

Mark 8:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him.

Analysis

The Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him (συζητεῖν, syzētein)—the verb implies hostile debate, not genuine inquiry. **Seeking of him a sign from heaven** (σημεῖον ἀπὸ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, sēmeion apo tou ouranou)—they demand spectacular celestial proof like Joshua's sun-standing-still (Joshua 10:12-13) or Samuel's thunder (1 Samuel 12:18). They reject Jesus' earthly miracles (healings, exorcisms, feedings) as insufficient, demanding unambiguous divine validation.

Tempting him (πειράζοντες, peirazontes)—the same word describing Satan's wilderness temptation (Mark 1:13). The Pharisees align themselves with demonic opposition to Jesus' mission. Their demand is disingenuous—no sign would satisfy hardened hearts (Luke 16:31). Jesus had just fed 4,000 miraculously, yet they demand more proof. This exposes the futility of evidential apologetics apart from Spirit-wrought faith—signs convince only those already willing to believe.

Historical Context

Pharisees were Judaism's most influential sect (6,000+ members), emphasizing strict Torah observance and oral tradition. They held significant sway over synagogues and common people. Their demand for 'signs from heaven' reflected rabbinic debate about distinguishing true from false prophets. Deuteronomy 13:1-3 warned that even sign-performing prophets might lead people astray, so signs alone weren't conclusive. However, their rejection of Jesus despite overwhelming

evidence (Matthew 12:38-42) revealed spiritual blindness. First-century Jewish expectation anticipated spectacular messianic signs—Messiah would reunite the twelve tribes, rebuild the temple, and defeat Gentile oppressors.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does the Pharisees' demand for signs after witnessing miracles expose the hardened heart's capacity for denial?
2. What 'signs' might you be demanding from God while ignoring the evidence He's already provided?
3. How does recognizing sign-seeking as 'tempting' Christ shape your approach to faith and doubt?

Interlinear Text

καὶ ἐξῆλθον οἱ Φαρισαῖοι καὶ ἤρξαντο συζητεῖν αὐτόν
And came forth G3588 the Pharisees G5330 And began G756 to question G4802 him G846

ζητοῦντες παρ' αὐτόν σημεῖον ἀπὸ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ

seeking of him a sign from G3588 G4592 G575 heaven G3772

πειράζοντες αὐτόν

tempting him G3985 G846

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 10:9 (Parallel theme): Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.

Matthew 12:38 (Resurrection): Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee.

Deuteronomy 6:16 (Parallel theme): Ye shall not tempt the LORD your God, as ye tempted him in Massah.

Malachi 3:15 (Parallel theme): And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered.

Exodus 17:7 (Parallel theme): And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, Is the LORD among us, or not?

John 4:48 (Parallel theme): Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.

Luke 11:16 (Parallel theme): And others, tempting him, sought of him a sign from heaven.