

March 21, 2004 by Steve Brandon



Warning Signs

Matthew 16:1-12

- 1. Beware of Missing Jesus (verse 1)**
- 2. Beware of Testing Jesus (verse 1)**
- 3. Beware of Seeking Signs from Jesus (verses 2-4)**
- 4. Beware of Distrusting Jesus (verses 5-11)**
- 5. Beware of Straying from Jesus (verse 12)**

I want to begin with an old Indian story. It concerns an Indian Chief named Big Feather who ruled his tribe. As Big Feather was aging and finding it more and more difficult to rule the tribe, he had to select a replacement for himself. Big Feather had three sons, Running Deer, Broken Arrow, and Falling Rock. And he decided to have a contest among his sons to determine which one would be the next chief of the tribe.

The contest was really quite simple. They were to leave the tribe and go into the forest to gather three items: 1. A bear skin. 2. An eagle's feather. 3. A ball of spider's web that weighed 16 ounces. A bear would need to be killed in order to get his skin. This would demonstrate bravery. An eagle's feather would be difficult to find, as eagles were rare in those parts. This would demonstrate ingenuity. A ball of spider's web would take a long time to make. This would demonstrate persistence. When the items were gathered, they could return to the tribe. The first one to return with these three items would be chief of the tribe.

So, the contest was explained to Running Deer, Broken Arrow, and Falling Rock. They were given two days at home to think about their strategy. At the end of the two days, they were sent into the forest to retrieve their items. After one week, none of the Indians had returned. After a second week, they still hadn't returned. The suspense was growing daily as to who would return first with these items. Some thought that Running Deer would be the first one to return, as he was the swiftest of the three. Some thought that Broken Arrow would be the first one to return, as he was the bravest of the three. Some thought that Falling Rock would be the first one to return, as he was the strongest of the three.

Finally, after three weeks, two of the Indians were spotted in the distance. They were too far away to see exactly who they were. They were running back toward the Indian village. Each of them were trying to get to the village first. As they came closer, those in the tribe could now discern that it was Running Deer and Broken Arrow who were returning. Running Deer proved to be the faster of the two and returned first to the Indian village. He came back to the village with his bear skin, eagle feather, and ball of spider's web. He was to be the next chief. There was much rejoicing in the Indian village that night.

But, Falling Rock didn't return. After another week, Falling Rock still hadn't returned from the forest. So, Big Feather arranged for a few search parties to go out and look for his son and to call him back home since the contest was over. Running Deer was to be the next chief. But, several weeks of searching turned up nothing of Falling Rock, not even a trace. A year went by and Falling Rock still hadn't been seen. Over the next few years, there were a few Indians who thought they had seen him in the distance, but they weren't exactly sure that it was him. Though most of the tribe had considered Falling Rock to be dead, Big Feather had hopes of seeing his son once more. So, he began to post signs wherever his son had been spotted, in hopes of reminding those Indians to look out for his son.

As the years went by, Falling Rock was never found. But, the tradition of placing signs along the road where he has been spotted has continued until this day. Perhaps you, too, have seen signs along the highway that say, "Watch for Falling Rock." Have some of you seen those signs along the road? Now, you know where they came from.

I tell that humorous story to introduce the topic of my sermon this morning. I'm going to be speaking this morning about "Warning Signs." The theme verse of this section comes in verse 6, where Jesus said to His disciples, "Watch out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." In our text this morning, we have five warning signs for your life. They may not be on flashing neon signs, but they are warnings for your life. You need to take heed to them.

As we begin to look at these warning signs, let me remind you that warning signs are not to be hated. They are to be loved. Warning signs keep you from danger. Warning signs protect you. Imagine that you are driving along the road and see a big, yellow diamond-shaped sign with a rounded arrow. You see the sign, and you slow down to negotiate the turn. If the sign were not there, you might very well drive too fast and end up crashing over the edge of the road. Imagine that you are taking a walk in your neighborhood, and you happen upon a sign that says, "Beware of Dog." You know that it isn't safe to enter the fence. Without the sign, you may find yourself inside the fence, face to face with a growling German shepherd. Imagine that you are rummaging through your garage. You happen upon a bag of fertilizer with a picture of skull and cross-bones with a sign that says, "poison." Because you saw that sign, you decide to treat the bag very carefully, washing your hands after you handle it. Without the sign, you may poison yourself and be sick for a few days.

Warning signs are there to protect you. And so, this morning, my message is for your protection. Please, don't despise my message this morning. If you do, your faith is going too fast around the curve. Your faith is entering a fence with a dangerous rottweiler inside. Your faith is

playing with poison. Here is my first warning....

1. Beware of Missing Jesus (verse 1)

Let me set the context by reading the first four verses of Matthew 16.

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

In verses 2-4, we see how Jesus responded to them. His response came with a strong rebuke. He demonstrated how hypocritical they were. He didn't give them a sign like they had wanted. Listen to what Jesus said, ...

"When it is evening, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.' And in the morning, 'There will be a storm today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Do you know how to discern the appearance of the sky, but cannot discern the signs of the times? An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign; and a sign will not be given it, except the sign of Jonah." And He left them, and went away. (Matt. 16:2-4).

The reason why they came up to Jesus, "testing Him" is because they missed Him. They had seen wondrous miracles from the hand of Jesus. They had heard amazing, authoritative teaching from the mouth of Jesus. They had witnessed tremendous compassion from the life of Jesus. But, apparently, this wasn't enough. They wanted more. But, Jesus said that they had already been given enough to discern that He was the Messiah. Since they didn't embrace the truth of what they witnessed, Jesus turned His back on them and left. My warning to you church family is the same: Beware of Missing Jesus.

Oh, you may have never seen Jesus in the flesh. Oh, you may have never seen Jesus work miracles they these Pharisees and Sadducees had seen. Oh, you may have never heard the voice of Jesus. But, most of you in this room have heard clearly the truth of His word. You have heard of His teaching, of His miracles, and of His compassion. You have heard of how Jesus lived a sinless, perfect life. You have heard of how He was hated by sinful men, of how He was killed upon the cross, of how God's wrath, anger, and hatred for sin was poured out upon Jesus. You have heard of how by simply looking to Jesus, your sins can be forgiven, and you can stand before a holy God with no shame and in perfect purity. You have heard of how you can enjoy God forever. Have you missed Jesus?

There are many people who attend churches, who have missed Jesus. On one extreme, you have the **liberals**, who are so interested in social issues, like world hunger and war, that they have entirely missed the only one who can solve those problems -- Jesus Christ. On Sundays they pay lip-service to Jesus, but spend little time reflecting upon the implications of His crucifixion and resurrection. These are like the Sadducees, who were the theological liberals of the day. They didn't believe in the supernatural. They denied the afterlife. They denied the resurrection. They denied angels and spirits. They neglected much of Scripture, paying most attention to the books of Moses. They functioned entirely on the earthly plain. They were rationalists, who tried to reason through everything. They were very involved in politics. They were very willing to compromise if it meant that they gain from it. I believe that the Sadducees missed Jesus because He was so much a revolutionary that He was going to disturb the peace.

On the other extreme, you have the **legalists**, who are so interested in the letter of the law, that they have missed the spirit of it entirely. These are those who are so focused on certain areas of Christian living, that they have forgotten the purpose of it all. Some are focused on how you dress for church on Sunday morning. Some are focused on what the style of your music is on Sunday morning. Some are focused on what version of the Bible you read. Some are focused on the length of your hair, the length of your dress, the length of your sermon, and whether or not you have an alter call at the end. Your orthodoxy is determined by your conformity to their rules and standards. So much focus is placed upon these things that in practice Jesus is often missed. These are like the Pharisees who were the theological legalists of the day. They spent hours and hours studying the intricate details of the law. They wrote volumes of material on what you were to do, how you were to act, how you were to dress, how much you were to give, how you were to worship, when you could work, when you couldn't work, and what constitutes work. In all of these, Jesus rebuked them for missing the main point. Jesus rebuked them saying, "you tithe mint and dill and cummin [i.e. the very tiny spices that they had], and have neglected the weightier provision of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness" (Matt. 23:23).

I ask you again, "Have you missed Jesus?" You may be religious. You may attend Rock Valley Bible Church on a regular basis. But, you also may easily miss Jesus. I love the apostle Paul, because Jesus Christ and Him crucified was everything to Paul. In fact, when Paul went to Corinth, that was his message (1 Cor. 2:2). When you look at the content of Paul's preaching and writing, you'll see that it always comes back to the crucial importance of the cross in every area of life. Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church. Wives are to submit to their husbands as the church submits to Christ. Workers are to labor, as serving Jesus. Masters are to treat their workers fairly, because they too have a Master in heaven. Church members are to "be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven [them]" (Eph. 4:32).

There are several of us men who are going to begin reading a book by D. Marty Lloyd-Jones, entitled, *The Cross*. In this book, he preaches nine sermons on Galatians 6:14, "May it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." My desire in this reading is that we would see the cross of Christ as more and more and more important in our daily lives, that we could get to the point of saying with the apostle Paul, "I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord" (Phil. 3:8). This is the importance of Jesus. You can't miss Him.

And so, I give you the warning this morning, Beware of Missing Jesus. When we gathered together yesterday to practice our music for this morning, I was told by one of our musicians, "I love our first song, because it is what it is all about." We sang, "Praise the name of Jesus." This is the point! You can't miss Jesus.

Our second warning this morning is ...

2. Beware of Testing Jesus (verse 1)

I get this warning again from verse 1, where these religious leaders approach Jesus, "testing Him." This wasn't anything new for these religious leaders. They were always testing Jesus and trying Jesus. Remember when they brought the man with the withered hand to Jesus? They did so "in order that they might accuse Him" (Mark 3:2). When Jesus healed the hand, "The Pharisees went out, and counseled together against Him, as to how they might destroy Him" (Matthew 12:14). When they questioned Jesus concerning the washing of hands (at the beginning of chapter 15), I believe that they were attempting to trap Jesus. In chapter 19, they will come again, testing Jesus about the issue of divorce (see Mark 10:2). In chapter 22, they will come one last time in trying to "trap Him in what He said" (Matt. 22:15). They were always trying to find out what they can do to discredit Jesus. Even while Jesus was hanging upon the cross, the religious leaders were mocking Jesus, "He saved others; He cannot save Himself. He is the King of Israel; let Him now come down from the cross, and we shall believe in Him" (Matt. 27:42). Do you really think that these people would really have believed Jesus if He had come down from the cross? I don't think so. It may look like the Pharisees and Sadducees were sincerely seeking to know more about Jesus. But, they weren't. They were trying to further discredit Jesus.

This is a warning to you all. Don't put God to the test. Never say, "God, if You will only ..., then I will ..." That is putting God on your terms. But, God has set up the universe that you are on His terms. God has already set His terms. The Bible says, "If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you shall be saved" (Rom. 10:9). The promise is this, "Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved" (Romans 10:13). God's terms are that you need to seek Him by faith. When you come to God, come to Him on His terms. They have been established clearly in His word. You simply need to trust it.

Skeptics abound in this world of ours. People are always trying to seek more proof for God. People are always trying to test Him to see if He really is there. I read this week of a new book that was recently printed. It's called *The Probability of God*, and was written by Dr. Stephen Unwin "who used 200-year-old formula to calculate the probability of the existence of an omnipotent being." He began with the assumption that God has a 50/50 chance of existing, and then factored in the evidence both for and against the notion of a higher being. Dr. Unwin said that the recognition of goodness makes the existence of God more likely, but that the existence of natural evil (like earthquakes and cancer) decrease the probability that God exists. By his calculations, he figures that there is a 67% chance that God exists, though Dr. Unwin, himself, is 95% sure. [\[1\]](#) You can see how flawed his calculations were simply by considering that God brings calamities to accomplish his purpose. To accomplish His purpose, God uses things like plagues in the time the exodus, drought in the time of Elijah, and fire and brimstone in the time of Sodom and Gomorrah. The sad thing about this book is that its author is a welcomed speaker in churches today.

That type of book might appear to bring credibility to God, it really doesn't. Rather, it brings shame upon the Lord of the Universe, who has clearly demonstrated that He exists. Listen to Psalm 19:1-2, "The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night reveals wisdom." Every time you look up at the sun, it is teaching you of the glory of God. Every time you look up at the stars at night, it is teaching you of the glory of God. "Since the creation of the world, ... His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made ... so that [men] are without excuse" (Romans 1:20). God has revealed Himself. He doesn't need to be proved. You simply need to look to the heavens. ... This leads us nicely into our next warning sign.

3. Beware of Seeking Signs from Jesus (verses 2-4)

Like Dr. Unwin, these religious leaders wanted some proof from Jesus to really demonstrate His power. In this instance, they requested that Jesus show them a "sign from heaven" (verse 1). You almost get the idea from these religious people that the earthly signs that Jesus had done for them were simply not enough to satisfy them. They wanted to see more! Rather than being satisfied with seeing "the dumb speaking, [and] the crippled restored, [and] the lame walking, and the blind seeing" (Matt. 15:31), they wanted to see more. They wanted to see something from heaven. Now, they didn't say exactly what they were wanting Jesus to do. Perhaps they wanted to see Manna come down from heaven again, as in the days of Moses (Exodus 16:1-7). Perhaps they wanted the sun to stand still and the moon to stop for an entire day, as in the days of Joshua (Joshua 10:12-14). Perhaps they wanted Jesus to send thunder and rain upon command, as in the days of Samuel (1 Sam. 12:16-18). Perhaps they wanted Jesus to move a shadow backwards upon the stairway, as in the days of Hezekiah (Isaiah 38:8). We don't know what they wanted, but I think the point of asking something from heaven is for the sign to be big and demonstrate who Jesus was without a doubt.

The way that Jesus responds is quite instructive. He first complements them on what wonderful weathermen they are. They can look to the sky to see and understand what the day will be like. They ought to be on channel 13 on the television each evening! Jesus said, "When it is evening, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.' And in the morning, 'There will be a storm today, for the sky is red and threatening'" (verses 2-3). Today, we say it this way: "Red at night, sailor's delight. Red in the morning, sailor's warning."

And then, Jesus rebukes them, "Do you know how to discern the appearance of the sky, but cannot discern the signs of the times?" (verse 3). Jesus was saying, "Can't you see and understand what I am doing? I am working wondrous miracles. I am doing them in your very midst. Remember when we were in Peter's house and the paralytic was lowered down through the roof? You saw Him! He walked home! Remember the leprous man? I healed Him. Remember when you confronted me in the synagogue with the man with a withered hand? I made his hand completely healthy. I have given sight to the blind. I have given hearing to the deaf. Haven't you read Isaiah's prophecy? When these things take place, it indicates the dawning of the Messianic Age has come upon you! You can look at the sky and predict tomorrow. Why won't you look at the wondrous miracles that I am doing and discern the times? You may be good weathermen, but you are terrible theologians!"

And in verse 4, Jesus really lays into them. Jesus said, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign!"

There is this brand of Christianity that is always seeking after a sign. Some seek **religious experiences**. They want to be moved to greater and greater experiences with God. They want to see miracles. They want to see tongues. They want to see the supernatural. Now, there is

nothing inherently wrong in experiencing the great power of God in your life. But, the problem is that some are so consumed with their experiences, that they live their life seeking the experiences. They soon discover that experience never satisfies. Experience always wants more. The next miracle crusade needs to be bigger and more spectacular than the one before it. Jesus said, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign" (verse 4).

Some seek **prophetic fulfillment**. There are those who are so consumed with wanting to see a great sign, that they are consumed by seeking the fulfillment of prophetic events. They are always looking in the newspaper, searching for fulfilled prophecy. Again, this isn't wrong in principle. We ought to understand our times in light of Biblical revelation. The problem here is that it then becomes all consuming. All that is important to these people is prophecy. ... And they are almost always wrong.

When I was growing up, the talk was that Russia, coming from the north, was led by Gorbachev who must be the anti-Christ. The end of the cold war proved that to be untrue. In the last decade, it has been Iraq. Saddam Hussein is the anti-Christ. The war this past year put an end to that one. Now, the talk is on North Korea or China. It keeps going and going. People are seeking a sign of the end. Jesus said, "many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many" (Matthew 24:11). Do you know who are misled today? The sign-seekers are misled. Y2K really clarified this issue in my mind. It is not an accident that the prophecy experts were the same ones who predicted that Y2K would be an upcoming disaster. It is not an accident that those seeking prophetic fulfillment were the very ones who were led astray during Y2K. It is not an accident that those same prophecy experts are continuing to predict the future today, though they have already proven themselves to be false prophets. Jesus said, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign" (verse 4).

When Jesus confronted these Pharisees and Sadducees, he said, "a sign will not be given it, except the sign of Jonah" (verse 4). Earlier in Matthew, Jesus spoke about the sign of Jonah. (You can read about it in Matthew 12:39-41.) Jesus links Jonah to the resurrection. "Just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matt. 12:40). The resurrection of Jesus Christ was the one last sign that these Pharisees and Sadducees would all see. Jesus said to these religious leaders, "The sign of Jonah is the only sign that you will get." And then He left, which is what verse 4 says, "And He left them, and went away." The sign-seekers were left in their tracks to await the clear evidence of the resurrection, which, by the way, they never saw. Isn't it fitting that those who were seeking great signs, missed the greatest sign of all: Jesus raising from the dead!

As we come to verse 5, Matthew turns our attention away from the Pharisees and Sadducees and now we focus upon the disciples. This warning comes more closely to home. Let me give you a fourth warning sign.

4. Beware of Distrusting Jesus (verses 5-11)

Beginning in verse 5, we read, "And the disciples came to the other side and had forgotten to take bread." Perhaps these disciples had left quickly and didn't have time to plan ahead for their journey. We don't know exactly why. But, now, they are on the shore without any bread to eat. Perhaps there was some conversation about what they were going to eat. I know what my children say when we forget to bring bread. "Dad! Can we go to Burger King?" (they love to play on the play set in the Burger King near our house.) In Jesus' day, they didn't have Burger King or McDonalds or Wendy's back then. But, there were bakers who would sell them bread.

The disciples were probably in the midst of discussing where to go and get bread when Jesus picked up a bit on their discussions and their plans. And so, he used the metaphor of bread to issue another warning. He said, "Watch out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees" (verse 6). Now, these disciples were still thinking food. They interpreted Jesus' statement to mean that they couldn't purchase their bread from the shops owned by the Pharisees and Sadducees. Verse 7 says, "And they began to discuss among themselves, saying, 'It is because we took no bread.'" In other words, they are discussing that Jesus is telling us where to get bread. In Mexico, you don't drink the water. In this area of Galilee, you don't support your local Pharisees and Sadducees. The disciples are trying to find a place that has bread and is not owned by a Pharisee or Sadducee. Jesus was probably shaking His head in disgust, as they simply didn't understand.

In verse 8, Jesus said, "You men of little faith." (verse 8). This is not the first time they had failed to trust Jesus. When the storm raged on the sea, and Jesus was sleeping in the boat, the disciples cried out, "Save us Lord, we are perishing." Jesus said, "Why are you timid, you men of little faith?" (Matt. 8:26). In another storm, Jesus walked on the water and encountered his struggling disciples. Peter recognized Jesus and began to walk on the water also. But the waves around Him filled him with terror. He said, "Lord! Save me!" Jesus said, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" (Matt. 14:31). In Matthew 17, we will see the disciples trying to cast out a demon from a little boy, but are unable to do it. The disciples asked why they were unable cast out the demon. Jesus replies, "Because of the littleness of your faith." (Matt. 17:20). These disciples didn't trust Jesus. Sure, they had no bread. Sure, they had to go purchase bread. Sure, it needed their attention. But, they forgot who was with them. They were with Jesus. And when you are with Jesus, you have no worries of being without bread.

At our house, you have no worries of being without cookies. From time to time we often have unexpected visitors stop by. When they come by and are welcomed into our home and we are seated in our family room, an amazing thing takes place. Fresh cookies appear. Yvonne knows that we will have unexpected visitors. So, she has some prepared cookie dough in the freezer, which simply needs to be placed into the oven for fresh cookies. With Jesus you need not fear that you won't have enough bread. Jesus begins the inquisition, ...

"... why do you discuss among yourselves that you have no bread? Do you not yet understand or remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets you took up? Or the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many large baskets you took up? How is it that you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread? But beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." (Matt. 16:8-11)

We addressed these verses a bit last week, so I don't feel much need to delve into them in much detail. I simply review for you my main point: **It is easy to forget the provision of God in the past. It is hard to believe that He will provide again in the future.** The disciples of Jesus had "little-faith" (verse 8). Though God had provided for them in miraculous ways in the past (he fed multitudes of 5,000 and 4,000), they didn't trust Him for their future. Faith isn't only something that saves you. Faith is what keeps you going and trusting and living each day

for the glory of God. These disciples should have trusted Jesus. They should have said, "Jesus, we don't have any bread. You know that we need bread. What would you like for us to do? Shall we go out tonight? Or, are You going to make dinner?"

Beware of distrusting Jesus. Listen to Romans 8:32, "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?" Do you believe that Jesus died for you? Then believe that Jesus will provide for you! You need to trust Jesus.

Let's focus our attention now upon our last warning sign...

5. Beware of Straying from Jesus (verse 12)

I get this from verse 12,

Then they understood that He did not say to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees. (Matt. 16:12)

This takes us back to the real meaning of verse 6, "Watch out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. The word "leaven" means "influence". In Scripture, it is often--but not always--used to indicate an evil influence. Beware of the influence and teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Jesus is warning the disciples, telling them to trust His words and not the words of the Pharisees or Sadducees. If you listen to the Pharisees or Sadducees, you will be influenced by them. Their doctrine is dangerous. They will lead you astray.

The Sadducees, with their complete denial of an afterlife, will lead you astray in this life. The Pharisees, with their consuming focus on living according to the tradition of the elders, will lead you astray. Simply read through the gospel narratives and you will discover how often the teaching of Jesus clashed with the teachings of the Pharisees and Sadducees. The Pharisees grumbled that Jesus would go to be with the sinners and call them to repentance (Matt. 9:10-13). They were disturbed that Jesus didn't fast like they did, twice per week (Matt. 9:14-17; Luke 18:12). They claimed that Jesus was casting out demons by the power of demons (Matt. 9:34; 12:24). They were raging mad when Jesus' disciples transgressed their own understanding of the Sabbath (Matt. 12:1-14). They pointed out when Jesus' disciples didn't wash their hands when they ate with unwashed hands (Matt. 15:1-9). They tried to trap Jesus with His view on divorce and taxes (Matt. 19:3-12; 22:15-22). They questioned His authority (Matt. 21:23-46). We don't have a much data about Jesus' interaction with the Sadducees, but they joined right in when appropriate. They sought to attack Jesus on His views of the resurrection (Matt. 22:23-33).

These religious leaders were always trying to pull away from the teaching of Jesus. But, you need to pay close attention to the words of Jesus and the words of His apostles. Don't fall short, like the Sadducees. Don't go beyond, like the Pharisees. One of the most helpful tools to Bible study that I have ever received is called, "the line of Scripture." Suppose that the truth of Scripture is represented by a yard stick. There are some, who would fall short of the teaching of Scripture. They can be represented by a 12 inch ruler. They are often called **liberals**. There are things in the Bible that they refuse to believe. Thus, they don't measure up the full 36 inches. There are other people, who would go way beyond the teaching of Scripture. They can be represented by a 6 foot board. They are often called **legalists**. They agree that the Bible is a good start, but you need more rules to cover every area of your life. Thus, they go far beyond the 36 inches of the yard stick.

You need to stay away from both these dangers. You need to be a yard stick. Believe what the Bible says. Stop where the Bible is silent. The best way to combat error is to love your Bible. I use that word, "love" intentionally. It isn't enough simply to study your Bible. There are plenty of people who study their Bibles and have gone astray, through their intellectual pursuits. You need to "love your Bible." It need to be your treasure and your delight and your joy. Of course, this will lead you to read it and study it. And if you have a love for your Bible, you will pray over it and following it and obey it. If you do these things, you will be led to Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith (Heb. 12:2). He will satisfy you and He will protect you from the error of the liberals and the legalists.

I have given you five warning signs this morning:

1. Beware of Missing Jesus (verse 1)
2. Beware of Testing Jesus (verse 1)
3. Beware of Seeking Signs from Jesus (verses 2-4)
4. Beware of Distrusting Jesus (verses 5-11)
5. Beware of Straying from Jesus (verse 12)

I want to close with a story about an experience I had with my car. It's not a good car story. It's a bad car story. A little over two years ago, I was driving around in my car and my battery light on my dashboard turned on. Over the next several weeks, the battery light would go on, but sometimes it would go off. I didn't think much of it, especially since my car continued to work correctly. For those of you who are mechanically inclined, you know what was happening. For those of you who aren't, like me, I'll tell you what was happening. My alternator was going out. The alternator allows the engine to charge your car battery, so that you can start your car, use your headlights, listen to the radio, and run your heater. Anyway, the sign on my dashboard was alerting me of this. But, I ignored it. Eventually it got to the point that every time that I drove the car, the battery light was on. But, as I had been driving the car for weeks without any problem, I didn't think that there was much wrong.

Well, my mother-in-law flew out to see us from California. She landed about 8pm at night. I remember that night well. It was early January and about 10 degrees below zero outside. Since it was a long time since she had seen her grandchildren, I decided to take Carissa with me. I drove to O'Hare to pick her up. The drive into the airport went just fine. The battery light was on the entire time, but I just ignored it. We went into the airport and picked up my mother-in-law. She was delighted to see Carissa. She was excited about spending a few weeks in cold Illinois with us. But as we were driving home, I noticed that my dashboard lights were getting dimmer and dimmer. Furthermore, I noticed that my headlights weren't very bright either. So, here I am, driving down I-90 and realizing what was happening. I'm losing power. At that point, I

knew what the warning sign had been alerting me of.

Eventually, I pulled off the side of the road. Imagine the situation. It's 9pm. It's 10 degrees below zero outside. There I was, with my mother-in-law and my 7 year old daughter in the car. The battery was totally dead. The car wouldn't start. I didn't even have enough power to turn on my hazard lights. I didn't have a cell phone. I couldn't call anybody. I tried to flag down somebody. Finally, I did. They were very gracious and allowed me to charge my battery. But, again, not being a mechanic, I didn't realize the kind of charge that I would need. They charged my car for about 15 minutes. I figured that my battery would be fully charged by then. I could probably get back to Rockford. But, what I didn't know was that it would take me another 10 minutes down the road. The same scenario took place. I noticed that my dashboard lights were getting dimmer and dimmer. My headlights were getting dim. I had enough speed to take me through the Roselle Exit and through the toll-booth, where I pulled over to the side.

To make a long story short, I borrowed someone's cell phone and called my brother-in-law, who lived nearby. He came to the rescue. It was a long night. I had acted very foolishly. I got into trouble because I had ignored my battery light. I had ignored the warning sign that was intended for my good.

If you ignore these warning signs from Matthew 16:1-12 that I have laid out before you this morning, you may very well find yourself out in the cold someday. Oh, perhaps it may not be right away, but someday, you will be in trouble. So, as you drive down the path of life, I urge you, I plead with you, I beg you to pay attention to these signs. They are for your good.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on March 21, 2004 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] Maclean, S., Bolsover, C., & Curtis P. "Odds On That God Exists, Says Scientist." March 8, 2004. <http://education.guardian.co.uk>