

Mark 8:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation.

Analysis

He sighed deeply in his spirit (ἀναστενάζας τῷ πνεύματι, anastenaxas tō pneumati)—a profound groan from Jesus' innermost being, expressing grief over spiritual blindness. The compound verb emphasizes intensity—this isn't mild frustration but anguished sorrow. Jesus feels the tragic irony: the Son of God stands before them performing messianic signs, yet they demand more proof. His sigh reveals His true humanity—Jesus experiences emotional pain over hard hearts.

Why doth this generation seek after a sign?—'This generation' (ἡ γενεὰ αὕτη, hē genea hautē) becomes a technical term for Israel's unbelieving contemporaries who witness the kingdom yet reject it. **Verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given**—the strongest possible negation (εἰ δοθήσεται, ei dothēsetai, literally 'if a sign be given,' a Hebrew oath formula meaning 'absolutely not'). Matthew 12:39 clarifies the sole exception: 'the sign of Jonah'—Jesus' death and resurrection. The greatest sign wouldn't be celestial spectacle but the crucified and risen Lord.

Historical Context

Jesus' refusal echoes OT prophets who condemned Israel's demand for signs while ignoring God's word (Isaiah 7:10-14; Jeremiah 44:29-30). The phrase 'evil and adulterous generation' (Matthew 12:39) recalls Israel's wilderness rebellion—a

generation that saw miracles yet lacked faith (Psalm 95:10; Hebrews 3:10). Jonah's three days in the fish prefigured Christ's burial and resurrection (Matthew 12:40). Early church recognized that the resurrection was Christianity's foundational sign—if Christ rose, the gospel stands; if not, faith is futile (1 Corinthians 15:14-19).

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus' deep sigh reveal His emotional engagement with human unbelief and spiritual tragedy?
2. What does the refusal to give signs 'on demand' teach about faith's nature as trust beyond empirical proof?
3. How is the resurrection the ultimate 'sign of Jonah' that validates all of Jesus' claims and ministry?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	ἀναστενάζας	τῷ	πνεύματι	αὐτοῦ	λέγω	Τί	ἡ
And G2532	he sighed deeply G389	G3588	spirit G4151	G846	I say G3004	Why G5101	G3588
γενεᾶ	ταύτη	σημεῖον	ἐπιζητεῖ	ἀμὲν	λέγω	ὕμῖν	
generation G1074	this G3778	a sign G4592	doth G1934	verily G281	I say G3004	unto you G5213	
εἰ	δοθήσεται	τῇ	γενεᾶ	ταύτῃ	σημεῖον		
There shall no G1487	be given G1325	G3588	generation G1074	this G3778	a sign G4592		

Additional Cross-References

Mark 7:34 (Parallel theme): And looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened.

Matthew 16:4 (Parallel theme): 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.

Isaiah 53:3 (Parallel theme): He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Mark 3:5 (Parallel theme): And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other.

Mark 9:19 (Parallel theme): He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me.

Mark 6:6 (Parallel theme): And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching.

Luke 19:41 (Parallel theme): And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it,