healing power from God or Satan?
 - Pharisees believe Jesus' power as demonic (**Mark 3:22**)
- His power is so obviously from God, why did they reject Him?

John 8:45-46 *Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me! ⁴⁶Can any of you prove Me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don't you believe Me?*

Luke 16:31 *He said to him, "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead."*

John 3:18-20 *He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. ¹⁹And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. ²⁰For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.*

o Unbelief "strains the gnat"

Isn't this the Carpenter? Isn't this Mary's Son and the Brother of James, Joseph (or Joses), Judas and Simon? Aren't His sisters here with us?"

- Diverts the issue to what's really at stake

Note: "straining the gnat" is the idea that the gnat is the smallest unclean animal and the religious leaders would strain the wine to get rid of the gnats so they would not swallow it. They were nitpicking to the extreme to maintain the fiction of being righteous.

Example: Bringing someone to church. The preacher preaches about salvation and how we need Christ; however, the person complains about how dark the room was and how small the church is--not even focusing on the issue at hand

- What do these questions have to do with anything that Jesus does or says?
 - They could not focus on His teaching or power
 - They attacked Him through His family
 - Carpenter—disdain—He is not a rabbi or any of the religious leaders
 - Mary's Son
 - o Not a normal title for calling someone's son
 - o Focused on the illegitimacy

John 8:41 *You do the deeds of your father." Then they said to Him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father--God."*

- His brothers and sisters
- Jesus is a nobody from a nowhere family

Note: The problem is that the people of Nazareth cannot relate to Jesus they knew when He grew up there to the person they are hearing at the synagogue.

o Unbelief attacks the messenger

And they took offense at Him. Jesus said to them, "Only in His hometown, among His relatives and in His own house is a prophet without honor."

- Offense
- Basically telling Jesus that He is such an insignificant person from such an insignificant family that He cannot possibly amount to anything

- *Skandolizomai*
- Scandalized by His message and claim
- Jesus was exposing their hypocrisy, but they rejected His claims because they were unwilling to give up their sinfulness

John 15:18 *If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated Me first.*

- They hated Jesus and were offended by His own words

o Unbelief rejects God

He could not do any miracles there, except lay His hands on a few sick people and heal them.

- It was not a power problem, Jesus could still heal
- The problem was that people rejected Jesus as Messiah, so God did nothing there
- Purpose of miracles, to show and agree with the truth
- Reject truth, no need for miracles

Matthew 7:6 *Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces.*

Folly of Unbelief

If you had a person in your midst who could heal all your diseases, conquer death, deliver from demons, who could provide by a word a sumptuous meal for untold thousands of people, who showed compassion, who could show you the way of life and every aspect, is this the person you want to kill? But that's what it was. Give us Barabbas, kill Jesus. That is so bizarre. This is the ultimate disaster of unbelief. It literally shuts a person off from God. He can do nothing if you do not believe.

How foolish is unbelief? Unbelief chooses hell. Unbelief chooses Satan. Unbelief chooses sin. Unbelief chooses to go it alone my way in the kingdom of darkness with no divine intervention. Is that really what you want? So you do not want to be blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies? You do not want love, joy, peace, gentleness, faith, meekness, self-control. You do not want prayers answered. You do not want divine intervention in your life, supernatural wisdom, supernatural direction, hope, the promise of heaven, peace that passes understanding. You do not want those things? Well unbelief spurns the supernatural. It shuts out God. (John MacArthur, *Amazing Unbelief*, 2010).