Dealing with Spiritual Blindness, Part 1
Matthew 16:1-4
2315

This morning we return again to the Gospel of Matthew and chapter 16, Matthew chapter 16...We're going to be looking...at the first 12 verses as a unit. We'll consider just the first half of it this morning, and the next Lord's Day complete that study; but the basic issue in this portion of Matthew's Gospel is the subject of spiritual blindness, spiritual blindness...

My wife and I had a marvelous time in our visit to Canada. It was a combination of vacation and ministry together; but one thing sorta stood out in my mind in the first week when we were just sort of relaxing and refreshing our spirits. We left Los Angeles on an L-1011 Air Canada, and we flew through the bumpiest, cloudiest weather that perhaps I'd experienced in a while in flying; and as we approached the city of Toronto, it was about dusk, and we broke out of the clouds into the most gloriously clear sky. You could see for miles and miles in every direction, and the sun was beginning to set as we came into Toronto, and we saw the beauty of that city as it sits along the water and the little lakes and rivers and the green countryside and the farms and the...the glistening of the...the lights in the city. And I thought and commented to my wife what a marvelous and beautiful, breathtaking sight it was as that great, huge airplane settled down into the Toronto airport.

We were there about a half an hour and took off again for Montreal, which was about an hour away; and by the time we reached Montreal, it was dark and just as clear and just as beautiful night; and we came in over the city of Montreal to what will be for me an unforgettable sight. A beautiful city washed clean by the rain, sparkling with all of its lights, the moon flashing off the St. Lawrence River and the Lake San Louis or whatever those French call it. And the beauty of that city took my breath away, and I...I just was thrilled by it, and we circled it several times, and the thing lumbered into the airport as the lights got closer and closer, and we talked about the magnificent beauty that our eyes had seen that night.

We had the privilege then to stay in a little place on a lake up in the Laurentian Mountains, and it happened to be that the leaves were turning, and that's something we don't see in California. What leaves? But back there, the leaves were turning; and it was so magnificent; and there we were in this little place on the edge of a lake up in the middle of the mountains; and we would eat our meals at dinner looking out the window of the little dining room by the lake and watch the sunset and the glistening of the water and all those beautiful leaves. And I mean it was just breathtaking. And then as we drove through the countryside and...and several times during all of this I had this amazing thought, "Thank God for glasses."...

You ever had that thought? I mean I just took them off and said, "Bless the Lord for these." You know? Because I mean all that would be lost to me. It would be one big haze. Some of you know that, and that's -- some of you don't understand that, but I...I thought back about the...the time of the Bible, and there were no glasses; and you just thought the world was out of focus and, especially if

you were a Christian, you figured it's real perception was as its theological perception, equally out of focus.

But I was thankful to God for my ability to see all of that and to see it clearly and precisely. And then I was reading, and I got interested in how nice it is to be able to see, and I...I read an article that said that we spend every year $5 billion in the United States on eye care. Seven percent of our population, by the way, are legally blind...but the most amazing statistic of all is that 100 percent of our population is spiritually blind. That's right, 100 percent. They can't see God. They can't see reality. They can't see the spiritual dimension; and the fact is you and I can't see it either, except for the illuminating work of the Spirit of God; because, even though we are redeemed, in our humanness, we have no capacity to perceive that. Even redeemed humanness can't perceive it. It is the illuminating work of the Spirit of God. We're all spiritually blind. We are limited to the physical, and we see that very well. In fact, we look very hard to make sure we don't miss much; but when it comes to the spiritual dimension, we miss it all...

And then I realized that, of those all of us who are really blind to the reality of the spiritual world, there are two kinds. There are the blind who will never see it; and there are the blind who will be made to see it; and in our passage we meet both kinds. There are the blind who will never see; and there are the blind who are made to see; and the whole world is made up of those kinds of people: the blind who never see and the blind who do see. And the difference between the two is what a person does with Jesus Christ...because if you follow Jesus Christ and believe in Him, He makes you to see. If you reject Him, you go through life and eternity blind. It's a spiritual reality. That's what we're gonna learn as we look at this text.

Now, just to reinforce the fact that spiritual blindness is a worldwide malady, lemme share with you some Scriptures; and I'll run by them rather rapidly. In the first chapter of the Gospel of John in verse 5, we read, "And the Light shines in darkness and the darkness comprehends it not. There was a man sent from God who's name was John. The same for a witness to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light which lights every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, but the world....what?...knew Him not."

Now, in Romans chapter 1, it says in verse 21, "When men knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful, but became empty in their reasoning, and their foolish heart was darkened." In 1 Corinthians chapter 2, the familiar 14th verse says, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God. They're foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." And verse 8 says, "I hath not seen nor heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for them that love Him."

John says, "Men are blind." Paul says, "Men are blind. They can't see." In Ephesians 4, there's a wonderful summation of this truth in verse 17 and following, where Paul says, "That men walk in the emptiness of their mind, and their understanding is darkened, and their hearts are blinded." So men do not see. The Psalmist in Psalm 82:5 says, "They walk on in darkness." Isaiah said, "They have eyes, but they see not." And Jeremiah said the same thing. In Exodus chapter 5 and verse 2, Pharaoh said, "Who is the Lord? I know not the Lord." Of course he didn't. No one does...on their own. In fact, the Psalmist said in Psalm 73 verse 22, "So foolish was I and so ignorant, I was as a beast." The Proverbs tell us in chapter 4 verse 19 that, "The way of the wicked is darkness." In Isaiah 5, the prophet says, "My people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge." And then

he cries out in chapter 42 and says, "Look ye blind that ye may see."...

Jeremiah says, "We are a foolish people without understanding. We have eyes, and we do not see." And Micah says, "They know not the thoughts of the Lord, and they do not understand His counsel." Now, men are blind. We are physical creatures, and we are, in a sense, incarcerated in a physical world of perception and unable to get outside of that to really perceive divine reality. The Bible also says that three things contribute to the totality of this blind darkness. One is sin. We are blind, because sin has blinded us. Sin is paralleled in the Scripture very often with darkness, and the Bible says that we walk in darkness. "We walk, who walk in sin, also in darkness." And it says in John 3 that, "Men love darkness rather than light because...what?...their deeds are evil." And so we are trapped in the darkness of sin.

Second contributor to blindness is Satan. In 2 Corinthians 4 verses 3 and 4, it says, "The God of this age has blinded the minds of them that believe not lest the light of the glorious Gospel should shine unto them." So there's the blindness of sin compounded by the blindness of Satan; and, thirdly, there's the blindness of sovereign judgment; and that's where God gets into the act.

And, for example, in Luke chapter 19, we find God Himself being involved in the blinding process. It says in verse 42, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace!" In other words, if Jerusalem had awakened to who it was that was in their midst, "But now they are hidden from thine eyes...later says...because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation. You didn't perceive the spiritual reality. You didn't see the sign of the times. You didn't awaken to light when light was here, and now I affirm you in your blindness."

And so men are triply blind. They are blinded by sin. They are blinded by Satan. They are blinded by sovereign God who places upon them the judgment of...of supernatural blindness. So the world is blind, all of us. We're all sinners. We're all in some sense subject to Satan's dominion and, consequently, under the judgment of God; and so we don't see that Kingdom, that Kingdom that belongs to God. That holy, righteous Kingdom; and so most people just go through world as if the world was all there ever was. Just grab it now while you got it, baby, and make the most of it; because it isn't gonna last forever. That's all there is, is the perception of the world around them; and they missed the reality of the spiritual dimension.

Now, these blind people of whom we are some fall into two categories, the blind who will never see and the blind who will be made to see; and we're gonna be looking this morning at the blind who will never see; and we'll show you why they'll never see. But as we approach chapter 12, just a couple of notes so that you can figure out where we are in Matthew.

In Matthew chapter 13, the Lord described this age. It began with His rejection. It ends with His return. This long sweep of time already nearly 2,000 years, this long period of time He called a mystery time. That is, in the Old Testament, there was clear prediction of the ultimate Kingdom, the millennial Kingdom, and how it would be. It is described in detail, but we're not there yet. In the meantime, we're in a time that wasn't really described. It was hidden. That's why it was called a mystery; and in Matthew 13, the Lord says, "Here are the parables that explain to you the nature of this mystery time." And He gave seven parables.

Now, the singular mark of those parables was to teach that the mystery time, the time in which we

live from the rejection to the return, is a time where there is mixture of belief and unbelief. Mixture of receiving and rejecting. And that's the characteristic of this age; and, frankly, the receiving is on the short end. The believing is on the short end, and the rejecting is on the long end; and so after giving us the parables to define this time as a time when some will believe, but most will reject, the mixture that's the characteristic of the Kingdom, the wheat and tares growing together, and so forth.

After laying that out in a parable form, the Lord then, in Matthew's Gospel, gives eight illustrations of this period of time. Six of the eight discuss the rejection. The other two are dominated by the faith that exists in this time. In other words, they're little vignettes that point us to what we should expect in this period. Mainly rejection, but some who believe.

Now, we are at the last of those illustrations; and with verse 12, this section ends. Those eight illustrations began in 13:53, I think, 53, yes, and they end in 16:12; so we're looking at the end of these...these little illustrations to help us understand this era. And as we look at it, again we see the characteristic of the rejecters, and then we'll get a glimpse of the disciples who portray for us the good soil that received and believed the Word.

Now, there are a couple of other notes that I need to make relative to this particular final illustration of our Lord; and it has to do with the Pharisees and the Sadducees. It is the last time that He really offers to them an invitation. From now on when He meets with them, it is a condemnation. It's as if He flipped the switch right here, and the lights went out; and that which was willful, sinful blindness and satanic blindness becomes sovereign blindness. It is at this point in which there is a...a very clear distinction, so it's as if this is a transition in the Gospel of Matthew.

Also we wanna note that when you begin in verse 13 of chapter 16, He begins to spend His time with His disciples; so He's turning away from those who have ultimately rejected. He abandons them, and He focuses on His own; and His ministry priority becomes, not the multitudes, not the crowds, not convincing the skeptics, but teaching, discipling His own, so they'll be ready for the task at hand when He leaves. There are no more signs for the rejecters, only instruction for those who believe. And so that's why we see in the passage the blind who will never see, and the blind who will see, because the Lord reveals truth to them.

Now, let's look first of all, and for this morning, at the blind who will never see, verses 1 through 4. You follow as I read. "The Pharisees with the Sadducees came, and testing Him, desired that He would show them a sign from Heaven. He answered and said unto them, "When it is evening you say, 'Fair weather, for the sky is red.' And in the morning, 'Foul weather today, for the sky is red and overcast.' O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky, but can ye not discern the signs of the times? A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonah.' And He left them and departed."

Now, here we come face to face with the rejecters again. Wicked, personally willfully blinded by their own sin. Satanically blinded, and now sovereignly blinded by God. In Matthew 13, in fact, Jesus had quoted Isaiah and said, "Isaiah predicted that you'd be like this. Hearing without hearing and seeing without seeing and unable to understand, because your hearts are gross."...And so He meets 'em again.

Now, the setting is interesting. Verse 1, "The Pharisees and the Sadducees came." Now where is

Jesus now? Well, our Lord had just been across on the eastern shore, you remember, of the Sea of Galilee in an area known as Decapolis, which stands for ten cities. Deca polis. Ten cities. And this is a Gentile area, and He had fed 4,000 men plus women and children; and when that was accomplished, He got in a boat. He came across to the western shore. The end of verse...the end of chapter 15 in verse 39 says, "He came to Magdala." As soon as He gets out of the boat, He's back in Jewish territory. As soon as He gets there, after a rather lengthy stay in the Gentile areas, you remember, originally He went north through Tyre and Sidon. Then He went over across the top, crossing the Jordan. Dropped down the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee to Decapolis. He's been in the Gentile area.

Now, as soon as He steps on the Jewish shore, He is immediately hit by His enemies. They waste no time in approaching Him; and here we begin to learn the characteristics of people whose blindness will never end. First, they seek darkness. They seek fellowship with darkness. This is the first characteristic we note, and we see it in verse 1. simply stated, here it is. "The Pharisees with Sadducees came."...Now the marvelous thing about that, the amazing thing about that, the unbelievable thing about that is that the Pharisees and the Sadducees could get together to do anything...and what is especially unique is that in the Greek rendering, there's only one article here, not the Pharisees and the Sadducees, as if they were separated; but the Pharisees with Sadducees. In other words, the Pharisees with Sadducees mingled in; *a*nd the Pharisees are the leaders. They're named first. Mark says the Pharisees do the speaking, but their group is salted with Sadducees...

Now unless you know a little bit of a background, you're not gonna understand the importance of this. They hated each other. In fact, there's kind of an amusing incident in the life of the Apostle Paul where he was on trial late in the Book of Acts; and he was on trial before the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and to sort of redirect everybody away from him, he just said, "I believe in the resurrection,"...and the battle started. Because, you see, the Pharisees also believed in the resurrection; and the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection. They did not believe in angels. They did not believe in Spirit. They did not believe in immortality. They were theological liberals. The Pharisees were theological conservatives; and all he had to do was say, "I believe in the resurrection," and they were at each other's throat; and it says there was a great dissension and the whole place was divided.

Now, that's just a little insight into how those groups got along. Not well. And there were many reasons for it, many reasons. The Pharisees were, as I said, the fundamentalists. They believed in the literal interpretation of the law. They also believed in the traditions. All of the Talmud, all the stuff that had been passed down they thought was equally binding with the written Word of God. On the other hand, the Sadducees denied all tradition. They did not accept the traditions of the elders, the traditions of the rabbis. They accepted only the Scripture, but they did not believe it literally. They spiritualized it away.

On the other hand, the Pharisees were common people. The Sadducees were the aristocrats. The high priest was a Sadducee. The Pharisees tended to be poorer. The Sadducees were the wealthy ones who ran the temple concessions and ripped off the people and made literal fortunes out of it. So you have the... the dichotomy between the rich and the poor, between those who were theological liberals and those who were theological fundamentalists. You had also another factor. The Jews...the Pharisees, rather, were sort of the sons of what were known as Hassidim, or Hassidic Jews. This was a group of Jews during the Maccabean Period between the New Testament and the Old Testament, that period of time there; and these Jews were the...were called the pious, the saints, the

holy ones; and they despised the influence of Gentile culture. They wanted to keep Jewishness pure; and so these Hassidic Jews denied all intrusions of Gentile culture.

On the other hand, the Sadducees, I should point out, the Pharisees were the children of the Hassidics, so they had the same mentality. The Sadducees loved to get mingled up politically with the...the Gentile culture. In fact, one of their daughters married Herod, and they even got mingled up with the Herodians. They were compromisers. They were politicians. They were whatever was expedient; and so these two parties were literally at each others' throats; and the amazing thing is that they got together here to come to Jesus to attack Him.

But they're reminiscent, you know, of two dogs fighting each other who both see a rabbit cross the trail. And all of a sudden their fight ends as they pursue the common goal. And so they... they stopped their own war. But what is interesting to me is that here are Pharisees, and the Pharisees have heard all that Jesus said. They've seen all that He's done, this absolutely massive display of divine power; and instead of seeking the light, instead of coming to His disciples for their answers, they go back into the pit if darkness, and they dig up a bunch of other blind people like themselves. But, you see, that's always the way with people who are willfully, sinfully blind. They do not come to the Light for the answer. They go back into the same pit they've come out of and try to find truth from that pit, because they're not willing to admit that there's none there. They seek no light. They are classic illustrations of our Lord's definition earlier in Matthew chapter 15 verse 14 where He called them "Blind leaders of the blind."

So the blind Pharisees go get the blind Sadducees; and they both come; and it is the blind leading the blind and both have fallen to the ditch. Pharisees are the separatists. The Sadducees are the compromisers; and if separatists hate anybody, they hate compromisers; and if compromisers hate anybody, they hate separatists. But these two can get together to get rid of their common enemy; because even though they had those differences, it's interesting to note that they both believed you were saved by works, self-righteousness; and on that they could agree, and so they came to attack Jesus.

Isn't it interesting how people who are sinfully blind always seem to seek the fellowship of others like themselves? I think the proverb put it this way. "Birds of a feather...what? ...flock together."...And that's the mark of someone who'll never come to the light. That's the characteristic of someone whose blindness will be permanent blindness, because they never really seek the light. All they do is go into the pit to pull up the same kind of garbage that they themselves have found. So the ritualists and the rationalists join forces on the basis of a mutual contempt of Jesus Christ...evil company. They won't read the Scripture, obviously. They won't talk to the disciples. They love their darkness. In fact, the light is a terrible threat to them, just a terrible threat.

Here's a second characteristic that I see in this passage of the person who...whose blindness is never eliminated, and that is that not only seek the darkness, but this is the flip side. They curse the light. They curse the light. Verse 1 says these guys came, and they were testing Him. They were offering Him a test which they hoped He would fail. They weren't trying to get Him to demonstrate and show them the truth, so they could say, "Oh, we now believe." No, no, they were trying to discredit Him publicly. They were trying to make Him look bad. They were trying to get Him to do something He couldn't do; and when He couldn't do it, He would be publicly shamed and embarrassed...and "they desired that He'd show them a sign from Heaven."

Now, that'll show you how stupid they were. He was a sign from Heaven. When He was born in Luke 2:34, Simeon said, "This One who has come for the rising and the falling of many is a sign." He Himself was a sign from Heaven, and where did they think He got all that food to feed the 50,000 that must have been in those two feedings? Not from the earth...And where did those limbs come from that He reattached, and those eyes, and that life that He breathed into those who were dead? No, all they wanted to do was discredit him like in John 8:6. It says, "They came and asked Him questions tempting or testing Him that they might have reason to accuse Him." They wanted only to curse the Light, that's all.

And there are people who come to Christianity who want nothing more than to curse the Light. They're not really interested in the truth. They only come to curse the Light. Now, the Jews had a superstition, and their superstition was that demons could do earthly miracles, but only God could do Heavenly ones; and so this sorta may have been behind the thing. They're saying, "Hey, what You've done could've been demons." And they'd even said to Him, "You do what You do by the power of Beelzebub," hadn't they? Chapter 12. And they had said to Him, "You have a demon," so forth. So they're now saying, "Now, You do a Heavenly one," and they could've said, "Now, Joshua made the moon and the sun stand still. Now, Elijah made fire come out of Heaven. Now You do something up there in the Heaven that..." when it says sign from Heaven, it uses ec, out of Heaven, proceeding out of Heaven, rather than on earth. "We wanna see it in the sky."

And the very fact that they asked that question is indicative of the fact that they had rejected every single thing He'd done already as being anything evidential of His Messiahship. I mean even Nicodemus, who was a lot smarter than they were and a lot more pious had said, "We know that no man can do what You do except God be with him." John 3:2. So they had ignored all of that, and all they wanted to do was make Jesus look bad publicly. Of course they couldn't see anything. They couldn't understand anything spiritual. They were of their father, the devil, and Jesus said to them, "Because I speak the truth, you don't recognize it."...

They wanted signs...proof, only that Jesus might be discredited. They're...they're no different than Pharaoh, you know. God kept demonstrating His power to Pharaoh, and Pharaoh kept hardening his heart. He didn't want any answers. He didn't want any signs; and finally God just devastated the whole Kingdom. They're little different, you know, than the brothers of the rich man. The rich man said, "Send somebody to tell my brothers," and the Lord says, "Well, if they don't believe Moses and the prophets, they're not gonna believe that somebody rose from the dead." You see, if a person's heart is turned to darkness, when the Light comes, they'll curse the Light.

Voltaire, the French atheist, I think summed it up for all these people when he said this, and I quote, "Even if a miracle should be wrought in the open market place before a thousand sober witnesses, I would rather mistrust my senses than admit a miracle." Now, that's a man who's blind and will never see. Never. You see, all unbelief will always find a way to reject the truth. Always. Even today...and...and when they ask for signs, it's...it's a mockery. Woody Allen...said, "If only God would give me some clear sign, like making a large deposit in my name in a Swiss bank."...That's mocking God, isn't it? As if there weren't enough signs.

So the blindness that will never see is that which looks only to fellowship with the darkness and which curses the light...and, you know, you see that even in religion. You really do. You see people in religion who never wanna come to the real light of the Word of God. Maybe they're the liberal critics of Scripture, the ones who wanna deny the truth of God. They wanna run to philosophy. They

wanna run to...to man's religion. They wanna run to human intellect. They wanna run to rationalism. They wanna run to skepticism. They wanna run to their own ego and their own intellect; and all they're doing by doing that is demonstrating that they seek the darkness, not the light; because they very often hold in their hand the light...

Then there are all those people who are in religions that are not of God. Religions that are total darkness, total blackness, and they just pursue that and pursue that, and somebody says, "Oh, those poor people." Yes, feel sorry for those people, but they do what they choose to do.

We went into the largest Catholic church in North America, St. Joseph Oratory in Montreal; and this little guy named Father Andre was a monk in the '30s, and supposedly he saw a vision of Joseph, the...the stepfather of Jesus; and out of this vision came healings, and they have crutches hanging around. It was sort of a mini-Lourdes, you know. And...and this little guy's bones are in a crypt, and I walked into the place, and people were lying on the ground kissing the crypt. Now that's darkness, folks. That is darkness. And then they took his heart out, and they stuck it in a box, and they put his heart in a box, in a little box up there, and people kissed the glass where the little box is where his heart is, and they shove prayer requests in there. And somebody stole his heart, and the Catholic church ransomed it back...

Now that is darkness. I mean that is darkness. And there's 300 or more steps going to the top of this mountain, and there's a sign that says, "These steps are to be used by pilgrims ascending on their knees. Everyone else is prohibited." And these people are crawling up there on their knees. Darkness. Darkness, and everywhere are the elements of the Light. There's Christ, there's the cross, there's God. All of that, but they... they pursue the darkness and they curse the Light. And I said to someone, "Why?" Well, it's very convenient religion, see. You do what you want. You go in. You confess it. You go right out and do what you want again. You go back, confess it again, go out and do what you want again. They don't really ever wanna deal honestly with the sin problem. Darkness.

So when you see people who are blind, whose blindness will never be eliminated, it is because they pursue like mad the darkness, and because when the Light comes around, they curse the Light; and the Light's the only thing that can expose 'em; but they don't wanna be exposed, because they're not ready to give up their sin.

Now, our Lord's reply is absolutely masterful. Look at verse 2. "He answered and said to them, 'When it's evening ye say, 'Fair weather, for the sky is red.' And in the morning, 'Foul weather today, for the sky is red and overcast.'" Now, that's a little, oh, you know, backyard meteorology. I mean that's...that's a poor man's weather report. There was a mariner's poem. I don't know if you remember it. It went, "Red sky at night, sailor's delight. Red sky in the morning, sailor's warning." And that's been around for years. Basically, they say that if the sky is red at night, it's gonna be a beautiful day the next day. If the sky's red in the morning, it's gonna be a stormy day. And He says to these guys, He says, "Hey, you're good at telling the weather. I mean you got the little deals down. You...you know what the...the common feeling is, 'Red sky at night,' so forth. You've got that down. You're real good with the physical perceptions. You can see the sign, the clouds and the red sky, and you can say so and so about the weather; but, 'You hypocrites, you can discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times.'"

And what He is saying to them is simply this. "Your sensitivity to weather makes a mockery out of your insensitivity to God's Kingdom, because you are not meteorologists. You pass yourself as

theologians; and, frankly, you're better at the weather than you are at theology." What an indictment. Ooh. This illustration was also used by our Lord in another context or a similar one in Luke 12. Very vivid. They were experts in the physical realm. "You can look at the sky and so, but you don't have a clue what's going on in God's Kingdom." They could see physical signs, but not Spirit. You can't know what a blast that was, because the one thing they thought they knew was the spiritual. They knew what God was doing. They could chart the course of the divine unfolding of the Kingdom, the redemptive plan. They were the...the religious experts, the theological experts, the experts on the Kingdom movements of God, and all of that; and Jesus said, "You haven't got a clue. You don't even know what's going on. You didn't recognize John the Baptist. You didn't recognize the Messiah. You didn't know what the miracles meant. You didn't know what My teachings meant. You missed the whole thing."

And that's the third mark of one who will never see. They just go into deeper darkness. You see, they...they seek the darkness. When the Light comes, they curse the Light and run deeper into the darkness. And so the more miracles, the more miracles, the deeper they went into their rejection...In Matthew 23, Jesus calls them "blind guides." Can you imagine? A blind guide? That's what they were...and it wasn't easy for the Lord to say this. Mark 8:12 has a most interesting insight into the Lord. It says there that...in Mark 8:12, Mark says, "He sighed deeply in His Spirit." Those are the kinds of things in the Bible that intrigue my imagination. I can hear what Jesus says, and I can understand it; but when I read that, "He sighed deeply in His Spirit," I wonder what His emotions were. I mean I wonder what He was feeling. I wonder what kind of pain. The sort of like, "Ahhhhh," the...the sort of exhaustion that comes when you've done everything you can do; and all you get is this...and you sigh, because you know the fate...Great emotion gripped His heart; and He says, "You can't...you can't discern the signs of the times."

The word times here is not chronos, minutes and hours and days and weeks. It's chyros, eras, seasons, periods, movements. In other words, it isn't that you don't know what time of day it is. You don't know if it's 6:00 or 8:00 in the evening. It's that you don't know what period in the flow of redemptive history. You can't read God's working in the world. This is a terrible indictment. I make that indictment rather frequently on those who reject the Word of God and call themselves religious leaders, and call themselves theologians. They do not know what time it is. They don't see God's Kingdom. They can't read the realities.

But our world is like that. You know, we've got people in our society who can...who can tell you about a lotta stuff. I mean we've got people who can tell you about the stock market. They can tell you whether it's gonna go up and gonna go down, how far up, how far down. They can tell you about gold, whether gold's gonna go up and down. Silver up/silver down. They can tell you about economics. They can tell you whether the...you oughta buy or sell. They can tell you whether the interest rate's gonna go up or down, or whether there's gonna be an oil glut or a shortage. They can tell you whether we're gonna have a increase in interest rates regarding mortgages or not, whether the market's gonna free up in real estate. They can tell you what the latest fashions are gonna be, whether skirts are gonna go up, down, sideways, or what...

I'm waiting for the ankle-length hula skirt with a big hoop in it that they used to have. Hoop skirt, I guess they called 'em. It'll all come back. People can tell you the...the social modes. People can tell you the trends in education. They can predict wars, hot wars, cold wars, movement of nations. They can predict what's gonna happen in the future. We have all this futurology going and seeing strange, bizarre science fiction things. People have analyzed everything, and you can put the whole thing

together, and they have not got clue one what's really going on in the world. They don't know, 'cause they cannot perceive the Kingdom of God.

My dear teacher of years ago, Dr. Ralph Kyper, illustrated this so wonderfully, and I may have shared this many years ago; but I...I wanna share it again. He was in Philadelphia, and he is blind. He does not see barely at all; and because of his blindness, he's able to sort of get in different places; and people sort of let him by, you know. He was in a very large store in Philadelphia, and there was a lady there who was a clairvoyant, a medium, a fortuneteller, did horoscopes. She'd written a new book, and she was in the store promoting the book, and she was the guest celebrity and the whole shot. And so he listened to her predict...promise to predict everybody's future and to give them the plan they could follow for happiness and peace and so forth, so forth.

And so he thought he oughta do something about that; and so he just pushed his way through the crowd to get the very, very front; and he got right up to the front; and he looked up at that lady with rather sightless eyes and said, "Ma'am, do you know where the Kleenex is?" She was indignant. She said, "I do not work at this store...I do not know where the Kleenex is."...And he said at the top of his voice, "Ma'am, how come you know so much about the future, but you don't even know where the Kleenex is?"...It's a fair question, isn't it?...

Yeah, you see, the Pharisees didn't know anything; and there are so many people in our society like that. They can tell you a lot about a lotta stuff, but not about anything that matters. Signs were all there. In fact, the disciple of John the Baptist in Matthew 11 came to Jesus and said, "Look, how do we know that You're the Messiah?" And He says, "You go tell John this. You go tell him that the lame walk and the deaf hear and the blind see and the dead are raised up and the Gospel is preached to the poor." The signs are all over the place...but the unbelieving heart'll never see the signs.

It's true today. I think there are signs all around that Jesus is coming back, don't you? I mean the signs are everywhere. Do you know what they are? Do you know the hour in which you live? Do you know how close it is to midnight, to the end of the world? I mean if you start looking at the signs... they're all over the place; and if Jesus says here, "You should know the signs of the times," then, boy, we oughta know 'em now. We oughta know what time it is. The disciples in Matthew 24 said to Him, "Lord, what are the signs of the coming of the Son of Man? What do we look for?" And He said to them, "Well, there'll be wars and rumors of wars, hot wars, cold wars." We see that. "There'll be pestilence. There'll be earthquakes. There'll be famines." We see that. We got a world hunger problem. We got a increase in earthquakes, etc., etc.; and then He goes on to say, "There'll be false prophets and false christs arise." And the world is proliferating itself with all these false religious leaders. Political unrest, political turmoil, physical turmoil in the earth, false prophets, antichrists.

Ezekiel said, "You know when you're getting near the end, because God's gonna restore His people Israel." And here we are alive in the time when Israel has become a nation...And then the Bible tells us there'll be a unifying of the world. There'll be one great world coming together in Revelation 18. One great world consciousness. A common world economics, common world politics, common world religion; and Daniel 2 says it; Daniel 7 says it. Revelation 13, Revelation 17, Revelation 18, one great world and...and media and communication and television and travel and all these things are pulling our world together. They'll all come to one great spiritual union religiously; and I think maybe the charismatic experience is gonna be the unifier of that. The world will look for one great leader, and the world is doing that now. I mean I think some people thought it was gonna be Henry Kissinger; and now some people think it might be Philip Habib; but the one dominant world leader right now, the

one that everybody seems to flood to see is the pope, and he is a model for what the world is looking for. And in the end time, it's the antichrist who will fill that kind of a role.

We're living in time when you oughta look at the signs. The Bible says, "In the end time, when Jesus comes, the hostile power to the north is gonna come against Israel." And certainly we're at a time when...when we could easily understand that Russia, the hostile power of the north, could come against Israel. The Bible says in 2 Thessalonians 2, "There will be an increase of lawlessness." That is resistance of the law, anarchy, rebellion, unable to respond to authority, and we see that in our society. First Timothy 4 says, "A rise in the cults, seducing spirits, doctrine of demons," and it also says in 2 Peter 2, "There will be apostasy, denying the faith, denying the Lord, denying the Second Coming." All of these mark the time, and they're all true of the time we live. This is the end of the age; and I hope you see the signs of the times. I hope you're more interested in looking at the Bible than you are looking at the stock market. Looking at the Bible than you are looking at the headlines. Finding out what God is doing, 'cause the truth is it doesn't matter what men are doing. Only matters what God is doing. And I'm excited, because I know what time it is in God's clock; and that's the issue.

One final point...people who are blind and will never see...seek the darkness, curse the Light, plunge deeper into darkness, and finally are abandoned by God. Verse 4, He calls them a wicked, because they're so evil, and adulterous, because they have defected from their relationship to God, which Israel had given...had been given. They are an unfaithful wife, so they're adulterous spiritually. So He calls them an evil and unfaithful generation who seek a sign. "You wicked, unfaithful people are seeking a sign. Well, no sign will be give you. I'm not giving any special signs to wicked, adulterous, unbelieving people."

What is the point there? The point there is God doesn't go around trying to convince the heart that seeks the darkness, curses the light, and plunges deeper and deeper into the pit. That is not the heart that God responds to...There's no sign. The only sign, and that's gonna be a sign for everybody, is the sign of the prophet Jonah. What's that? What...what...what is the sign of the prophet Jonah? Well, you know what that is. The sign of the prophet Jonah, back in chapter 12 verse 39, He says, "An evil and adulterous generation seek after a sign. There shall no sign be given it but the sign of the prophet Jonah... listen...For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. And the men of Nineveh shall arise in Judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, a greater than Jonah is here."

Here's the sign. The sign is the sign of Jonah, which is the resurrection. Jonah was a type or an example or a model or an illustration of Christ going into the grave and rising. The only sign you're gonna see is the resurrection. Only Jonah's generation's gonna be better off than you are, because Jonah's generation repented, and you won't, and they didn't, did they? In fact, these same religious leaders, when they knew of the resurrection, took money and bribed the soldiers not to say anything about Him rising. That's how they cursed the Light. Even when the resurrection happened, they bought off the soldiers' silence with money, see.

And what happens as a result? The end of verse 4. "He left them and departed." That is a severe word. He abandoned them. He abandoned them...and when God abandons somebody, that is the most severe of all acts; and that's what happens to people who are blind, seek only darkness, curse the Light, plunge deeper. They're abandoned by God. This passage, beloved, is a warning to you. If

you do not know the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, if you have not received the Light of Christ, if you have not come to have your sin exposed and opened your heart to Jesus Christ and let the Light flood you, that Light which lights eternally the soul of one who believes, if you have not had that happen, then you are all always in the danger of going to the point where God abandons you to your darkness. That's...tragic...tragic. Let's bow in prayer...

Our Father, we...ask You at this point...to cause the Light of the glorious Gospel of Christ to shine in the hearts, those who are here. Father, if there's any here that have been in the darkness...and who are seeking the Light, oh, God, by Your Spirit, light their hearts. In the way that we read earlier, that the one who seeks You with all his heart shall find You. The one who calls shall have an answer...Take some out of the darkness into the glorious light of Christ...who said, "I am the Light of the world. He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." We pray, Father, that some may step into that glorious light. Break the... shackles of darkness, blindness. Tear the scales off eyes. May we be as Moses who saw Him who is invisible...because...the scales were removed. Oh, God, thank You that You offer us sight, that we may see and see clearly...the signs of the times...To the end that every one of us may know that reality we pray for Christ's sake. Thank You, Father, for our time this morning. Oh, how rich. Thank You for the grace of Christ. Bring us together tonight with hearts filled with anticipation...and may the light shine in someone's heart this morning who's known only darkness; and may we take the light to others, faithfully proclaiming it. For Your glory, in Christ's name. Amen.

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