

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

Psalms 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	And	began	to question	him
G2532	G1831		G5330	G2532	G756	G4802	G846
ζητοῦντες	παρ'	αὐτόν	σημεῖον	ἀπὸ	τοῦ	οὐρανοῦ	
seeking	of	him	a sign	from	G3588	heaven	
G2212	G3844	G846	G4592	G575		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.