TITLE: Deception: a sign of the times

TEXT: Mt. 24:10-14, 23-25; Ro. 16:17-18; Col. 2:1-17; 2 Co. 5:18-20; 1 Co. 12:12; Eccl. 4:12; Mk. 2:23-28; Ex. 20:8; Ro. 14:5-8; Gal. 5:1; Mt. 5:17

INTRODUCTION: This morning I want to talk about something that Jesus said would be one of the signs to watch for that would indicate that the time of His return was approaching.

Sometimes I feel like reading Scriptures such as Matthew Chapter 24 where Jesus talks about the conditions of this world as His 2nd coming draws near, or Ezekiel 36-37 where Ezekiel talks about the war of Gog and Magog where Russia forms an alliance with Iran and other Muslim countries and comes against Israel from the north or Johns Revelation about the end times, is like reading from a daily newspaper today.

I believe we are seeing many of these things that were prophesized thousands of years ago unfolding before our very eyes today.

This morning I want to talk about one of the signs that Jesus said to watch for that would indicate that His return was drawing close. And that is deception.

**Matthew 24:10-14(NIV)   
10At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other,    
11and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people.    
12Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold,    
13but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.    
14And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.**

**Matthew 24:23-25(NIV)   
23At that time if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or, ‘There he is!’ do not believe it.**  **24For false Christ’s and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect—if that were possible.**  **25See, I have told you ahead of time.**

Jesus here speaks of a time where there will be an increase in deception among the people of God.

**10At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other,    
11and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people.**

Are we seeing an increase in deception today?

We probably can remember the spirit of deception that led the followers of Jim Jones into the jungle and ended in mass suicide and murder.

We probably can remember the spirit of deception that led the followers of David Koresh to Waco Texas where they all died a fiery death.

But these deceptions where several years ago. What about today?

Deception is much greater today because deception has become main stream. A very large part of our media today is deception. And it is not unintentional deception.

Most national mainstream media has become part of the liberal left politically. They are used to attack the opponents of liberal secular philosophy.

Just look at what they done with President Trump over the last 4 years. Anything they can to destroy him.

How many times have they used the phrase “an unnamed source” has told us that Trump did this or said that.

I believe that most of the time when that phrase is used by the media there is no legitimate source. It is made up or manufactured.

I think that this is evident in that most of these claims later on are proved to be false.

There is great deception that has been taught to our children in our public schools and colleges with regard to American history and our constitutional republic.

We see the results of that deception in our streets today with the Black Lives Matter movement and Antifa and other far left organizations trying to dismantle America and rebuild it in their own socialistic and communistic image.

This is what they have been taught the last few decades in many, if not most, of our educational institutions

The question is not if there is a spirit of deception at work in our world today or not, because there obviously is. The question for us is; how can we recognize those deceptions when they arise?

**Romans 16:17-18(NIV)**  **17I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them.**  **18For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people.**

How does one recognize deception?

The apostle Paul here says:

**17I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them.**

**18For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people.**

One of the deceptions that Paul dealt with in the Churches of his day was from what he called Judaizers.

These would have been Jewish converts who were still trying to live according to the Law of Moses.

They had come into the Church and tried to get people to fall back into the legalism of the law.

They would say that things needed to be added to the work of Christ. That believers must be circumcised and observe the Jewish festivals and holy days and Sabbaths in order to really be saved.

One way to recognize deceptive spirits is by what that deception accomplishes.

What we need to understand about groups like the followers of Jim Jones and David Koresh is that they all started out in orthodox Christianity before they were deceived and went astray.

How were they deceived?

**17I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned.**

New or “enlightened” theology was introduced that went contrary to the very Gospel by which they were saved in the first place.

In studying groups like Jim Jones and David Koresh and others like them, some common denominators become apparent. Things we can recognize as deception.

One is a tendency toward isolationism and being drawn away from the body of Christ.

A belief that because of some new or heightened revelation they are right and everyone else is wrong.

So they withdraw from the larger Body of Christ and go it on their own.

Another sign of deception is, most often there is a lost or diminished focus on seeking and saving the lost. Religion becomes more self-centered.

And almost without exception, a drawing back into some form of legalism or a works based faith.

In order to please God I have to dot this i and cross this T.

Again Paul deals with this deception more fully in:

**Colossians 2:1-17(NIV)**  **1I want you to know how much I am struggling for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally.**  **2My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ,**  **3in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.**  **4I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments.**  **5For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how orderly you are and how firm your faith in Christ is.**  **6So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him,**  **7rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.**  **8See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.**  **9For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form,**  **10and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.**

**13When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins,**  **14having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.**  **15And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.**

**16Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day.    
17These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.**

The Body of Christ is to be the manifestation of God on planet earth!

Let that sink in a moment!

The Body of Christ, the Church, is to be the manifestation of God on planet earth!

**2 Corinthians 5:18-20(NIV)   
18All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:    
19that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.    
20We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.**

**20We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.**

Paul uses the plural word “we” here! Who is the “we” that he is talking about?

The Church! The Body of Christ!

**20We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.**

Jesus died and rose again and then sent back His Holy Spirit to indwell you and I as Believers.

We, as individual believers, comprise the larger body of Christ.

Paul talked about the importance of the unity of the Body in 1st. Corinthians chapter 12.

**1 Corinthians 12:12-14(NIV)   
12The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ.    
13For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.   
14Now the body is not made up of one part but of many.**

This is why Satan will work so hard to try to cause division within the body of Christ and division within the peoples of a nation.

Why will he use deceptive doctrines to separate Christians from the rest of the body of Christ or separate the people of a nation through racial and class division?

It is the ancient strategy of divide and conquer.

**Ecclesiastes 4:12(NIV)   
12Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.**

There is strength in numbers, especially when each individual member is filled with the Holy Spirit of God!

When the Body of Christ gathers together there is a multiple presence of God in that place! Each gifted by God to meet the needs of the rest of the Body to make the Body complete and whole.

If the enemy can separate us from one another, as the Body of Christ, than he has weakened the entire body. The same can be true for the peoples of a nation.

**8See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.   
9For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form,    
10and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.**

**God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins,    
14having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.    
15And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.   
16Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day.    
17These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.**

Religious festivals, New Moon celebrations and even the Sabbath days are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.   
**Because “in Christ” all the fullness of the deity lives in bodily form!**

The Judaizers of Paul’s day were trying to bring people back into the bondage of the law, Back into a strict adherence to Jewish religious festivals, New Moon celebrations and Sabbath day’s.

Scripture says: **17These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.**

How is the reality of these things found or fulfilled in Christ?

Let me just use the Sabbath as an example.

**Mark 2:23-28(NIV)   
23One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain.    
24The Pharisees said to him, “Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?”   
25He answered, “Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need?**  **26In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions.”**  **27Then he said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.**  **28So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.”**

The Pharisees saw Jesus and His disciples doing something that was unlawful to do on the Sabbath according to the Law of Moses. Actually they were breaking two Sabbath laws.

They were walking along through a grain field and picking some of the grain to eat.

Law #1 A Sabbath day journey was a very limited distance measured in feet. They had most probably broken that limit as they were walking along through a grain field.

Law # 2 they picked grain which would have been considered a labor under the letter of the Law.

Jesus answers them by giving them an illustration of David and his men, when they were hungry, eating the sacred bread that was only to be eaten by the priest and then He makes a pretty amazing statement.

**“The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.    
28So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.”**

**“The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.**

The Greek word for Sabbath is:

***sab'-bat-on* Of Hebrew origin [H7676]; the *Sabbath* (that is, *Shabbath*), or day of weekly *repose* from secular avocations (also the observance or institution itself—Sabbath (day).**

It comes from the Hebrew word:

***shab-bawth'* *intermission*, that is, (specifically) the *Sabbath:—* (+ every) Sabbath.**

Sabbath means a day of intermission or a day of weekly repose or rest from secular vocations.

Question? Who is the Sabbath for?

Jesus said that the Sabbath was made for man not man for the Sabbath!

Was Jesus saying anything contrary to the 4th Commandment?

**Exodus 20:8-NIV)   
8“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.**

No, He was just reminding them who God proclaimed the Sabbath was for and what its intent was. Man would work six days and then have a day of rest.

**8“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.**

The Hebrew word for Holy is:

***kaw-dash'* *make*, *pronounce* or *observe* as *clean* sanctify-(set apart) (ceremonially or morally):— consecrate, dedicate, hallow, (be, keep) holy , keep, prepare, proclaim, purify,**

**“The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.    
28So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.”**

Here is the thing…

AS CHRISTIANS WE ARE TO LIVE SABATICAL LIVES –NOT JUST WORSHIP GOD ONE DAY A WEEK!

I don’t know that it matters what day you set aside as a day of rest and repose. It is Gods design that you do it though. It is for your benefit---the Sabbath was made for you not you for the Sabbath…

But as Christians, each and every day should be lived worshipping God. And if we choose one day out of 7 to worship Him and think we are doing what God has intended then we need to think again.

Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath and if He is Lord of our life than every day is to be separated unto Him in worship. Every day is to be separated as Holy unto Him.

I don’t care what day a person chooses to use as their Sabbath day of rest, but for a Christian every day should be a day set apart to God and considered holy.

**Romans 14:5-8(NIV)   
5One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.**

**6He who regards one day as special does so to the Lord. He who eats meat, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains, does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God.**

**7For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone.    
8If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.**

Many of the Jewish converts in Paul’s day were trying to bring the Church back into the bondage of the law.

**Galatians 5:1(NIV)   
1It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.**

What yoke of slavery was Paul talking about? The slavery to living under the yoke of the law that was essential to Judaism!

So he says it was for freedom that Christ has set us free!

**Matthew 5:17(NIV)   
17“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.**

Fulfill=

***play-ro'-o*; to *make* *replete*, *satisfy*, *execute* (an office), *finish* (a period or task), *verify*—accomplish, complete, end, fulfil, (be, make) full (come), fully preach, perfect, supply.**

Jesus is the perfection or the completeness of the law!

When we allow Jesus to come into our heart and be the Lord and savior of our life then the law is fulfilled within us!

Because Jesus is the fulfillment of the law!

It is for this freedom that Christ has set us free so we are to **Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.**

Deception is not always easily recognized but there are some telling signs of it for the Christian.

Any teaching that has a tendency to isolate us and draw us away from the Body of Christ is more than likely a deception of the enemy.

Any teaching that causes us to lose focus on our primary calling to go out into our world with the Gospel message of Jesus Christ and lead the lost to Him is more than likely a deception of the enemy.

Any teaching that brings us back under the yoke of bondage to the law is more than likely a deception of the enemy.

Jesus listed Deception as one of the signs of the times that would indicate that His return is quickly approaching.

So our admonition from Scripture is:

**8See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.   
9For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form,    
10and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.**

**1It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.**

Are you living in the freedom that Christ Jesus has secured for you this morning? Are you fulfilling your responsibility to the Body of Christ? Being the body part that He has called you to be, operating in the giftedness He has given you to make the body, the Church fellowship, whole and complete so we, as the body, can truly manifest Christ to our world?