

The Character of Jesus 35
Matthew 16:1 – 28, Mark 8:11 – 39, Luke 9:18 – 27
Expecting People to Think

- Characteristic: Expecting people to think
 - Following the Matthew account
 - (1 – 4) The Pharisees and Sadducees ask for a sign
 - Many signs already given: John the Baptist’s declaration, signs and wonders, predictions by prophets of old
 - Jesus expected them to assess the obvious and reach a conclusion.
 - The Jonah prediction had been published earlier (Matthew 12:39).
 - (5 – 12) Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees
 - Recognizing figurative versus literal communication is not that hard. In this case, simply remembering the food miracles of the previous few weeks would make concern over today’s lunch immaterial. Second, the Pharisees and Sadducees were not famous for their baking products.
 - Trust that the message will make good and consistent sense.
 - (13 – 20) Whom do you think I am?
 - Jesus eases into the topic by asking what other people think.
 - Peter draws the obvious conclusion.
 - (17) “You did not learn this from the complex theology of the religious hierarchy. Rather, you based your thinking on the facts in front of you.”
 - (18) “The Kingdom will be build on simplicity, not complexity. A simple message cannot be assailed because people can understand it and resist confusing explanations.”
 - (19) A startling promise of inspiration, repeated in Matthew 18:18 – 20.
 - (21 – 28) Preparation for hard times
 - Peter had not yet come to grips with the difficulties of the journey.
 - Jesus taught so that people could react out loud so that problems could be surfaced and handled.
- Application: Expecting people to think
 - Do we use the works of the Spirit as evidence?
 - Too often, various churches reach out with doctrine, not evidence.
 - Are the works of the Spirit evident so that people can be expected to think?
 - Do we warn the faithful about insidious teachings?
 - How does this mesh with 15:14, the blind leading the blind?
 - We are expected to think – focus on the positive but with brief warnings.
 - Do we encourage people to express their own conclusions?
 - Too often, churches allow only parroting of approved doctrines.
 - We are expected to draw conclusions from simple and logical physical evidence
 - Do we prepare people for difficulty?
 - The faithful had many hard times. How did they handle that?
 - Guessing the wrong answer is not terminal.