

The Sign

“But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas:” (Matt 12:39)

The Creator of the universe is understanding and compassionate. He knows our frame and remembers that we are dust. He took upon Himself the nature of man. He was tempted in all points like we are, yet without sin. He created within us a streak of skepticism and is sympathetic to our need for evidence. Consequently, God has never required man to do something without providing a rational basis for his obedience.

Moses, for example, was commanded by God to return to Egypt and liberate a nation of Hebrew slaves. A number of things made Moses reluctant to do this. First, he was wanted as a criminal in Egypt. In the second place he was a shepherd, and every shepherd was an abomination unto the Egyptians (Gen. 46:34.) In the third place he been away from Egypt for forty years and was no longer fluent in their language. God, however, gave Moses a series of signs. A bush burned but was not consumed. His rod became a serpent and his hand became leprous. Finally Moses was convinced that God was calling him to Egypt and it made more sense to have the Pharaoh mad at you than God.

Gideon was called by God to deliver Israel from the Midianites. This did not make sense to Gideon. He was from a poor family in Manasseh and he was the least in his father’s house. He asked the plaintive question: “If God be with us, where be all the miracles our fathers told us of.” A series of signs were then graciously given by God to Gideon. (1) Fire came out of a rock and miraculously consumed a sacrifice. (2) A fleece of wool was made wet with dew while all about it was dry. (3) A fleece of wool was made dry while all about it was wet. (4) A Midianite dream was related ascribing victory to Gideon. Gideon was convinced and ultimately was given a miraculous victory.

Hezekiah was promised an additional fifteen years of life as well as deliverance from the King of Assyria. It seemed impossible. The king said to Isaiah, “What shall be the sign that the Lord will heal me?” (II Kings 20:8.)_ The gracious god who understands our doubts turned back the clockwork of the heavens and the shadow on the sun dial of Ahaz went back ten degrees.

The world has catalogued and condemned its doubting Thomases, but Jesus did not. HE simply said: “Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side and be not faithless, but believing.” The word “Didymus” means “twin.” God could understand the skepticism of a man who had been mistaken for his twin brother upon many occasions. Consequently he gave to Thomas evidence that was irrefutable.

But now let us pause and consider the evidence that God has given to us. He demands that we deny ourselves, take up a cross, and follow him. He requires that we repent of our sins, confess Him before men, and be baptized. He calls upon us to gather faithfully each week with others of like precious faith. His demand upon our lives is totally intrusive and requires that whatever we do in word or deed we do in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

A doubting world demands a sign. What evidence do we have to make such a radical change in our behaviour. The sympathetic Saviour replies: “Destroy this temple and in three days I will build it up.” “An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: for as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whales belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”

Thus the sign of the resurrection is deemed sufficient by the Judge of Heaven to convince rational men to become Christians. The logic of the apostles focussed on the empty tomb and reminded the world that if Christ be not risen, our faith is vain and we are yet in our sins. If Christ is still in the grave we are of all men most miserable.

The Good News, however, is that Christ is risen from the dead. Please prayerfully ponder this magnificent “sign” and surrender your life to the resurrected Christ!