



A just weight
and balance

are the
LORD'S:

Thus saith the Lord...

- It is astonishing to discover how many potentially **deadly poisons** **lie around the house.**
 - In 2016, the fifty-five poison control centers in the U.S. provided telephone guidance for over **two million** poison exposures.
- That's about **ONE** every **14.6** seconds.

- Not only must we be alert to poisons around the house
 - We must be alert to poison at church.
- Common household poisons are deadly to the body.
 - Poison religion is deadly to the soul.
 - Jesus warns about it in our lesson for today.
(Matthew 16:1-4)

- Most poisons work because **they destroy tissues in our body** such as a caustic substance eating a hole in your stomach,
- Or they cause our organs **to function improperly** such as a neurotoxin over-stimulating your nervous system causing convulsions.

- However, carbon monoxide does neither.
- It works because your body loves it so much.
- It is the same with religion.
- As we shall discover today!

- When you breathe in, the oxygen in the air is transferred through your lungs and becomes attached to your red blood cells.
 - They in turn circulate throughout the body and deliver the oxygen to where it is needed.
 - Blood cells then pick up excess carbon dioxide and bring it back to the lungs where it is exhaled.

- Oxygen is inhaled and carbon dioxide is exhaled.
- Carbon monoxide, however, prevents this process from happening
- Because the red blood cells like carbon monoxide so much that once they have it
- They do not want to pick up either oxygen or carbon dioxide.
 - A person actually suffocates while breathing.

- This morning we are going to look at another kind of poison that works the same way.
- It is a spiritual poison that condemns the soul to death
- Because the human spirit prefers this poison to what it needs for life.

- We see this poison demonstrated in our lesson for today.
 - Note how the enemies of Christ, united to tempt Christ.
 - Pilate and Herod were made friends for the same reason (Luke 23:6-12).

- In asking for “a sign from heaven”
(Matthew 16:1)

- They were discrediting His miracles,
which they considered signs upon earth.

- Jesus described their spiritual condition:
- (1) they could interpret things physical and earthly, but not things spiritual;
 - (2) they were wicked, in that they tempted God;
- (3) they were adulterous in that they had forsaken the true God for their empty religion.

- Jesus pointed to His death, burial, and resurrection, and to His ministry to the Gentiles, by referring to the Prophet Jonah.
(Matthew 16:4)

- There are several things to take note of in our lesson text. (Matthew 16:1-4)
- First, poisoned religion is not concerned with the truth.
- Second, poisoned religion is man-centered,
- Third, poisoned religion understands the temporal, but not the eternal.

- The **Sadducees** were largely from the aristocracy and usually the **High Priest** and **Chief Priests** were from their ranks.
- Selling Temple concessions they became wealthy **selling the sacrificial animals** and from money changing.

- They claimed to believe the Bible,
- But they denied the existence of angels,
- The resurrection of the dead,
- And anything else supernatural.

- The Pharisees were largely from the working class
- And many of them made their living in some sort of trade just as Paul did.

- The Pharisees held to the Bible to be God's Word
- They believed in angels,
- The resurrection of the dead,
 - And God's supernatural intervention into the lives of mankind.

- Their main problem is that they **raised their traditions to be equal with the Scriptures.**

- And for all practical purposes they actually held their traditions **to be superior** to the Bible.

- For these two groups to come together they would have to set aside their many fundamental differences,
- And that demonstrates that the truth was not their major concern.

- The Scriptural proverb that **"Two men cannot walk together unless they are agreed"** is true. (Amos 3:3)
 - **The common point of agreement** for the Pharisees and Sadducees was that they **wanted to destroy Jesus.**

- The Sadducees wanted Jesus destroyed because He interfered with their profiteering in the Temple.
- He had taken a whip and drove them out while scattering the sheep and oxen and over turning the tables of the money changers (John 2:13).

- The Pharisees wanted Jesus dead because He did not follow their traditions and was becoming a threat to their power over the people.

- Neither group was concerned about the truth.
- The Sadducees were willing to compromise on almost anything if it would get them what they wanted.

- The **Pharisees** were really no different.
- They made much acclaim **to being the keepers of the Mosaic Law** and the rabbinic traditions,
 - But they held **the traditions of men** over the truth of God's revelations.

- The **first mark** of a poisoned religion is that it is **not concerned about truth.**
 - **Why?**
- Because poisoned religion **is man-centered.**

- Pharisees
and
Sadducees
were both out
to destroy Jesus
because He was
interfering with their
personal interests.

- Their demand of Jesus also demonstrates their man centered thinking.

- **"And the Pharisees and Sadducees came up, and testing Him asked Him to show them a sign from heaven.
(Matthew 16:1)"**

- Notice that they **did not come to Jesus** seeking to learn from Him,
- But as the text says, **"to test Him."**

- Again we note that **they were not interested in the truth,**
- But only in finding some way they could **discredit Jesus and then destroy Him.**

- They wanted to give Jesus a challenge that they thought **He would fail.**
 - They were so centered in on themselves that they failed to observe **what Jesus had already done.**
 - The challenge they gave Him was one that **He had already fulfilled.**

- Their challenge was for Jesus to show them a **"sign from heaven."**
- They were looking for something like had been recorded **in the Old Testament.**

- Something miraculous like manna from heaven.
 - Or the fire that Elijah called down in his confrontation with the prophets of Baal,
 - Or the Sun and Moon standing still like it did for Joshua.

- The **Sadducees** thought that Jesus would certainly **fail this test.**
 - Remember that they did not believe in the supernatural so they reasoned **it would be impossible** for Jesus to perform such a feat.

- And if Jesus did produce some sort of sign, there certainly would be some logical explanation of it.

- The **Pharisees** also thought Jesus would **fail**.
- They believed in the **supernatural**,
- Because...

- Because they believed...

Satan

was limited to the earth,

- Therefore Jesus could not perform such a sign because **they believed**

His power came from Satan.

- They were **wrong** on both accounts.

- Let us remember that the Apostle Paul described Satan as **“The prince of the power of the air”**.
(**Ephesians 2:2**)

- Satan can perform miracles!
- As he did in Job 1:16 -19 when Satan directed fire from heaven to fall on Job's sheep destroying them.

- Satan also commanded a great wind to come out of the wilderness and kill all of Job's sons and daughters when it caused the house they were all in to collapse.

- We must remember that Satan is **"a deceiver"**.
- As Paul warns in **1 Thessalonians 2:9**
"The working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders",
by which he will deceive many.
- A miracle in itself did not say whether it is from **God** or from **Satan**.

- The **Pharisees** were also wrong about Jesus.
- His various miracles **were in fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies.**
- They wanted **a sign from heaven** and Jesus said in **John 6:41** **"I am the bread that came down out of heaven."**

- All the evidence was already present demonstrating that, but the Pharisees and Sadducees were not interested in the truth.
 - They were man-centered and only interested in themselves.

- The Pharisees and Sadducees had taken Judaism and poisoned it
 - And they found many followers who wanted what they had to offer.

- 2 Peter 2:2

And many shall follow their pernicious (evil) ways;

- by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.

- Just as our physical body craves carbon monoxide over what is best for it, so it is in religion
 - Mortal man craves not God, but himself.
 - He wants to be the center of his universe, the captain of his fate.

- And so he finds a way to poison the revelation of God with a man-centered philosophy
 - And then call evil "good."
 - And distorts the truth of God's Word according to his own desire.

- This type of poisoned religion is still around today.
- It is a watered down gospel of easy salvation.
 - It says
”*Now, you boys and girls run along and do something religious ever now & then. And everything will be all right.*”

- **Poisoned religion**
reveals its self
when people try
to earn
their way
to heaven
through **rituals**
and **good works.**

- Poisoned religion is recognized by its turning away from the truth of God's word and becoming centered in the thoughts of man rather than the revelation of God.

- One other mark of poisoned religion is that it understands the temporal,
but not the eternal.

• Jesus asks,
"How come you
can so easily discern
what the weather
will be by
looking at the sky
and yet you cannot
comprehend the signs
of the events that are
before your very eyes?"

- They could see clearly the signs that marked the changing of the weather,
- Yet they were blind to all the signs given by both Jesus and John the Baptist that the Messiah was present.

- Because they were not concerned about the truth and they were man-centered, they were blind to what was in front of them.

- It is for that reason that Jesus concludes His answer to them in verse 4.

- **"An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign; and a sign will not be given it, except the sign of Jonah."**
 - **Jesus then leaves** without explaining what He meant by the sign of Jonah.
 - This was His **first public reference** to His forthcoming death.

- He now leaves them alone in their spiritual blindness
 - Because they refused to see what was right in front of them.
 - No sign would convince them of the truth.
Not even if one should rise from the dead
(**Luke 16**).

- Now the sign which turned the people of Nineveh to God was not the fact that Jonah was swallowed by the great sea monster.
- Of that they knew nothing; and Jonah never used it as a means of appeal.

- The sign of Jonah was Jonah himself and his message from God.
 - It was the appearance of the prophet and the message which he brought which changed life for the people of Nineveh.

- So what Jesus is saying is that God's sign is Jesus himself and his message.
- It is as if he said to them: "In me you are confronted with God and with the truth of God".
 - What more could you possibly need?
 - But you are so blind that you cannot see it."

- We find from our lesson today and also from Romans 1 that God will depart from a person who continues in unbelief.

- Three times in Romans 1 we read that ”God gave them up” (Romans 1: 24,26,28).

• There is truth
and
there is warning here.

• Jesus Christ
is
God's last word.

- **1st there is truth**
 - Beyond him **the revelation of God cannot go.**
 - Here is God **plain for all to see.**
- Here is God's message **plain for all to hear.**
 - Here is God's **only** sign to man.

- **2nd there is warning.**
- If Jesus cannot **appeal** to men,
nothing can.
- If Jesus cannot **convince** men,
no one can.
- If men cannot **see God** in Jesus,
they cannot see God
in anything or anyone.

- When we are confronted with Jesus Christ, we are confronted with God's final word and God's ultimate appeal.

- That being so, what can be left for the man/woman who refuses to listen to that last word, who rejects that last appeal?

**The doors of the church
are open.**

**The Spirit and the Bride
Say
“Come”.**

Revelation 22:17



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