

Luke 11:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And others, tempting him, sought of him a sign from heaven.

Analysis

And others, tempting him, sought of him a sign from heaven. A second group responds to the exorcism not with accusation but with demand for further proof. The phrase "tempting him" (πειράζοντες, peirazontes) indicates their motive was not genuine inquiry but testing—attempting to trap or discredit Jesus. They "sought of him a sign from heaven" (σημεῖον ἐξ οὐρανοῦ ἐζήτουν παρ' αὐτοῦ, sēmeion ex ouranou ezētoun par' autou), demanding a spectacular celestial miracle to validate His authority.

The irony is profound: Jesus had just performed an undeniable miracle, yet they demand more. Their request for a "sign from heaven" suggests they considered exorcism insufficient proof—perhaps anyone might cast out demons, but only God's true prophet could command heavenly phenomena. This reflects the Jewish expectation that the Messiah would perform signs like Moses (manna from heaven) or Joshua (sun standing still). Yet their demand reveals unbelief masquerading as due diligence: no amount of evidence would satisfy hardened hearts. Jesus later responds that "an evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign" (Matthew 12:39), offering only the sign of Jonah—His death and resurrection.

Historical Context

First-century Jewish messianic expectations included miraculous signs validating the Messiah's identity. The Pharisees may have expected Jesus to replicate Moses' wilderness miracles or to demonstrate authority over nature in spectacular ways. Their demand for "a sign from heaven" reflects rabbinic categories distinguishing

lesser miracles (healings, exorcisms) from greater ones (cosmic events, heavenly phenomena). By requesting the latter, they attempted to put Jesus in an impossible position—either perform on demand (which prophets don't do) or be dismissed as inadequate.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does demanding signs before belief differ from faith that responds to the evidence God has already provided?
2. What does Jesus' refusal to perform miracles on demand teach about God's sovereignty and the nature of faith?
3. In what ways do people today demand 'signs from heaven' while ignoring clear evidence of God's work around them?

Interlinear Text

ἔτεροι	δὲ	πειράζοντες	σημεῖον	παρ'	αὐτοῦ	ἐζήτουν	ἐξ
others	And	tempting	a sign	of	him	him sought	from
G2087	G1161	G3985	G4592	G3844	G846	G2212	G1537

οὐρανοῦ

heaven

G3772

Additional Cross-References

John 6:30 (Parallel theme): They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work?

1 Corinthians 1:22 (Parallel theme): For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom:

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