

SBC – March 20, 2022

Matt. 16:1-12 (NKJV)

**“The Leaven of the Pharisees & Sadducees”**

# 57

**Prayer:**

**Slide # 1**

**Theme:** *Christ the King*

**Outline:**

Chps. 1-2 The Advent of the King. (Proving His LEGAL right to the throne by His genealogy.)

Chp. 3 The Forerunner of the King and the King's baptism.

Chp. 4 The Test of the King. (Proving His MORAL right to the throne by not yielding to temptation; and exhibiting His kingdom resume.)

Chps. 5-7 The Pronouncements of the King. (Proving His JUDICIAL right to the throne as seen in the wisdom of His kingdom teaching.)

Chps. 8-10 The Power of the King. (Proving His PROPHETICAL right to the throne by fulfilling prophecy.)

Chps. 11-12 The Rejection of the King.

Chp. 13 The Parables of the King.

**Chps. 14-16 The Revelations of the King.**

Chps. 17-20 The Instructions of the King.

Chps. 21-23 Formal Rejection of the King.

Chps. 24-25 The Predictions of the King.

Chps. 26-27 The Passion of the King.

Chp. 28 The Resurrection of the King.

In response to the Jews (led by their Jewish religious leaders) largely rejecting the Messianic claims of the Lord Jesus Christ, we find a shift in Christ's ministry from strictly targeting the Jews to now also including Gentiles. In Matthew 15 we see Him delivering a Canaanite woman's daughter from demon possession (15:21-28) and then we see Jesus feeding the 4000 in the Gentile area of Decapolis which is presumed to have been mostly Gentile in makeup (15:29-38).

At the end of chapter 15 we find Jesus leaving the Gentile territory of Decapolis and once again making His way to Magdala in Jewish territory in Galilee.

**Slide # 2**



Immediately upon returning to Jewish territory Jesus was met by the antagonistic Jewish religious leaders as seen at the beginning of Matthew 16. So we see a contrast between Gentile openness and Jewish hostility which marks Christ's ministry from this point forward – culminating in the cross.

Matthew 16 marks a major turning point in Christ's ministry. We see Him completely forsaking the religious leaders of Israel. We see Christ introducing "Church" truth in this chapter. And we see Christ now forthrightly preparing His disciples for His coming death.

### **Matthew 16:1–12 (NKJV)**

**1 Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and testing Him asked that He would show them a sign from heaven.**

When Jesus arrived back in Jewish territory the Pharisees and Sadducees were the "welcoming committee". But they were not friendly. They come challenging Jesus or as it says here in verse one "testing Him".

The Pharisees and the Sadducees were theological enemies but here they make common cause against Jesus (cf. Acts 26:6-10). They didn't agree on much of anything else, but they did agree on their hostility against Jesus.

The Pharisees were theological legalists while the Sadducees were theological liberals. However, the supreme court in Israel (called the Sanhedrin) was comprised of both Pharisees and Sadducees and it may be that these were a representative committee sent here by the Sanhedrin – but we are not told this.

However, it is clear that they were together in this endeavor because the two nouns are here joined together by one definite article. This indicates ONE delegation and not two separate groups.

Note that the word translated here as “**testing**” can also be translated as “**tempting**” as it is in Matthew 4:1. To **test** in the sense of “**tempting**” is to challenge in a malicious way which has the intent to harm. They were here to test Jesus in the sense of wanting Him to fail. Clearly their motives were evil and full of ill will. This was not an honest evaluation but rather a hostile challenge on the part of those who had already decided against Jesus.

It is never right to challenge the LORD! It is sinfully presumptuous. Who are we to ever try and JUDGE God? That is a reversal of roles. God ALONE is the judge. He is the one Who tests us to see if we are genuine – and never the other way around. Always remember there is only ONE God and we are not Him! He is the potter – we are the clay (Isa. 29:16; 64:8; Rm. 9:21).

But here came the Pharisees and Sadducees in a challenging sort of way asking that Jesus show them a sign from heaven. Jesus had done so many earthly sign miracles, but that was not enough for them. They were now demanding a heavenly sign.

### **Slide # 3**

A superstitious belief existed among the Hebrews that demons could perform works on earth, but only God could execute a sign from heaven. – **Stanley Toussaint**

Remember back in chapter 12 that the Pharisees were saying that Jesus was able to cast out demons by the power of Satan. So, this train of thought may very well have been behind their demand to see a sign from heaven.

They wanted Jesus to do something like command fire to fall from heaven as happened under Elijah’s ministry (cf. 1 Kg. 18:36-38); or to see something on the order of the plagues that fell on Egypt under the ministry of Moses (cf. Ex. 7-12); or that He would make the sun stand still as happened in the days of Joshua (cf. Josh. 10:12-14).

In truth there had already been a sign from heaven at the very beginning of Christ’s ministry when He was baptized by John. At that time Matthew 3:17 records, “**suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’**”

In truth this demand was a moot point because all the MANY miracles that Christ had done were “from heaven” – that is having the authorization of

heaven behind them as seen in the fact they aligned perfectly with the fulfillment of the prophetic Scriptures as a cohesive whole.

**2 He answered and said to them, “When it is evening you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red’;**

**3 and in the morning, ‘It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.’ Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times.**

What Jesus was quoting in reference to these religious leaders is similar to the old maxim that says, “*Red sky at night, sailor’s delight; red sky in the morning, sailors take warning.*”

Hypocrites are inconsistent with the truth. They knew how to discern the weather on a natural plane, but they did not know how to discern spiritual truth relevant to the times as revealed through Jesus the Messiah.

They could connect the dots concerning physical realities, but they did not connect the dots concerning spiritual realities.

Signs have a message. Signs point to something. The word “*times*” (Gk. “*kairos*”) refers to specific turning points in redemptive history (cf. Acts 1:7; and 1 Thess. 5:1 where this word is translated as “seasons”).

#### **Slide # 4**

The “signs of the times” might more literally be translated “the indications of the appointed time or occasion,” referring, of course, to the appointed time of the Messiah. – **Ed Glasscock**

There were indicators on the scene that clearly pointed to this being a MAJOR turning point in redemptive history. The “signs of the times” were clearly evident as seen in the Messianic ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ.

These were the “times” of the Messiah and the signs clearly pointed to this reality. John in his gospel consistently uses this word “signs” for miracles. The miracles of Christ were sign-miracles pointing to Him as the true Messiah.

The Jews were all about SIGNS. They were about as fanatical about signs as the charismatics are today, and yet when Jesus came presenting a boatload of signs they didn’t believe and demanded more.

**Slide # 5****1 Corinthians 1:22 (NKJV)**

**22** For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom;

What specifically were “these signs of the times” that they should have recognized. First there was John the Baptist. In perfect fulfillment of Isaiah 40:3 he stepped out on the stage of history as “The voice of one crying in the wilderness” as the prophesied forerunner.

Then there was the miracles of Christ which were unique to Him in scope and volume in perfect keeping with the OT prophecies related to the coming Messianic kingdom (cf. Isa. 35:5-6). Then there was the WISDOM of Christ which no one could refute in fulfillment of passages like Isaiah 11:1-2.

**Slide # 6****Isaiah 11:1–2 (NKJV)**

**1** There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, And a Branch shall grow out of his roots.

**2** The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.

These religious leaders saw this firsthand as He regularly shut them down and they didn’t know how to answer Jesus. He completely stymied their best attempts to stump Him.

Good students of the Scriptures should have connected the prophetic dots: Born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14); Born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2); and the timing of Messiah’s coming in relation to the 69<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel as seen in Daniel 9:26. All of this harmonized perfectly with the “signs of the times” as fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ.

But one of the most obvious signs was their rejection of Jesus Christ. How could they miss this? The Messiah was to be rejected by the “builders” – which is to say the leaders - and here they were rejecting this most unusual person Who claimed to be the Messiah! It all aligned perfectly with the Scriptures – the Scriptures they knew very well – and yet missed the obvious right in front of them!

**Slide # 7**

**Psalm 118:22–23 (NKJV)**

**22** The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone.

**23** This was the LORD's doing; It is marvelous in our eyes.

Peter in addressing the Jewish religious leaders sought to show them that Jesus was indeed the true Messiah by quoting and applying this Psalm.

**Slide # 8****Acts 4:11–12 (NKJV)**

**11** This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders [religious leaders], which has become the chief cornerstone.'

**12** Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

The signs of the times all pointed to the truth of Who Jesus was as the Messiah (the CHRIST) Who was here fulfilling the prophetic Scriptures to the letter.

Yes, they could discern the weather patterns, but here they were missing the most obvious of spiritual signs – the Scriptural patterns that all pointed to the fact that Jesus was the prophesied Messiah!

And what was the heart (pun intended) of their problem? Well, Jesus spells it out in verse 4.

**4 A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah." And He left them and departed.**

There is none so blind as he who will not see! There is such a thing as "willful blindness" (cf. Jn. 9:39; Rom. 1:28; 2 Pet. 3:5). Even though such people see yet they don't see because they refuse to see. Jesus said the condemnation is that "***men loved darkness rather than light***" (cf. Jn. 3:19). That implies an obvious choice – a choice of rejection!

**Voltaire** was a famous French atheist. He said, "*Even if a miracle should be wrought in the open marketplace before a thousand sober witnesses, I would rather mistrust my senses than admit a miracle.*"

You see UNBELIEF always demands more evidence because in truth rebel unbelief chooses not to believe no matter how strong the evidence. It doesn't believe because it doesn't want to believe!

This was the case here. They didn't discern because they didn't want to discern. They weren't really open to the truth. They were here to prove Jesus wrong no matter what the evidence said.

Therefore, Jesus called them a “**wicked and adulterous generation**” (cf. Deut. 32:5).

The word “**wicked**” (Gk. poneros) means evil. It is a word used to personify the devil himself (cf. Mt 13:19, 38, Eph 6:16, 2Th 3:3, 1Jn 2:13-14, 3:12, 5:18-19). It refers to that which is morally corrupt and is in opposition to that which is morally right and good.

Thus, Jesus speaking to the Jewish people of His day generally, called them morally perverse and really devil-like in character.

Furthermore, He called them an “**adulterous generation**”. Adultery (Gk. moichalis) indicates horrible unfaithfulness. It is covenant unfaithfulness. Marriage is a covenant relationship and to violate the covenant relationship through immorality is called adultery.

God applies this term spiritually to His unfaithful people Israel. They were in covenant relationship with Him but were spiritually unfaithful. In view here is spiritual adultery – spiritual unfaithfulness to God. These religious leaders were leading a whole generation in the ways of spiritual adultery.

This moral perverseness and spiritual unfaithfulness revealed itself in seeking after a further sign. When God has provided ample evidence it becomes a matter of wicked unfaithfulness to demand further signs. It is indicative of sinful unbelief!

Again, it is not like they didn't have any signs or any evidence. The entire ministry of Christ involved so much sign evidence that John in his gospel said this:

**Slide # 9**

**John 12:37 (NKJV)**

**37** But although He had done **so many signs** before them, they did **not believe** in Him,

**John 21:25 (NKJV)**

**25** And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen.

God does not cater to willful unbelief. They had rejected the overwhelming sign-evidence already given so more would not be given. The problem was not a lack of evidence, the problem was their wicked/adulterous rebellion.

Therefore, Jesus said that no further sign would be given to it “***except the sign of the prophet Jonah.***” And on that note Jesus left them.

The irony here is that they rejected all the obvious sign-miracles that Jesus did which lined up perfectly with the prophetic Scriptures. But in leaving them ONE more sign – which was yet to be fulfilled, Jesus in effect left them with the Scriptural story of Jonah which is a prophetic type of Christ.

Jesus left them hanging here with the Scripture about Jonah – what He called “***the sign of the prophet Jonah.***” Now they had to wonder what in the world was that all about.

They should have checked it out. They should have re-read the story of Jonah about how a great fish swallowed him and 3 days later spit him out on dry ground. And then they should have listened to Christ and what He said about being in the grave 3 days and then rising again. If they would have listened carefully – they would have been able to connect the dots. And then as it unfolded it would have all been clear because Jesus was buried out of sight for 3 days and then rose again – which was the greatest of all signs.

This confrontation resembles one that Jesus had with the scribes and Pharisees back in chapter 12.

### **Slide # 10**

#### **Matthew 12:38–40 (NKJV)**

**38** Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, “Teacher, we want to see a sign from You.”

**39** But He answered and said to them, “An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.

**40** For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.



In effect, Christ was saying that Jonah was a prophetic sign. What happened to Jonah in the belly of the great fish was a type of death and burial which was followed by a restoration to life. In other words, Jonah's experience illustrates the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Christ would give them no more signs with the exception of His resurrection which would be a fulfillment of the type found in Jonah!

[This was a] reference to Christ's bodily resurrection. This was the great sign to which He always pointed when pressed (Jn. 2:18-22; Mt. 12:38-4), to believers a precious proof of their redemption but to unbelievers a portent of coming judgment by the risen Christ.

– *Wycliffe Bible Commentary*

When it says, "And He left them and departed" the language here is very strong. Prior to this Matthew had used a Greek word (anachoreo) meaning "to withdraw" when speaking of Christ departing (cf. Mt. 12:15; 14:13; 15:21). But now he uses a different Greek word (katalipon) translated as "left" which means "to forsake" or "abandon". This indicates Christ was done with them!

With this parting denunciation the Lord turned His back on the Pharisees and Sadducees and walked away. Never again did He talk publicly or work a miracle in those parts. – *John Phillips*

Mark at this point indicates that Jesus sighed deeply.

### **Slide # 11**

**Mark 8:12–13 (NKJV)**

**12** But He **sighed deeply in His spirit**, and said, "Why does this generation seek a sign? Assuredly, I say to you, no sign shall be given to this generation."

**13** And He left them, and getting into the boat again, departed to the other side.

The sense is that Jesus groaned in His spirit.

This expressed the deep agony and exhaustion He felt at being constantly in conflict with the faithfulness, self-righteous religious leadership. – *Ed Glasscock*

This was not easy. It was hard on Jesus! No wonder Isaiah 53:3 calls Jesus a “***Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.***”

**5 Now when His disciples had come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread.**

The “***other side***” here refers to the other side of the Sea of Galilee which again was predominantly Gentile territory. Mark 8:22 indicates they came to Bethsaida on the NE shore of the Sea. From here Jesus would retire away from the constant tensions of Jewish hostility and His make His way up to the area of Caesarea Philippi (see Matt. 16:13).

### ***Slide # 12***



**6 Then Jesus said to them, “Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.”**

Recall how troubled Jesus was in departing from Magdala after His confrontation with the Pharisees and Sadducees as reported by Mark in Mark 8:12-13. This was still uppermost on Jesus’ mind and so He told the disciples to “***Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.***”

The disciples at this point had no idea what Jesus was talking about. Perhaps they were thinking that because they were now entering into Gentile territory and had forgotten to take bread that the issue of leaven might be a concern. Perhaps the only bread available might be sold by Gentiles and which might contain leaven – and of course for the Pharisees and Sadducees that would be a problem. Something like this may have been their reasoning.

Leaven (yeast) is put into a loaf of bread to make it rise. It only takes a small amount to affect the entire batch of dough. Jesus used it as an illustration of how a small amount of evil influence can affect a large group and lead many astray.

Leaven in the Scriptures very consistently represents evil influence that grows and corrupts all as it expands (cf. Ex. 12:8, 15-20; 34:25; Lev. 2:11, 6:17; Mt. 13:33; Lk. 12:1; 1 Cor. 5:6-8; Gal. 5:9).

To the Jewish way of thinking “leaven” was consistently representative of evil. The illustration of leaven was that it always brings about far-reaching and harmful effects.

But Jesus was not here talking about physical leaven, but rather using it metaphorically to speak of the evil influence of the teachings of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

To “beware” is to be on guard against. The disciples were to watch out for this evil influence propagated by these religious leaders.

**7 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, “It is because we have taken no bread.”**

All the disciples can figure out is that perhaps Jesus’ words about bread have something to do with the fact that they had forgotten to bring bread along – and again, perhaps thinking in the Gentile territory they were headed towards it might be hard to find a Jewish baker who could provide for them unleavened bread.

Note they “reasoned among themselves” not bringing Jesus into the discussion. They were trying to figure out what Jesus possibly meant but evidently didn’t want to show their ignorance to the teacher. These guys were all very human – for sure.

**8 But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, “O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread?**

**9 Do you not yet understand, or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets you took up?**

**10 Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many large baskets you took up?**

Jesus applied a mild rebuke calling them men of “little faith”. Now little faith is better than no faith. But they should have realized that with Jesus along the provision of food is not a concern. After all, they had all been there when He fed the 5000 (Mt. 14:19-21) and again when He had fed the 4000 (Mt. 15:32-38).

Faith would not have any concern about whether they were going to have ENOUGH bread or not. After all, it had already been abundantly proven that Jesus could provide. Faith should see this clearly! ***“Little is much if God is in it!”***

“Little faith” was one of the most used descriptions of the Lord in reference to the disciples (cf. Matt. 6:30; 8:26; 14:31). I think as they looked back on their time with the Lord in His earthly ministry they must have often mused, “How could we have been so slow to get it” and then I think they must have signed thinking, “Well at least He didn’t say ‘no faith’ but rather a ‘little faith’”. At least He said “O you of little faith”.

We know from Mark 8:14 that they did have one loaf in the boat. If Jesus could feed 5000 thousand with five loaves – no problem with serving 13 with one. If He could feed 4000 with 7 loaves – no problem feeding 13 with one. Where was their faith? They were completely missing the point.

One of the great challenges in learning from Jesus, the greatest of all teachers, is learning when to take Him literally and learning when to take Him spiritually (figuratively). If you get this out of balance your understanding will always be askew.

Proper understanding means taking what Jesus said figuratively as figurative and what He said literally (or normally) as literal. This requires thought and discernment that thinks in context.

Someone once said, ***“Do you take the Bible figuratively or literally?”*** The right answer is, ***“I take the figurative parts figuratively and I take the literal parts literally”***.

The challenge is to properly understand what is to be taken figuratively (or metaphorically) and what is to be taken literally (or normally). This is what is involved in rightly dividing the Word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15).

**Nicodemus** thought Jesus was talking about an actual physical rebirth when He said one must be born again, when in fact Jesus was talking about a spiritual rebirth (Jn. 3:3). The **Samaritan** woman thought Jesus was talking about material water when He spoke of the living water which if one drinks they will never thirst again, but in fact Jesus was speaking about the spiritual refreshment of everlasting life.

When Jesus told the **Jewish crowd** that “unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you” they assumed He was describing some form of literal cannibalism and were offended and

walked away (cf. Jn. 6:52-60). But in actually Jesus was speaking metaphorically of applying the truth of His sacrifice by faith. And we don't have to wonder how to take what Jesus said here because He plainly told us...

**Slide # 13**

**John 6:63 (NKJV)**

**63** It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. **The words that I speak to you are spirit**, and they are life.

By the way, the largest representative of "Christendom" (not authentic Christianity) but Christendom doesn't get this right. Roman Catholicism based on Christ's words of eating His flesh and drinking His blood still think He was speaking physically instead of spiritually. Instead of partaking of the elements at the Lord's table as merely a memorial in remembrance of Christ body and blood they practice what is called transubstantiation.

The Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation claims the priest has the spiritual power to transform the elements into the actual body and blood of Christ and that the mass is an actual partaking of the actual body and blood of Christ. This amounts to a re-sacrificing of Christ each time they partake of the mass. Thus, they completely miss the point of what Christ was saying and completely overlook Christ's own clarification that what He was saying was to be taken in a "spiritual" sense – not a physical sense.

When one takes what Christ said in a physical sense when the intention is a spiritual sense you end up with non-sense. And that is where the disciples were on this occasion. They failed to see that Christ was making a spiritual application and using the idea of leaven in a strictly metaphorical sense.

**11 How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread?—but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees."**

Christ now plainly tells them He is not talking about bread. In fact, He hadn't even mentioned bread – just LEAVEN. His warning was to watch out for the LEAVEN of the Pharisees and Sadducees. This had nothing to do with bread and everything to do with leaven – metaphorically speaking.

**12 Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees.**

Finally, they got it! The warning was concerning the doctrine or TEACHING of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

These were the key religious leaders in the land of Israel. They were the most respected of all the people. They were thought to be “the men of God” and here Jesus is telling His disciples to watch out for what they teach because it is a corrupting influence.

Jesus had more trouble with the religious leaders in Judaism than with any other group. Religious hostility against the truth of Christ is the worst.

The Pharisees were religious legalists and the Sadducees were religious liberals. The Pharisees were ritualists and the Sadducees were the rationalists. They represented the full spectrum of religious error in Judaism. They came from different angles but they were both wrong about God and His truth as found in Jesus the Messiah.

The word Pharisee means “separated one”. They were the conservatives who claimed to take God and His Word very seriously. The problem was that their religion was all about externals and therefore very legalistic. This in turn catered to self-righteousness and pride. They failed to see the real issue was the HEART of people and that this is where relationship with God really begins.

The Sadducees were rationalists who didn't believe in the supernatural. By some historical accounts it seems they only held to the books of Moses (that is the first 5 books of the Bible) as being God's Word. They didn't believe in angels or spirits, they didn't believe in the resurrection or the immortality of the soul, they didn't believe in eternal punishment (cf Acts 23:6-8). For them it was all about a religion of “your best life now”. We often say the Sadducees were SAD YOU SEE because they didn't believe in the resurrection. Ironically, they didn't even believe in the supernatural and yet here they were challenging Jesus to do a supernatural sign from heaven. That is called hypocrisy!

The Sadducees controlled the temple. They tended to be very wealthy and in positions of great power. And as such they were political activists being very well connected to the Herodian party.

In fact, the parallel passage in Mark 8:15 speaks of “the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod”. It would seem that the leaven of the

Sadducees was essentially synonymous with the leaven of Herod since most of the Sadducees were politically Herodians which is to say avid supporters of the political dynasty of Herod.

### **Slide # 14**

#### ***Pharisees Leaven***

Legalists  
Ritualists  
Separatists  
Externalists

#### ***Sadducees Leaven***

Liberals  
Rationalists  
Political Activists  
Materialists

Even though they came from somewhat differing theological perspectives both groups were defined by religious hypocrisy, self-righteousness, and pride. And the bottom-line problem is that they both had an errant view of Scripture which caused them to not be properly discerning when it came to seeing Christ as the Messiah.

### **Slide # 15**

Each sect in its own way had leavened and corrupted the holy Bread of Scripture, the ritualists by what they had added to it and the rationalists by what they had taken away from it. – ***John Phillips***

The bottom line is that the KEY recognized religious leaders in Israel were off in their teaching. They were both off on the Scriptures. And when you are off on the Scripture your doctrine will be wrong, your practice will be wrong, and your conclusions will be wrong – especially in this case about the Messiah. Thus, they could not properly discern the “signs of the times” because they had corrupted the Scriptures.

Neither the Pharisees nor the Sadducees had a HIGH VIEW of Scripture. They both put their own ideas above the Word of God – the Pharisees with their extra-biblical traditions and the Sadducees with their rationalism. Consequently they both were DEAD wrong when it came to Jesus!

They demanded more signs – heavenly signs and here the greatest of all signs – the Son of God sent from heaven doing innumerable acts by the power of heaven was standing right before them in perfect fulfillment of the Holy Scriptures – and they missed it!

**Slide # 16****Isaiah 53:1 (NKJV)**

**1** Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

The plaintive answer is Israel failed to believe the report of the prophets! They failed to see it. To whom was the arm – that is the power of the LORD revealed? The answer was to Israel in the person and power of the Messiah Jesus! Israel had both the testimony of the prophets and also the first-person POWER of the LORD through the Messiah on display. They had both and they missed Him! Tragedy of all tragedies they missed Him!

BEWARE of religion that leads away from the truth of Christ; that leads away from a HIGH VIEW of Scripture for the end of that way leads to rejecting God's truth and ultimately abandonment by Christ – which is what happened to these Pharisees and Sadducees.

In our study this morning we see these traits of a wicked generation.

A wicked generation comes challenging Jesus in spite of all the evidence for His claims.

A wicked generation seeks for more signs when what God has given is already more than adequate.

A wicked generation cannot discern obvious spiritual truth.

A wicked generation fails to see that Christ is the fulfillment of the prophetic Scriptures.

A wicked generation lacks faith in Jesus.

A wicked generation while being very religious has an errant view of Scripture resulting in an errant view of God's truth as found in Christ.

By application we want to be very careful of religious legalism that adds to the Word of God. This is a HUGE problem in Christendom at large. And we want to be very careful of religious liberalism that in its rationalism thinks it knows better than God. Suddenly we know better than God about the role of men and women, about sexuality, about the creation account and on and on. Both legalism and liberalism are leaven, and we must ever be on guard against them for in the end they represent deadly error!



Religion in any form that fails to have a HIGH view of Scripture and thus a HIGH view of Christ is always a spiritually corrupting thing.

Jesus said to the Jews...

**John 5:46–47 (NKJV)**

**46** For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me.

**47** But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?”

The watchword of the Reformers in the Reformation was ***Sola Scriptura*** which means “***Scripture Alone***”. In a day when the church controlled how most people conceived of all things spiritual the Reformers brought it back to the singular authority of Scripture.

A Church is not the authority, experience is not the authority, a clergy person is not the authority, rationalism is not the authority. I submit to you “***Sola Scriptura***” – Scripture ALONE is the authority. Get that right and proper discernment will follow. Get that wrong and you end up with mere religion that is wicked and adulterous!

Let us resolve to always maintain a HIGH VIEW of Scripture and not be sidetracked by either legalistic ritualism or by liberal rationalism. It’s ultimately not about “religion” but relationship with God through Christ based on the uncompromised TRUTH of Scripture.

For the faithful led by the truth, the watchword ever remains “Sola Scriptura”!