

# THE CHRIST-CENTERED LIFE

## Take Heed! Beware! Three Warnings

Matthew 16:5-12

INTRODUCTION: Four times in the gospels, Jesus says to His followers, “Take Heed! Beware!” One of those times He was warning of a lifestyle of covetousness, wanting what God has entrusted to somebody else and not to you.

But the other three times had a common thread.

- He said, “Take heed!” In other words, pay attention! This is important!
- “Beware! What I am about to warn you about is dangerous!”
- Then in each of these three cases, Jesus said, “Beware the leaven of ...”
  - By describing the philosophy or practice as leaven, Jesus was saying that these are things that can seep into your life unnoticed.
  - These are things that can grow in your life quietly.
  - These are things that can destroy you before you are even well aware of their presence.

We find these three warnings in two different passages in the gospels. We will take one warning per week for three weeks, because that of which Jesus is so carefully warning us is so insidious and so destructive in our lives that we need to take the time to TAKE HEED and BEWARE!

Matthew 16:5–12 NKJV 5 Now when His disciples had come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. 6 Then Jesus said to them, “Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.” 7 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, “It is because we have taken no bread.” 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? 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.” 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.

Today we are going to talk about the leaven or the doctrine of the Sadducees.

## I. WHAT IS THE DOCTRINE OF THE SADDUCEES OF WHICH WE ARE TO BEWARE?

What the Sadducees believed is made clear in a later conversation they had with Jesus.

Matthew 22:23-33 NKJV 23 The same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him and asked Him, 24 saying: "Teacher, Moses said that if a man dies, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. 25 Now there were with us seven brothers. The first died after he had married, and having no offspring, left his wife to his brother. 26 Likewise the second also, and the third, even to the seventh. 27 Last of all the woman died also. 28 Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had her."

29 Jesus answered and said to them, "You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. 30 For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven. 31 But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, 32 *'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'* ? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." 33 And when the multitudes heard *this*, they were astonished at His teaching.

- **The Sadducees**
  - **did not believe in resurrection**
  - did not believe in **angels**
  - did not believe in spirits (**demons**)
- **Why not?**
  - **Jesus said because they did not know (perceive, understand) the Scriptures.**
    - They claimed to believe the Scriptures but they so spiritualized their interpretations as to make it meaningless.
    - Jesus' point is not that they were not well acquainted with the text of Scripture, for many of the Sadducees were also scribes, and even those who were not knew well the text of Scripture.
  - What they did not know was what Scripture really was. **They did not know the nature of Scripture.**
    - **They did not know that it was the Word of God.**

- **They did not know that it was authored by God.**
- **They did not know that it was breathed by God.**
- **They did not know that it was formed by the power of God.**
- **They denied God's supernatural work in the world.**
- Therefore they denied angels and everything to do with the resurrection.

## **WHAT IS THE DOCTRINE OF THE SADDUCEES OF WHICH WE ARE TO BEWARE?**

It is the doctrine of **anti-supernaturalism that results in unbelief of the Scriptures**, especially those passages that could only be true if God acted supernaturally in this world.

- The practical result of this philosophy
  - error in their other teachings
    - Not believing in the resurrection threw off their whole doctrine on death and eschatology.
    - Not believing in angels caused error in their doctrine on the providential care of God.
    - Not believing in demons, of whom Satan is chief, would have caused errors in their doctrine of sin.
    - Each of these failures to believe would have corrupted their understanding of the nature of the Holy Scriptures.
  - sin in their daily lives (Mt. 23)
    - hypocrisy
    - greed
    - political expediency
    - a dependency on the power of men rather than trust in the power of God
  - In summary, both their teaching and their living was wrong because they denied the power of God and they did not know the Scriptures were the very Word of God.

## II. IS THERE A MODERN SUCCESSOR TO THE DOCTRINE OF THE SADDUCEES?

- **The modern successor is theological liberalism.**
- Let me be clear. We are not talking about political or economic liberalism verses political or economic conservatism. We are talking about theological liberalism.
- While it does not always label itself with that title, theological liberalism can be recognized by the following characteristics:
  - **It does not know or believe that the Scriptures are the perfect Word of God.**

For instance

- **Liberalism views the Scriptures as man-made rather than God-given.** Those of this persuasion view the Bible much like any other book of religion.
- **Liberalism views the Scriptures as man's record of his encounter with God rather than God's revelation of Himself.**
- **Liberalism views the Scriptures as subject to the frailty and error of the men who wrote them rather than the perfect Word of the God who gave them.**

Therefore, the follower of liberalism might conclude

- ❖ Certain passages were not recorded as God gave them but were developed and edited to their final form over hundreds of years of time.
  - Liberals believe that the books God gave to Moses and which Jesus repeatedly attributes to Moses were actually an assemblage of documents edited into their present form hundreds of years after Moses died.
  - They believe the gospels were not written by their identified authors but by others many years later, not accurately reporting what Jesus said or did but reflecting what the church had on its own come to believe.
- ❖ **Certain books or passages might claim to be written by one person but in reality they were written by another.**
  - Liberals claim that although the book of First Peter says it is written by Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, it was not really written by

Peter. Instead, an unknown author wrote it and used Peter's name as the author to gain public acceptance.

❖ **Certain passages may not be accurate scientifically or historically because of the mistaken understanding of the men who wrote them.**

- Whenever liberals come to a passage that they cannot explain apart from the supernatural intervention of God, they simply explain it away.
- The Scripture says that God made the iron ax head float so it could be retrieved by the prophet Elisha; they say Elisha must have poked around with a long stick in the water and gotten lucky by hitting the hole in the ax head and retrieving it.

○ **Theological liberalism denies that the supernatural power of God has accomplished what is described in Scripture.**

- **Liberalism denies that creation was accomplished by the direct word of the Lord in 6 days** as described in the Bible.

Rather, the power of random chance and evolutionary forces are substituted for God's power.

- **Liberalism denies that God destroyed the world in a flood that covered the whole earth,**

but instead that the stories of local floods were collected and united to create this story.

- **Liberalism denies that the waters of the Red Sea were rolled back forming a wall of water on the right and left** allowing Israel to pass in safety and collapsing on the pursuing armies of Egypt.

Instead a shallow marsh or a combination of underwater peninsulas and tidal action are substituted for the mighty act of God.

- **Liberalism denies that Jesus fed 5,000 people with 2 fish and 5 loaves of bread,**

but rather that He taught His followers to share their food so that everyone had enough to eat.

- **Not always in its beginning, but usually after time has allowed its full effect, liberalism results in the denial of the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith** such as

- 1) the virgin birth of Jesus
- 2) the deity of Christ
- 3) the sacrificial, blood atonement of Christ
- 4) the bodily resurrection of Jesus
- 5) the literal second coming of Christ

- It leads to the same tragic results as it did for the Sadducees.
  - Error in many of their teachings.
  - Sinful and immoral ways in their lifestyle.

### III. DO NOT PEOPLE GET INTO LIBERALISM BECAUSE OF THE EVIDENCE?

The answer is no.

- **There is no historical or archeological evidence at all for the documentary and composite theories of the forming of any of the biblical books.**
  - No portion of any of these fantasized documents has ever been found.
  - No reference to them in any historical or literary narrative.
  - They are the necessary formulations of a mind that refuses to believe that the Bible is the book it claims to be, the book Jesus said it was: the perfect Word of God.
- **There is no evidence that contradicts the miraculous accounts of the Scripture.** Where evidence exists, it perfectly matches the biblical account.
  - Fanciful explanations are not an attempt to explain evidence that must be explained.
  - They are the attempts to explain using only the forces of nature and men and omitting the power and intervention of a personal God who has revealed Himself to us in the person of Jesus Christ.

**CONCLUSION: Do not think that because Sadduceeism died soon after the resurrection of Christ, that its kinsman liberalism is not a threat.**

**It has consumed and made ineffective whole denominations and countless millions of people.**

I know. I used to be one. I have told this story from my life before, but it has been awhile, and we have a lot of new folks who need to know this about their pastor.

I was raised to trust in Christ and to believe the Bible. I was saved when I was 8 years old, and even through high school, I just never considered that any part of the Bible might not be true. Yes, I knew there were lots of people who did not believe the Bible was true, but I thought they were all atheists or agnostics. The thought that people who claimed to be followers of Christ would then also claim that parts of the Bible were erroneous just never entered my mind.

At the beginning of my senior year in high school, God called me to preach. I had already made application to several Ivy League schools, and my only question about the direction of my life was whether I was going to do pre-law or pre-engineering. I even had a sweet, beautiful new girlfriend named Karen who also loved the Lord. So, when God called me to preach, I very suddenly had to change my college plans. I withdrew my applications to prestigious schools on the east coast and sent an application to our state Baptist University, because that was just where preacher boys were supposed to go. In retrospect, I should have prayed a lot more about it, but at the time it seemed the automatic thing to do if I was going to be obedient to God's call to preach.

So, I went to college as a young preacher boy, trying to prepare to teach and preach the Word of God, and it was there that I received my first exposure to liberalism, sad to say, from the Baptists. Liberals do not believe the Bible is historically or literally true. They believe that only the spiritual message of the Bible is true. Therefore, a liberal might conclude from Gen. 6 to 9 that a worldwide flood never occurred, but they believe that it is true that God judges sin. They may not believe in the virgin birth, but they would say that in some way Jesus should be called the Son of God.

It did not take me very long to learn that the Baptist college I had gone to train to be a preacher was filled with liberals, professors and students. Now let me be clear. Not everyone was a liberal in either faculty or student body. But it became apparent to me very quickly that the seemingly smartest students and professors were proponents of liberalism. The chairman of the Department of Religion openly said in the classroom that angels were not real. He explained that they were added to the Bible by editors as a result of Persian influence during the captivity.

The very idea that professors would do this causes my blood to boil today. That men and women would draw their salaries from God-fearing, Bible-believing people in the pews of our churches and then turn around and teach the students entrusted to their care that the Bible is full of myths, legends, and mistakes is so repulsive to me that it makes me want to do what the whale did with Jonah. But it was not repulsive to me then. It seemed sophisticated. It seemed scholarly. And in my pride, I became willingly deceived.

I quickly joined their crowd. I began to doubt the veracity of many passages of Scripture, especially those that mentioned miracles. I abandoned my belief in a seven

day creation, Noah's ark, or that the Red Sea opened before Moses and Israel. It was a sad predicament. I was called to preach the Word of God, but I had to be selective about what I preached, because I did not believe it all. I continued in this deplorable condition for seven years, through all of college and half of seminary.

When I arrived at seminary to begin work on a Master of Divinity degree, I was very comfortable with the liberal professors I met there. Again, not all were liberal, but many were. The head of the Department of New Testament said the shedding of Jesus' blood was not necessary. It would have been the same if He had been hung. He explained that salvation came not because He shed His blood or even died in our place but that His death was an example to us of giving our lives in service to others. Other men and women in the classroom who were preparing for lives in ministry or in missions sat with mouths agape and minds confused because they had not all come from liberal undergraduate schools as I had. For me, it was just another layer of clothing that insulated me from the warm Presence of the Spirit of God. My academic pride, my self-sufficiency, my confidence in human intellect, especially my own, left me with a hot mind but a very cold heart.

But God in His grace was not content to leave me there. Through a challenge issued by a teen, I began to study the issue of origins, weighing the evidence for evolution against the evidence for a direct, miraculous creation. Having a math degree and science background, I was equipped to consider the arguments and evidence of each. I studied harder than I ever had before, in college or in seminary. I reread the evolutionist textbooks I had studied in college and bought some more. I did not even know that creationist books existed. But God in His mercy had me stumble upon one which led me to others, and I read them as well.

Although I began my study as a convictional evolutionist, I ended it as a creationist. The evidence from geology, paleontology, biology, cosmology, thermodynamics, and probability was overwhelming. I became convinced, by the evidence, that Genesis 1 and 2 were absolutely true. Once I was convinced that Genesis was true, it did not take me long to figure out that the whole Bible had to be true.

My life verse became Isa. 40:8 The grass withers, and the flower fades; but the Word of our God shall stand forever.

Take heed, beware the doctrine that does not believe that the Bible is the Perfect Word of God!