



Faith Retains Divine Presence

“A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas....” (Matthew 16:4).

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“The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven. 2 He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. 3 And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times? 4 A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them, and departed.” (Matthew 16:1-4).

Note how verse 4 ended “And he left them, and departed” What an outcome - for a faithless live steeped in unbelief, doubt and distrust. God’s Spirit “... shall not always strive with man...” (Genesis 6:3). A time comes when Jesus must leave the unbelievers alone and go to minister to those who will dare to believe. God clearly states that “... the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him” (Hebrews 10:38). The secret to retaining divine presence is pleasuring God by faith.

Signs and wonders, popularly referred to as miracles attests to divine calling and approval. The ministry of Jesus was full of spectacular miracles, but in this teaching, Jesus pointed out that the pursuit of miracles only at the expense of God’s word is dangerous, and could potentially damn a soul in hell fire. Despite all the previous signs and wonders they were privileged to see in the Ministry of Jesus, these religious leaders still came to Jesus expressing a desire to see a “a sign from heaven” (vs 1). This begs the questions:

- 1) How many signs would they need to see in order to believe?
- 2) If the signs they have already seen do not convince them, what difference would additional sign make to their life and faith?

There is place for signs and wonders. When

“... And he left them, and departed” (Matthew 16:4).

John the Baptist sent disciples to ask Jesus if He was the Messiah, Jesus simply performed miracles and told John’s disciples to report back to John what they had witnessed. This is because John had already known the scriptures concerning Jesus. Therefore, the miracles Jesus performed on that occasion were aimed at providing the evidence base for John to substantiate the truth of the scriptures he had already known and anchor his faith on God’s word.

On this occasion, Jesus refused to satisfy their expectation but simply departed from them after a reprimand. Note the salient points in the reprimand:

- 1) The statement by these Pharisees and Sadducees was not motivated by a desire to learn or experience the power of God, but rather they came to tempt Jesus. This was synonymous to setting up an idol in their heart, that ultimately became a stumbling block for them (Isaiah 14:1-11);
- 2) He characterised them as hypocrites who can interpret the signs of the sky with respect to the weather, but cannot discern the signs of the times (vs 3);
- 3) He referred to their obsession for sign as a mark of an evil and adulterous generation (vs 4);
- 4) He told them “there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas” (vs 4);
- 5) His departure from them cut them off from seeing, knowing, hearing and receiving the blessings of God. What a price to pay for unbelief!

Examine yourselves, Where do you stand? Are you a seeker of signs only or a believer of God’s word?