

The Jews Seek After Signs

"Seeing that Jews ask for signs, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, unto Jews a stumbling block, and unto Gentiles foolishness ..." (1 Cor. 1:22f)

Paul was moved by inspiration when he wrote this letter but he was well aware of the nature of his fellow countrymen (2 Cor. 11:37). It was his peoples' nature to ask for signs. *"... Certain of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, Teacher, we would see a sign from thee"* (Mt. 12:38). Other passages record similar requests. When a nobleman sought Jesus' help in healing his son, Jesus said, *"Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe ..."* (Jn. 4:48). When some sought him out because He had fed 5,000 with five loaves and two fishes, Jesus told them, *"Ye seek me not because ye saw signs, but because ye ate of the loaves and were filled"* (Jn. 6:26). These pseudo-disciples said, *"What then doest thou for a sign, that we may see, and believe thee?"* (Jn. 6:30). Even His disciples, when informed of the future, but certain destruction of Jerusalem asked, *"Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?"* (Mt. 24:3). Jesus gave signs to His nation. Peter said he was a *"man approved of God unto you by signs and wonders and mighty works"* (Acts 2:22). One of history's greatest tragedies is that the sign Jesus gave His nation became a stumbling block to them, for while Jesus wrought many signs to His nation, when asked by Jews for a sign, He responded, *"an evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of Jonah ..."* (Mt. 16:4). At an earlier time He had said, *"Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up"* (Jn. 2:19). Just as Pharaoh's two dreams in Joseph's day were the same (seven fat kine eaten by seven lean ones with no visible indication they had devoured them; and seven full ears of grain devoured by seven lean ears, Genesis 41:2-8), so the two signs Jesus gave His nation were identical. Jonah was in the belly of the whale and came forth from it; Jesus would be in the grave three days and would come forth; the temple (Christ's body) would be destroyed but in three days would be raised up again. Both these figures were a prophecy Jesus would be crucified, be buried for three days and be raised from the grave. This was an awesome sign to any people; then or now.

Yet those who demanded signs could not read the sign Jesus gave them. When asked for a sign, Jesus said, *"When it is evening, ye say It will be fair weather; for the heaven is red, and in the morning, It will it will be foul weather today for the heaven is red and lowering. Ye know how to discern the face of the heaven; but ye cannot discern the sign of the times"* (Mt. 16:2f). Nicodemus perceived Jesus was a teacher from God, but was in the

minority in his perception: *"For no one can do these signs that thou doest except God be with him"* (Jn. 3:2). When Jesus had opened the eyes of the blind man and the Jews had said, *"We know God hath spoken unto Moses, but as for as this man, we know not whence he is,"* the once blind, but now-seeing man responded, *"Why herein is the marvel that ye know not whence he is, and yet he opened mine eyes ... If this man were not from God, he could do nothing"* (Jn. 9:29, 39, 33).

The resurrection of Jesus was a sign to His nation that He was God. The greatness of this sign was lost on His people. They could read the signs of the heavens, but they could not see the great testimony of the death of resurrection of Jesus! That sign given them became a stumbling block. *"We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block."* They wanted a victorious Messiah; they did not see that the victory offered them in Christ's death and resurrection was far greater than any worldly victory! They could not see the insufficiency and inefficacy of the system given by Moses, intended as a type to picture the sacrifice of God's own Son. Remember, *"Many other signs and wonders truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples ... but these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye may have life in his name"* (Jn. 20:30f).

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