

# THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

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In Matthew 16:1-4, “The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would show them a sign from heaven. He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times? 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.” The type of “sign” they asked Jesus for was a miraculous sign. The word “sign” refers to a *signal*, and God used many miracles to serve as a signal of warning most often to His own people. But man must *discern* the signs that God has sent for them to be of benefit.

## **The generation that was delivered from Egypt**

The first miraculous *signs* described in the Bible are the three that God gave to Moses to perform before the people of Israel in Egypt (Exod 4:2-9). What did these miracles “signal?” The Lord had spoken to Moses out of the burning bush, commanding him to tell the elders of Israel that God had appeared to him saying that He was now going to deliver them from their bondage in Egypt and give them the land of Canaan (Exod 3:16-17). “And Moses answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee” (Exod 4:1). God gave Moses the power to perform the three miracles as a sign that God had indeed appeared to Moses and Moses was truly speaking the word of God to them. When the signs were done in their sight, “the people believed” (Exod 4:30-31). These same people were privileged to witness the ten plagues that God brought upon the Egyptians, the parting of the Red Sea, a cloud to lead them by day and fire by night, water pouring from rocks, and manna falling from the sky six days every week. Sadly, they “forgot his works, and his wonders that he had showed them” (Psa 78:11; 106:13). In Numbers 14:11, God asked, “How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have showed among them?” He then swore that that generation would not enter Canaan but would wander in the wilderness for forty years until they all died out (Num 14:22-35). Worse than not seeing Canaan, they were destined to lose their souls because they could not “discern the signs of the times.” Psalm 95:10-11 says, “Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways: unto whom I sware in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest.” Hebrews 3-4 uses this example to warn Christians not to “fall after the same example of

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unbelief.” We need to discern the signs given to Israel so long ago by taking heed not to depart from the living God and to exhort one another daily so that we do not become hardened through the deceitfulness of sin (Heb 3:12-13). Hebrews 4:1 says, “Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.”

## **The generation that saw Christ**

John 1:10-11 says of Christ, “He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not.” In Matthew 23:33, Jesus said of those unbelievers, “Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?” That generation was given far more signs than even the ones who were delivered from Egypt. Jesus’ first miracle at the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee is literally called the “beginning of signs” (John 2:11). It was only the beginning. He did more in Jerusalem at the Passover (John 2:23). By the time the next three years passed, he had done so many wondrous things, had given so many “signals” from God, the Apostle John wrote that “if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written” (John 21:25). Unfortunately, that generation was like their fathers. “But though he had done so many miracles before them, *yet they believed not on him*” (John 12:37). They could not discern the signs of the times. Because they rejected so many signs from God, Christ said their judgment would be worse than that of Sodom, Tyre, and Sidon (Matt 11:20-24). The signs, wonders, miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit confirmed God’s word as it was being revealed (Mark 16:20; Heb 2:3-4). When the revelation was completed, the miracles would be done away (1 Cor 13:8-10). It is not necessary for every generation to personally witness the signs that God has given. The rich man who died and ended up on the wrong side of the gulf in Hades begged Abraham to send Lazarus back from the dead so his brothers would see and repent (Luke 16:27-30). Abraham replied, “If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead” (Luke 16:31). Similarly, our generation will not personally see a miracle from God to warn us to flee from the wrath to come. To us, John 20:30-31 says, “And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: *but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.*” May we never fail to discern the signs of the times!