**The First Baptist Church of Columbus**

**Dr. Paul Large, Pastor**

**Sermon Notes Outline for video posted January 10, 2021**

**T I T L E: Discerning the Signs of the Times**

**T E X T: Matthew 16:1-3; Luke 12:54-56**

**I. SIGNS OF THE TIMES AND SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT**

 1 Corinthians 1:22 ---- For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom;

**A. A lack of spiritual discernment regarding His identity and second coming is not caused by a lack of evidence supporting His identity and the certainty of His second coming but by the nurturing of a calloused heart that refuses to believe regardless of the evidence**.

The Sadducees and Pharisees of Christ’s day represented the religious elite of their day. That is, they were the religiously prominent and religiously educated of their day therefore, they should have recognized without much trouble the messiah when He arrived.

It is reasonable to believe that at least in some cases they did recognize the signs but simply refused to accept them as adequate because of a calloused heart, i.e., they had no heart to believe.

The messiah’s “coming was the theme of all the Old Testament prophecies and Scriptures. The prophets had foretold the tribe from which He would come, the line of His genealogy, the place where He would be born in Bethlehem and even prophesied His virgin birth. Yet, when He came, they missed Him entirely.”

 Frank Turek — Christian apologist... He often asks the following question to those who challenge the truthfulness of Christianity. If Christianity were true, would you become a Christian?

**B. An undo emphasis on signs is indicative of a lack of childlike faith in the authority and trustworthiness of Christ’s promises as well as the Bible as a whole**.

Matthew 18:2–4 ---- 2 And He called a child to Himself and set him before them, 3 and said, “Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. 4 “Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus promoted a humble, honest faith in God, and He used the innocence of a child as an example. Emulating the faith of children, we should simply take God at His Word.

**C. Although too much emphasis on signs of the times may be indicative of a lack of childlike faith in His promises nevertheless a reasonable discerning of contemporary signs of the times is encouraged, otherwise a lack of discernment of the times may result in a reprimand from the Lord. Matt. 16:3b**

Luke 12:54–56 ---- 54 And He was also saying to the crowds, “When you see a cloud rising in the west, immediately you say, ‘A shower is coming,’ and so it turns out. 55 “And when you see a south wind blowing, you say, ‘It will be a hot day,’ and it turns out that way. 56 “You hypocrites! You know how to analyze the appearance of the earth and the sky, but why do you not analyze this present time?

**II. DISCERNING CONTEMPORARY SIGNS OF THE TIMES**

 Luke 12:56

 You hypocrites! You know how to analyze the appearance of the earth and the sky, but why do you not analyze this present time?

 **A. While analyzing the signs of the times does not encourage day and date setting of His return it does encourage a continuous sense of eschatological discernment of the times promoting a message of urgency in Christian ministries especially evangelism**.

 **B. The necessity of analyzing the signs of the times demands that the church understand the times if it expects to be a voice for the Lord in a manner that influences the culture of its day for Christ.**

Olive Tree Ministries has a feature entitled I Never Thought I Would See the Day When...

●Israeli media would say that folks in that country could not buy or sell without a vaccine. Is that coming to a city near me?

●The world would long for a vaccine to "get life back to normal." One proposed vaccine promises a mark that goes along with the shot, a mark under the skin. This all sounds more apocalyptic each day.

●In 2020, Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas came under attack! People who made holiday and family plans were scorned, mocked and scolded. Friends and neighbors turned people in if they were observed entertaining too many people! Canada fined people celebrating some holidays-thousands of dollars.

●There would be a cacophonous cry for a digital currency also called cryptocurrency. After all, it is so much safer and germ free. Are these movers and shakers following a script in the Bible?

**Conclusion:** Testimony of Swindoll --- I worked in a machine shop for four-and-a-half years alongside a fellow named George. His job was to sweep and clean out the shavings underneath the huge lathes and machines we were running. George was born again, and he loved the teaching of Scripture on prophecy. I remember hearing him sing hymns as he worked. Many of them had to do with the coming of Christ, such as “In the Sweet By and By” and “When the Roll Is Called Up Yonder.” Late one Friday afternoon about ten minutes to quitting time when we were all weary, I looked at George and said, “George, are you ready?” He said, “Uh-huh.” But he was all dirty. He was just obviously not ready. In fact, he looked like he was ready to keep on working. I said, “Aren’t you ready to go home?” He said, “Yeah, I’m ready.” I said, “Look at you! Man, you’re not ready. You’ve gotta go clean up.” “No,” he said, “let me show you something.” So he unzipped his coveralls and underneath were the neatest, cleanest clothes you can imagine. He had them all ready. All he did when the whistle blew was just unzip and step out of that coverall, walk up, and punch his clock and he was gone. He said, “You see, I stay ready to keep from gettin’ ready—just like I’m ready for Jesus!”