

Matthew 16:1-4. Christ Refuses to Grant a Sign to the Pharisees and Sadducees.

by Favell Lee Mortimer

The Pharisees and Sadducees' desire for a sign was motivated by their hatred for Jesus, and their rejection of Him led to His departure and a warning of impending destruction.

Scripture: Matthew 12:39, Matthew 23:37, Matthew 25:41, Mark 8:12

Topics: "Signs And Miracles", "Gods Judgment"

Description

Favell Lee Mortimer preaches about the evil desire of the Pharisees and Sadducees to see a sign from heaven, driven by their hatred towards Jesus. Jesus, deeply grieved by the hardness of men's hearts, patiently argues with the unbelievers, pointing out that they should have recognized Him as the Son of God through the signs and miracles He performed. Despite warning them of impending destruction, the Jews did not repent, leading Jesus to depart from them, a calamity that signifies a severe separation from God's presence.

Transcript

It is not certain what the sign from heaven was that the Pharisees and Sadducees desired to see; probably it was some display of Christ's glory, such as he afterwards gave to his most favored disciples upon the mount. But whatever the sign required might be, the motive that led these men to ask for it was a very evil one--it was the desire not to believe. And why did they entertain this desire? Because they hated Jesus. It is our desires and our feelings that mark our characters in God's sight.

And what were the feelings of the Savior on this occasion? Mark records a circumstance which shows us what they were. In Mark 8:12, we read, "And he sighed deeply in his spirit." The hardness of men's hearts grieved the Savior more than all the sufferings of his life. It is a sign of grace in the heart when a man is deeply grieved by hearing of sin committed against others; but it is a still better sign when he is grieved, rather than angry, at sins committed against himself. There are some to be found among the followers of Jesus, who have imbibed this feeling from their Master. The most cutting reproaches have excited no other emotion than this regret--"Alas, he who hates me is blind, and knows not what he does."

The Lord condescended patiently to argue with these unbelievers. He proved that their doubts respecting his being the Son of God did not arise from want of understanding; for they showed their understanding by knowing the signs of the weather. Their understandings were good enough to enable them to know that he

was the Son of God, because all the signs the prophets had described, had come to pass. We cannot now consider what these signs were. The miracles Jesus performed were among them; for Isaiah had prophesied that the tongue of the mute should sing when the Savior came, that the ears of the deaf should be unstopped, and that the lame man should leap as an deer, (Is. 35.)

Jesus declared that one sign only should be given to these unbelievers--the sign that God once gave to the Ninevites.

Jonas was cast into the sea, and was swallowed by a whale. Thus Jesus would be cast into the grave, and lie hid in the tomb. As Jonas was delivered from the whale, so Jesus was raised from the tomb. As Jonas warned the people of Nineveh that their city would be destroyed in forty days, so Jesus warned the people of Jerusalem that their city would be destroyed in forty years; that is, before that generation would pass away. But whereas the Ninevites repented at the preaching of Jonas, the Jews did not repent at the preaching of the Lord and his apostles.

The words which are recorded in the conclusion of this passage (verse 4) are dreadful--"Jesus left them and departed,"--left them in mingled sorrow and displeasure. To be left by Jesus is almost the greatest calamity that can befall a human creature! There is one calamity greater, which is this--to hear Jesus say, "Depart from me." If left by Jesus, we may implore his return; but when he says "Depart," we never can be admitted any more into His presence. Some, who have despised religious privileges while they possessed them, have learned their value after they have lost them; and sometimes God has graciously restored the blessings they had forfeited. But it too often happens that when Jesus leaves a people, he leaves them to their impenitence and hardness of heart, and that when they see Him again, it is to hear Him say, "Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire."

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