

# "HEAR YE HIM"

## A Devotional Series For Radio

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The Sermon: FAITH COMETH NOT BY SIGNS

Scripture: Doctrine and Covenants 63:2, 3, 4.

Let the wicked take heed, and let the rebellious fear and tremble; and let the unbelieving hold their lips, for the day of wrath shall come upon them as a whirlwind, and all flesh shall know that I am God. And he that seeketh signs shall see signs, but not unto salvation. (3) Verily I say unto you, There are those among you who seek signs, and there have been such even from the beginning; but behold, faith cometh not by signs, but signs follow those that believe. Yea, signs cometh by faith, not by the will of men, nor as they please, but by the will of God. Yea, signs cometh by faith, unto mighty works, for without faith no man pleaseth God; and with whom God is angry he is not well pleased; wherefore, unto such he showeth no signs, only in wrath unto their condemnation. (4) Wherefore, I, the Lord, am not pleased with those among you who have sought after signs and wonders for faith, and not for the good of men unto my glory .....

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Faith cometh not by signs, but signs follow those that believe.

We are surrounded by signs, miracles, and portents which speak of God. The Psalmist was speaking of these signs when he said: "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork." Paul was thinking of these signs when he wrote to the Romans about those wicked men who refused to acknowledge God. "It is not that they do not know the truth about God:" he wrote; "indeed He has made it quite plain to them. For since the beginning of the world the invisible attributes of God, e.g. His eternal Power and Divinity have been plainly discernible through things which He has made and which are commonly seen and known, thus leaving these men without a rag of excuse." (We have read from J.B. Phillips' modern translation.)

When Jesus miraculously and instantly changed water into wine, the spectators called it a miracle -- a sign attesting his divinity. Yet every year for thousands of years God has been changing soil and water into the grapes from which wine comes. He takes a little longer to do it, perhaps, but it is still a miracle. No man can do it; no man knows how it is done. Yet so common place is the miracle of producing man's food from the inert soil that we scarcely think of it as a miracle.

So accustomed are we to the miraculous order, beauty, and vastness of the

universe in which we live, that we seldom think of it as a miracle. At the other end of the scale the unbelievable microscopic complexity and beauty of a butterfly's wing or a house fly's eye are no less miraculous; yet we often carelessly pass by or ignore these signs and manifestations of God as unworthy of our notice. And some, in the face of these and countless other signs, miracles, wonders, and portents, stubbornly refuse to believe, and demand as the Pharisees demanded of Jesus: "Show us a sign."

People who do not believe the signs they already have would not believe new ones if they came. Only faith can see signs. Skepticism is blind. Pharaoh was unconvinced by all the miracles of Moses. Even when the death of Egypt's first-born forced him to let Moses and his people go, Pharaoh changed his mind and started in pursuit as soon as they were out of sight.

It was immediately after Jesus had cast a devil out of a blind and dumb man so that he could both see and speak, that the Pharisees said "Show us a sign." Ignoring the sign already given, they explained that it was worked by Beelzebub. When some of the five thousand people who had been miraculously fed with the loaves and fishes followed Jesus around to the other side of the lake, he commanded them to believe on him. They replied: "What sign shewest thou then, that we may see

and believe thee?" Unsatisfied with the miraculous bread he had given them, they said, "Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat." They wanted manna to fall from heaven to prove that Jesus was the Messiah, and conveniently forgot the loaves and fishes. So it always is with skeptics. So it always is with those who live by signs and not by faith; the daily dose of signs and wonders must constantly be increased to maintain their belief.

"The just shall live by faith." "Without faith it is impossible to please him." "Those who come to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of those that diligently seek him." The man of faith not only sees signs to which the skeptic is blind, but he also responds to them; and by responding he makes possible other signs which are denied to those who do not believe. Moses was a man of faith. When he saw the miracle of the burning bush, he responded to that sign; he listened to God's voice. As he went on in faith and obedience, other signs confirmed his faith. Peter, James, and John were humble, simple men of faith. When they drew the great draught of fishes in response to Jesus' instructions, they needed no further sign. They brought their ships to land, forsook all, and followed him. Their faith saw a sign of Jesus' Messiahship and divinity; skepticism would have seen only a lucky accident.

And so it was with the many signs and miracles Christ performed during his ministry. Men of faith saw and believed; men of skepticism saw and scoffed; then increased their unbelief and persecution. So it was with Paul -- a sincere but misguided man -- a man of misplaced faith who for a long time had been "kicking against the pricks." When the sign came to him on the road to Damascus he was ready and eager to receive it and to believe on the Christ who had sent it.

Faith is not created by signs, but signs vindicate and strengthen faith. "Faith cometh not by signs, but signs follow those that believe." In order to prove that anything is true you must first believe that it may be true; you must be at least willing to believe that it is true. Faith comes first, and the signs follow. The American continent was not, and never could have been discovered by men who were certain that the world was flat, and that all of its area was already known. The airplane was invented by men who believed that man could fly, and who set out to vindicate their faith -- not by the men who wrote learned treatises

proving by mathematical formulae that such flight was utterly impossible. Edison did not invent the incandescent light, or Bell the telephone, or Fulton the steamboat, because they believed such an invention impossible, but because they had faith that it was possible, and set out to vindicate their faith in actual experience. The signs follow the believer -- not the skeptic.

The authority and divinity of Jesus were attested by many signs and wonders. The signs continued in the ministry of the apostles and elders and seventies after his ascension. At his ascension Jesus commanded the apostles to go into all the world and preach the gospel, and promised that "these signs shall follow them that believe." Since it was physically impossible for the original twelve apostles to evangelize the whole world, this promise must apply not only to the original twelve, but to properly authorized ministry in any age.

Why then do the signs not follow today? Because many who profess to believe in Jesus teach that they can't and won't happen today. Many who seem to believe do not believe at all. They have no faith. In our materialistic, skeptical world we scoff at miracles and say they no longer can happen. We attempt to explain away the miraculous in the things Jesus did, and to limit him to human powers such as we ourselves possess. Of course signs do not follow the skeptic. They do not follow the believer who wants a miracle only to relieve him of the responsibility for thinking, and for exercising his faith and implementing that faith with patient, painstaking, persistent work. Again, signs rarely or never convert the scoffer or make the unbeliever a Christian. Signs are the result of Christian faith and life and growth -- not the cause of it.

Signs and miracles cannot be vouchsafed to the skeptic and the scoffer for another reason. Any such signs received by selfish, ungodly, irreverent men would be used exclusively for themselves -- or as the scripture says, "consumed upon their own lusts." The signs that follow the believer as a result of his sanctified and dedicated Christian life are given that the whole body of believers may be blessed and their faith strengthened. Therefore God does not grant signs to men as they will, but as he wills, to men who believe, to men of faith, to men of spiritual maturity who will use them to the glory of God, and not solely for themselves. Faith cometh not by signs, but signs do still follow those that believe.