

Not Even If They Saw a Miracle

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It seems that some people would refuse to obey God, even if they saw a miracle with their own eyes. Think about all the people of Bible times who saw miracles. Did every one of them repent and faithfully follow God? The problem is not that people need evidence to believe in God. Many who live in willful disobedience truly believe in the God of the Bible. The problem seems to be that they do not love and trust God enough to repent and put their selfish desires aside for Him.

What about Pharaoh, who refused to let Israel go? He witnessed powerful plague after plague and repeatedly refused to submit to God's will. After the death of all the firstborn in Egypt (including his own), he finally agreed to let Israel go because of the grief caused by the plagues (Exod. 12:29-32); yet he still pursued the Israelites to the edge of the Red Sea to slay them! This caused yet another calamity for him and his kingdom when God brought walls of water down on the Egyptian army (Exod. 14:5-9, 26-28).

What about the Israelites who had been delivered from Egypt? When Israel was delivered from Egypt, they repeatedly showed a lack of faith and obedience; but these people had seen the Nile River turn into blood! They had seen all the miraculous plagues in Egypt and had walked through the midst of the Red Sea! (Exod. 7-14). God had delivered them by a mighty hand and was raining down *"bread from heaven"* for them (Exod. 16:4). God sweetened the bitter waters (Exod. 15:23-25) and was visibly present in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night (Exod. 13:21), yet they still lacked the faith to trust Him and obey Him (Num. 13-14, etc.).

What about Jeroboam? When Jeroboam cried against the young prophet, saying, *"Lay hold on him,"* Jeroboam's hand *"dried up, so that he could not pull it in again to him. The altar also was rent, and the ashes poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the LORD"* (1 Kings 13:4-5). Jeroboam then appeared penitent, and asked the prophet to intreat the face of God and pray for him (13:6). God restored Jeroboam's hand (13:6), but Jeroboam still continued in his sinful ways of worship! *"After this thing Jeroboam returned not from his evil way, but made again of the lowest of the people priests of the high places: whosoever would, he consecrated him, and he became one of the priests of the high places. And this thing became sin unto the house of Jeroboam, even to cut it off, and to destroy it from off the face of the earth"* (13:33-34).

What about Ahab and Jezebel? Wicked people like Ahab and Jezebel knew that the true God Yahweh was real. God had shown His power miraculously through his servant Elijah (1 Kings 18:17-ff). However, they still rebelled against God's will, and even plotted to kill God's faithful servant after he had demonstrated God's miraculous power (1 Kings 19:1-2).

What about the Jews who opposed Jesus? During Jesus' time on earth, the fact that He was doing miracles was undeniable. Even so, many who conceded that He was doing miracles refused to follow Him, and even sought to kill Him because of envy (Matt. 11:20; 27:18; John 11:47-53; 12:37).

What about the rich man's family? The rich man in torment wanted Lazarus to be miraculously raised from the dead to convert the rich man's family, but *"Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead"* (Luke 16:29-31).

What about people of today? We are not seeing miraculous events like any of those today because miracles have served their purpose (Mark 16:20; John 20:30-31; 1 Cor. 13:8-12, etc.), but even if we could, many people would still refuse to obey God. As Abraham tried to explain to the rich man, the power to prick men's hearts is in God's Word (cf. Acts 2:36-38). Those who have no interest in God or His Word would not be persuaded to love and obey God, even if they saw a miracle.

Although that is a sad fact, understanding this may help Christians to persevere in personal evangelism. When we try to convert others, and they refuse to repent and do God's will, we should not take it personally and give up, as if it is our fault. Even Jesus Christ did not convert everyone who heard Him teach and preach, although they could also see Him doing miracles firsthand!

Jesus spoke of those whose *"...heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them"* (Matt. 13:15). However, in the next verse He said, *"But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear"* (Matt. 13:16). Dear reader, which verse describes you? Are you receptive to the Word of God to the point that you will actually allow it to change the course of your entire life?

After Jesus spoke those words, He taught the parable of the sower to help us understand that if no fruit is produced, the fault is not in the faithful sower, but in the soil (Matt. 13:18-23). There is good soil out there; we just have to find it. Therefore, don't give up, and if you run into stubborn souls, just remember, they might not have been converted even if the Son of God Himself were teaching them and doing miracles in their presence.