


FOLLOWING AFTER SIGNS



DISCERNING GOD'S DIRECTION
IN A WORLD FULL OF SIGNS



By Pastor Vern Peltz

WORD OF LIFE MINISTRIES



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3640 County Rd 6 NW

Stanchfield, MN 55080



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By Pastor Vern Peltz

Introduction

This booklet is written as an outline to the teaching series of the same title. It was written for the purpose of giving a quick reference to the scriptures used in the series. It also contains the main points that were covered.

This material is not written to be a full description of the information in the series. To fully understand this booklet, you will also need the audio recordings.

I. Signs can be very helpful, as well as dangerous

- A.** Ex.: Maps.
 - B.** Ex.: Road signs that are in error.
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II. Types of signs in the world

A. Here is a brief listing of the many different types of signs people follow that are of this world's system. This first list is fairly benign.

1. Road Signs.
2. Maps.
3. Weather signs.
4. Seasonal signs.
5. Advertising signs.
6. Directional signs.
7. Etc.

B. This next list can be very dangerous to us spiritually.

1. Signs of Zodiac. (Luke 12:29)

Gr. 'Meteorize'. "To raise in mid-air, suspend, fluctuate, be anxious, or be carried about as meteors moved about with the currents, tossed up and down between hope and fear." (Dake)

The rebuke concerns the heathen who superstitiously seek guidance by meteors, planets, signs of the Zodiac and all the magic and witchcraft and traffic with demons in the name of astrology, etc. These are condemned

by scripture. Here Jesus is comparing the Israelites who are asking for a sign to the heathen. (Dake)

2. Divination. "The art of mystic insight or fortune-telling." (Dake)

Ex. 21:21; Deut. 18:9-14; Jer. 10:2; Dan. 1:20, 2:2, 10, 4:7; Acts 16:16; Luke 11:29

- Tarot Card Readers.
- Palm-Readers.
- Fortune Tellers.
- Tea-Leaf Readers.
- Psychics.
- Crystal Balls.
- Aura Sketches.
- Horoscopes and Astrographs.

3. Sorcery. Thayer Definition: 1) one who prepares or uses magical remedies.

Strong's Greek Dictionary: (a drug, that is, spell giving potion); a druggist ("pharmacist") or poisoner, that is, (by extension) a magician:—sorcerer.

Ex. 7:11; Deut. 18:10; Jer. 27:9-10; Daniel 2:2; Mal. 3:5; Rev. 9:21, 21:8, 22:15

4. Enchantments; Enchanter: Practice of Magical Arts; Magicians.

BROWN-DRIVER-BRIGGS' HEBREW DEFINITIONS (#3858 — "ENCHANTMENTS")

1) flame (of an angelic sword)

STRONG'S HEBREW AND GREEK DICTIONARIES (#3858)

From H3857; a blaze; also (from the idea of enwrapping) magic (as covert):—flaming, enchantment

BROWN-DRIVER-BRIGGS' HEBREW DEFINITIONS (H2748 — "MAGICIANS")

1) diviner, magician, astrologer

1a) engraver, writer (only in derivative sense of one possessed of occult knowledge)

STRONG'S HEBREW AND GREEK DICTIONARIES (#2748)

From the same as H2747; a horoscopist (as drawing magical lines or circles):—magician.

Ex. 7:11, 22; 8:7, 18; Lev. 19:26; Deut. 18:10; II Chron. 33:6; II Kings 17:17; 21:6; Isa. 19:3; 47:9, 12; Jer. 27:9; Daniel 1:20

- Cast a spell.
- Bewitch.
- "Enchantress" — "A sorceress; witch" (Webster)
- Charm, Charmer.

5. Observer of Times.

Lev. 19:26; Deut. 18:10; II Kings 21:6; II Chron. 33:6

- Soothsayer (Isa. 2:6; Dan. 2:27; 4:7; 5:7, 11; Micah 5:12)

- Fortuneteller, The Readers, (Tarot, Palm, Tea-leaf, Crystal Ball)
- Channelers, (Seances) Astrologists, (Horoscopes) Psychics, Aura
- Sketchers, Numerologists.

BROWN-DRIVER-BRIGGS' HEBREW DEFINITIONS (H6049)

1) (Piel) to make appear, produce, bring (clouds)

2) (Poel) to practise soothsaying, conjure

2a) to observe times, practice soothsaying or spiritism or magic or augury or witchcraft

2b) soothsayer, enchanter, sorceress, diviner, fortuneteller,

“Augury” — Webster Definition.

“The practice of divination from omens.”

“A formal ceremony conducted by an augur.”

“An omen; sign; portent; indication”

“Augur” — Webster Definition.

“In ancient Rome, any of a body of officials who interpreted omens as being favorable or unfavorable in connection with an undertaking.

“A fortune teller; prophet; soothsayer.”

“To foretell or prophesy from Omens.”

“To be an Omen.”

6. Witchcraft, Wizardry: “Properly to whisper a spell, that is, to enchant or practise magic:— sorcerer, (use) witch (-craft)”. (Strong’s Heb. Def.)

Ex. 22:18; Deut. 18:10-11; I Sam. 15:23; II Chron. 33:6; II Kings 9:22; Micah 5:12; Nahum 3:4; Gal. 5:19-21

7. Medium, Spiritist, Necromancer: “Divination by means of pretended communication with the dead.” (Dake)

Deut. 18:11; I Sam. 28; I Chron. 10:13; Isa. 8:19

8. Magic, Magician: “Any pretended (or genuine) supernatural art or practice.” (Dake)

Gen. 41:8, 24; Ex. 7:11, 22; 8:7, 18-19; 9:11; Dan. 1:20; 2:2, 10, 27; 4:7, 9; 5:11; Acts 19:19

9. Astrology, Astrologers: “Dividers of the heavens for the purpose of prophecy and divination or to make a horoscope. Astrology professes to discover certain connections between the position and movements of the planets (and stars) and events which occur on earth. From the rising and setting of the planets, their orbits and color predictions are made concerning human affairs affecting both nations and individuals.” (Dake)

Isa. 47:13; Dan. 1:20; 2:2, 27; 4:7; 5:7, 11, 15

10. Star Gazing: “Those who endeavor to tell the future by the relative position of the stars.” (Dake)

- In the same group as Astrology.

11. Prognostication, Prognosticators: It is in the grouping of Astrology and Star Gazing. It's gaining knowledge of what might occur within the month by the various positions and shapes of the moon." (Dake)

Isa. 47:13

12. Familiar Spirits: "The demon spirits who work with and help carry on the above practices. All who forsook God and sought help from these demons were to be destroyed (in the Old Testament)".

Lev. 19:31; 20:6; Deut. 18:11; I Sam. 28; II Kings 21:6; 23:24; I Chron. 10:13; II Chron. 33:6; Isa. 8:19; 19:3; 29:4

13. These types of things will likely be a part of the last days deception.

Matt. 24:24; II Thess. 2:8-12; I Tim. 4:1-8; Rev. 13; 16:13-16; 19:20

C. Concerning the second list. ('B' above) I'd like you to notice something. In God's opinion, these kinds of things are an "abomination" (KJV) or "detestable" (NIV) to him. (Deut. 18:12)

1. "Abomination"

BROWN-DRIVER-BRIGGS' HEBREW DEFINITIONS (H8441)

1) a disgusting thing, abomination, abominable

1a) in ritual sense (of unclean food, idols, mixed marriages)

1b) in ethical sense (of wickedness etc)

STRONG'S HEBREW AND GREEK DICTIONARIES

Properly something disgusting (morally), that is, (as noun) an abhorrence; especially idolatry or (concretely) an idol:—abominable (custom, thing), abomination.

2. "Detestable"

ZONDERVAN HEBREW TO ENGLISH DICTIONARY

Detestable thing; loathsome thing; abomination; abhors; repulsive.

*** These kinds of things go against the very fabric of God's being!!!

3. It was because of doing these things that God cast Canaan out of their land. (Deut. 18:12) And later he cast Israel out of their land for the very same reason. (II Kings 17) So the lesson for us is, if we want to lose God's Blessing and Favor, get involved with these things.

D. Here is a listing of other Worldly Signs that are not to be followed. Yet too often we make decisions, plans, and choices according to them.

1. Coincidences.

2. Happen-stance. (Webster — "Chance or accidental happening.")

3. Strange Occurrences.

4. Misfortunes.

5. Difficult Circumstances.

6. Easy Circumstances.

7. Aligning of Numbers.

8. Smells.
9. Emotions: Fear, Hate, Revenge, Anger, Etc.
10. Pictures in Nature.
11. Messages from Nature.

III. Old Testament vs. New Testament

A. Why did God use Signs so much in the Old Testament?

1. Because the general population did not have access to the Holy Spirit. There was no way for the average believer in God to personally access the Holy Spirit or God.
2. So God would use Prophets, Speak Audibly, Dreams, Visions, Angels and Signs to speak to and lead his people. With Moses, he'd speak face to face with him so he could communicate to him what was needed.

B. This is a good time to remember that when we look at the Old Testament, there are three things that happen to all Old Testament truths at the Cross:

- (1) They stop at the cross. They no longer apply in the New Testament.
 - Example: Sacrificing animals.
- (2) They come through the Cross, but they are changed. They do not carry the same meaning as in the Old Testament.
 - Example: The way the Holy Spirit works among believers.
- (3) They come through the cross unchanged.
 - Example: God created the Earth.

*** When something from the Old Testament is not dealt with in the New Testament, it can be assumed it is unchanged from the Old Testament. The reason the Holy Spirit does not address it in the New Testament is because nothing has changed.

C. When it comes to signs and how they apply to us in the New Testament, they have definitely changed from how they were viewed in the Old Testament. In a nutshell, here is how they were viewed in the Old Testament and how they are to be viewed in the New Testament.

1. In the Old Testament, Godly signs were used to give people direction. Signs were used to tell a person what God wanted and what was to be done next. The people looked for a sign so they could hear from God.
2. In the New Testament Godly signs are used in four ways.
 - a. The first way is to confirm the word as being true. In our time we hear from God by his Spirit, and the sign comes (generally later) to confirm the Word of the Lord we have already been told. (Mark 16:20)
 - b. Give God's approval on a person or something. (Acts 2:22; Heb. 2:4)

c. The third way is to give us a 'general picture' of what is coming in the future. However, it is very general and does not give us specific, personal guidance. We still need to hear from the Holy Spirit concerning it. (Matt. 24)

d. Get our attention and cause us to check in with God concerning something. (Luke 2:34; Acts 2:43; I Cor. 14:22; Matt. 24)

D. This is what causes so much confusion and error among New Testament Christians. Too often we think that God still uses signs to personally lead us. HE DOES NOT. That's why when we try to follow signs to find his will for our lives, everything becomes such a mess. Because God no longer leads people by using signs.

IV. Old Testament Hebrew definitions for signs

A. The word 'sign' or 'signs' is used 74 times in the Old Testament.

1. There are seven different Hebrew words used. I will give you the definition of the three that are used most often. The others I will list by their Strong's number and how often they are used.

2. We have already seen that God was totally against certain signs in the Old Testament. (He's also against them in the New Testament) These were the signs that are not from God or his kingdom. However, he was not totally against all signs in the Old Testament. In fact we will find that he used signs to lead his people.

3. God was against the signs that were demonic in inspiration or origin. He was not against the signs he used. We'll give examples later.

B. Definitions:

1. H226 — used 60 times.

BROWN-DRIVER-BRIGGS' HEBREW DEFINITIONS

1) sign, signal

1a) a distinguishing mark

1b) banner

1c) remembrance

1d) miraculous sign

1e) omen

1f) warning

2) token, ensign, standard, miracle, proof

STRONG'S HEBREW AND GREEK DICTIONARIES

Probably from H225 (in the sense of appearing); a signal (literally or figuratively), as a flag, beacon, monument, omen, prodigy, evidence, etc.:—mark, miracle, (en-) sign, token.

2. H4159 — used 8 times.

BROWN-DRIVER-BRIGGS' HEBREW DEFINITIONS

1) wonder, sign, miracle, portent

1a) wonder (as a special display of God's power)

1b) sign, token (of future event)

STRONG'S HEBREW AND GREEK DICTIONARIES

From H3302 in the sense of conspicuousness; a miracle; by implication a token or omen:—miracle, sign, wonder (-ed at).

3. H852 — used 3 times.

BROWN-DRIVER-BRIGGS' HEBREW DEFINITIONS

1) sign, miraculous signs, wonders

STRONG'S HEBREW AND GREEK DICTIONARIES

(Chaldee); corresponding to H226; a portent:—sign.

4. Words used 1 time each: H5251, H6725, H7560.

V. New Testament Greek definitions for signs

A. The words 'sign, signs, signify, signified, signifying' are used 55 times in the New Testament.

1. There are six different Greek words used. I will give you the definitions of the two that are used most often. The others I will list by their Strong's number and how often they are used.

B. Definitions:

1. G4592 — used 34 times.

THAYER'S GREEK DEFINITIONS

1) a sign, mark, token

1a) that by which a person or a thing is distinguished from others and is known

1b) a sign, prodigy, portent, i.e. an unusual occurrence, transcending the common course of nature

1b1) of signs portending remarkable events soon to happen

1b2) of miracles and wonders by which God authenticates the men sent by him, or by which men prove that the cause they are pleading is God's

STRONG'S HEBREW AND GREEK DICTIONARIES

Neuter of a presumed derivative of the base of G4591; an indication, especially ceremonially or supernaturally:—miracle, sign, token, wonder.

2. G4591 — used 22 times.

THAYER'S GREEK DEFINITIONS

- 1) to give a sign, to signify, indicate
- 2) to make known

STRONG'S HEBREW AND GREEK DICTIONARIES

From ση~μα sēma (a mark; of uncertain derivation); to indicate:—signify.

3. Other words: G3902 (1×), G1213 (3×), G1718 (1×), G1770 (1×).

C. Notice: The definitions in the O.T. and the N.T. are very similar, and often identical. So this word came through the cross relatively unchanged. However, how it happens in a believer's life differs greatly from the Old to New Testaments.

VI. Types of and application of signs in the scripture

A. As we go through this portion of the study, we'll find:

1. Signs are used differently in the Old Testament than in the New Testament.
2. There are signs for both Unbelievers and Believers.

B. We will try to mention it where the difference is obvious.

VII. Signs in the Old Testament

A. Signs in the Old Test. were for both the believer in God and the unbeliever. Below you will find just a few of the signs given in the Old Testament. The one I like the best applies to both. It is found in the following scriptures. Remember: for the most part, the gospels are actually Old Testament books. They record Jesus' life which was lived under Old Testament law. He fulfilled the Old Test. The New Cov. begins with the book of Acts.

"Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. He will eat curds and honey when he knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right."

Isa. 7:14-15 (NIV)

"This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Luke 2:12 (NIV)

“Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”

Luke 2:34-35 (NIV)

As we can see in these verses, a ‘Godly Sign’ was not a bad thing in the Old Testament. Remember, most of the Old Test. signs were given to REVEAL God’s will.

B. Let’s look at some Old Testament signs.

1. Sun, moon, and stars as signs. (Gen. 1:14)

“And God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years.”

Gen. 1:14 (NIV)

a. Notice: the sun, moon, and stars were given to act as signs for man. But also pay attention what the signs were to mark — seasons, days, and years. They were not given for the Signs of Zodiac so that a human would follow them for direction in the choices of life.

b. The Star of Bethlehem is an example of this. It gave a general sign of a season. But it gave no indication what people were supposed to do. The wise men made the choice to go find the newborn king. They were not told to do so.

2. Moses and the signs for Egypt.

Ex. 4:1-5 — The Rod to a snake.

Ex. 4:6-9a — Leprous hand.

Ex. 4:9b — Water poured on ground becomes blood.

Ex. 4:28-31 — Moses tells of and shows the signs.

Ex. 7:3; 10:1-2 — Purpose of the signs. So they would know God is the Lord.

Ex. 7—11 — Many different signs.

3. Gideon and the angel of the Lord. (Judg. 6:11-23)

a. The sign was a confirmation that it was a message from the Lord.

4. Gideon and the fleeces. (Judg. 6:36-40)

a. The sign was another confirmation of what he already knew.

5. Abraham’s servant and finding Rebekah. (Gen. 24:12-21)

a. He asked the Lord for a sign to find the right girl.

6. The signs concerning Saul as king and changing his heart. (I Sam. 10:1-9)

7. Urim and the Thumim on the Breastplate and Ephod.

a. Ex. 28:30; Lev. 8:8; Num. 27:21; Deut. 33:8; I Sam. 28:6; Ezra 2:63; Neh. 7:65.

- b. The lighting of a gem on the breastplate would tell them what to do. It was their sign.
 - 8. Jonathan and his armor bearer kill the Philistines. (I Sam. 14:6-15)
 - a. The sign was a phrase the Philistines would say.
 - 9. The sign that Jeroboam's prophecy was of God. (I Kings 13:1-5)
 - 10. The Sabbaths were given as a sign to the Israelites. (Ezek. 20:12, 20)
 - 11. The Holy Spirit signified to the Prophets concerning the coming Christ. (I Pet. 1:11)
 - 12. The Holy Spirit signified the way into the intimate presence of God was not yet open. Even though it's stated in the N.T. — it happened in the O.T. (Heb. 9:8)
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VIII. Signs in the New Testament

A. Signs in the New Test. were for both the believer in God and the unbeliever. Below you will find just a few of the signs given in the New Testament.

Remember, signs in the New Test. WERE NOT GIVEN TO REVEAL God's will. THEY WERE GIVEN TO (1) CONFIRM GOD'S WILL AND THE WORD, or (2) show the general information about a thing that God was going to do, (3) get man's attention so we check in with God, and (4) give God's approval on a person or thing. There is a huge difference in how Signs are used.

We are going to give some signs out of the gospels, even though in reality the gospel time period was under the Old Testament Law. Jesus was fulfilling the Old Covenant Law while he was revealing what the New Covenant would operate like. Remember, the New Covenant doesn't contradict the Old Covenant. It simply changes the agreement between God and man from one that operated under Law, to one that operates by Grace.

So as you read through the gospels, realize some things fulfill the Old Covenant. Where others set the stage for the New Covenant. I will pick signs that were not only true in Jesus' day, but set the stage and are also true in the New Testament Church's day. (Our Day)

B. The first thing I'd like you to notice is the change Jesus makes concerning signs. He's in process of changing the people's thinking to a new way of being led — NOT BY SIGNS, but BY THE HOLY SPIRIT.

- 1. Jesus rebukes those seeking signs. (Matt. 12:38-39)

"Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. 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. 12:38-39 (KJV) (cf. Matt. 16:1-4)

2. Jesus is beginning to turn them away from seeking signs. Even though he is stating that HE would be a sign to them. (Fulfilling Old Test. Prophecy: Luke 2:34. John 2:18-19 also deals with him being a sign.)
3. Under the New Covenant, seeking after signs proves we are an evil and adulterous generation.

C. Let's look at some New Testament signs.

1. Signs of the End of this Age. (Matt. 24:14; Mark 13:22; Luke 21:11, 25; Acts 2:17-20)
 - a. Notice: nothing is said in these passages of how we're to find God's will for our personal lives. These are not signs that give direction for our personal lives. They speak of general things coming in the future.
2. Signs of False Christs and False Prophets. (Matt. 7:13-20; 24:24; Mark 13:22)
3. Signs of Apostles. (II Cor. 12:12)
4. Signs following believers. (Mark 16:17-18)
5. Paul refuses to give a sign. (I Cor. 1:22)
6. Tongues are a sign to the unbeliever. (I Cor. 14:22)
7. The sign of the seven angels with the last plagues. (Rev. 15:1)
8. Signs confirming the Word. (Mark 16:20)
9. Jesus upset they wouldn't believe without signs. (John 4:48)
10. Jesus did many signs. (John 20:30)
11. Jesus' ministry was approved of God by signs. (Acts 2:22; Heb. 2:4)
12. Signs were done by the apostles confirming the word. (Acts 2:43; 4:30; 5:12; 8:13; 14:3; Rom. 15:19; II Cor. 12:12)
13. Anti-Christ will come with signs. (II Thess. 2:9)
14. Jesus signified what death he would die. (John 12:33; 18:32; 21:19)
15. Signs given by the Holy Spirit and an Angel to show what was coming in the future. (Acts 11:28; Rev. 1:1)
16. Trying to pick an apostle to replace Judas via the old method of signs. (Acts 1:26)

D. Some things we must notice here.

1. Notice the absence of personal direction and guidance via signs. God no longer leads his people that way in the New Testament. The one time the disciples tried it in Acts 1, they totally missed God. Matthias was never heard from again. The one that was to replace Judas was Paul. (I Cor. 15:7-9) But because they didn't understand at that time, how they were to wait for the Holy Spirit to be given so they could be led by him, they did it the old way (FOLLOWING SIGNS) and totally missed the will of God.
2. When God does use a sign in the N.T., it's to do four things:
 - a. Confirm the word.
 - b. Give God's approval on a person or something.

c. Give general information about what is coming in the future. But it's not enough for a person to be able to make specific, personal decisions. We must still hear from the Spirit.

d. Get our attention so we pay closer attention to God.

*** This is true for both the believer and the unbeliever.

3. The Ungodly signs spoken of in the N.T. do the same things they did in the Old Testament: Deceive People.

IX. What is the New Testament way of receiving God's direction?

A. There are basically TWO AVENUES.

1. By the WORD/SCRIPTURE.

a. Which also needs the help of the Spirit. The word must be revealed to us by the Holy Spirit or we won't understand it.

b. I Cor. 2:6-16; I John 2:20-27 (cf. Luke 4:18-19); John 14:26; 15:26; 16:14; II Cor. 3:6; II Tim. 3:16.

2. By the HOLY SPIRIT. He has been given to Lead us, Teach us, Guide us, Show us things to come, Correct us, Convict us, Speak to us, Etc.

a. John 14:15-20, 25-27; 16:5-16; I Cor. 2:6-16; I John 2:20-27.

B. We are led in the New Testament by the Holy Spirit. NOT SIGNS. We're to be like Jesus. He was led by the Holy Spirit.

1. Matt. 3:16—4:1; Mark 1:9-12; Luke 4:1, 18-19.

C. The Lord will also use Angels, Visions, Dreams, Prophecies, etc. But they do not give the complete picture/message of what God is desiring. So we still need to seek God and hear from the Holy Spirit. Nor are they as consistent as the voice of the Holy Spirit, or the Revelation from the Word.

X. Caution: let's not fall into tradition, religion, and error

God is balanced. He walks down the middle of the narrow road.

Satan is very off-balance. He tries to get us into extremes. (the ditches and the wide road)

Every spiritual movement of God can get pushed off into its own little traditions, extremes, religion, and error. That includes Pentecostal, Charismatic, Faith, Full-Gospel, etc. If the devil can't cause us to go into unbelief, he'll try to stop us by pushing us into an extreme.

A. Below are listed a few of the ‘Signs’ we tend to follow. In themselves there is nothing wrong with them. They are of God, but when pushed to an extreme, they become wrong.

1. Falling Under the Power of the Spirit.
2. Exalting certain men or women.
3. Bible Roulette.
4. Personal Prophecies or Words via a person.
5. Glory Dust, Angels, Breezes, Gems, Oil, Fire, Glory Light or Fog/Mist, and various other manifestations of the Spirit.
6. Laughter, Drunk in the Spirit.
7. Sensing Demonic Activity.
8. Visions and Dreams.
 - I place Visions and Dreams under signs for two reasons:
 - (a) Even in the New Testament, by themselves they typically do not give all the information needed to know what God is really saying. We still need further explanation and direction by the Holy Spirit.
 - (b) Does God speak to us by Visions and Dreams? Absolutely. But they are a support tool that the Holy Spirit will use. They are not a primary method of communication like the Word, or the Voice of the Holy Spirit.
 - I am a Dreamer. God uses Dreams a lot in my life to speak to me. From my perspective, Visions and Dreams fall under the 3rd and 4th reasons that God will use a sign. (See III.C.2 above)
 - (Reason #3 — see III.C.2 above) To give us a ‘general picture’ of what is coming in the future. However, it is very general and does not give us Specific, personal guidance. We still need to hear from the Holy Spirit concerning it. (Matt. 24)
 - (Reason #4 — see III.C.2 above) Get our attention and cause us to check in with God concerning something. (Luke 2:34; Acts 2:43; I Cor. 14:22; Matt. 24)
9. Any Godly supernatural manifestation.

B. All of the above list (except #2 & #3) are tools that God uses. BUT LET’S KEEP THEM JUST THAT — TOOLS. They are not signs for us to follow.

We are to follow Jesus, Via the Holy Spirit, Via our Spirit. THAT IS OUR PRIMARY METHOD OF BEING LED BY THE LORD. God may use things in conjunction with that. But IT MUST BE IN CONJUNCTION WITH where he’s leading us in our spirits. Otherwise we are leaving ourselves wide-open and very susceptible to deception.

C. I would specifically like to take a brief look at Personal Prophecies. The reason I’m doing this is because it became such a huge thing in the 1980’s & 90’s, and I watched so many people be led astray by them.

Before I make my point let me say that I am 100% a believer in Personal Prophecies. I have received them and given them. The ones that were accurate

made a huge difference in my life. The ones that were 'Off' did me great damage. However, I'm not against them.

My concern is that they become a sign that we begin seeking after. When we are not hearing from God, we may begin seeking for a Personal Word of Prophecy. Once we get one, we begin living our life according to it and it becomes our guide. We're to be seeking Jesus. Not signs. Seeking for a personal word for guidance is no different than Saul seeking the Witch of Endor so he could find out what God wanted him to do when he wasn't hearing from God. (1 Sam. 28) If we seek a sign, we'll get one just like Saul did. But it may not be a sign or true message from God. Whether it was actually Samuel or his familiar spirit, we don't know. But this much we do know, It Was Not God's Will For Saul To Get Information This Way. It Had Been Forbidden.

Jesus made it plain that an adulterous and wicked generation seeks after a sign. (Matt. 12:38-39)

God will use personal words to confirm something we already know. Or give us bits and pieces of information about something we already know, but we must be cautious not to turn them into signs that we seek after.

Let's look at some Personal words in the New Testament.

1. Paul and Ananias. (Acts 9:1-19)

- a. The first point we notice is that Paul was not looking for a Personal Word from the Lord. In fact he felt he already knew.
- b. V. 4-6 — Paul literally gets a personal word from Jesus himself. He hears him speak to him in an audible voice. He was told that in Damascus he would be told what he will do.
- c. V. 10-16 — Ananias receives his direction from God via a Vision. Again there is no indication Ananias was seeking one. There are a few things here that are very interesting. God told Ananias a lot more than he told Paul. (Saul) God told Ananias the big picture of what Paul's life would look like. There is no record that Ananias told that to Paul.
- d. V. 12 — We know that God was also speaking to Paul during these 3 days. Because it says that he had seen Ananias coming to him in a vision. Did God tell Paul more during these 3 days? The reason I bring that up is because when we get to chapter 13:2, 47 — Paul already knows what he is to do. So some place between here and there Paul hears what God is asking of him.
- e. V. 17 — The only reasons Ananias gave for coming to Paul were (1) for Paul to receive his sight, and (2) that Paul would be filled with the Holy Spirit. There is no indication Ananias gave him a personal word. Paul learned of the things in v. 15-16 in a different way.
- f. It's important to see because Ananias is usually credited for giving Paul the information about the Gentiles, Kings, etc. via a personal word from the Lord. There is nothing that indicates Ananias gave him that information.

2. Paul and Barnabas. (Acts 13:2)

- a. The Holy Spirit obviously said something to someone. Did it come out as a Prophecy of some type — like so many believe? It doesn't say.
- b. Notice: combine the end of verse 2 with v. 47. In verse 2, they already knew the info. of v. 47. God states that in v. 2. So the direction given by the Holy Spirit in v. 2 was not the revelation of 'WHAT' they were to do, but rather 'NOW' is the time.

3. Paul and the Macedonian vision. (Acts 16:6-10) (This is a sign, not a personal word)

- a. Paul was following the Holy Spirit as where they were to go. (v. 6-7)
- b. God gave Paul a vision showing him where to go. (v. 9-10) This vision was a sign that gave Paul some details on what he was already pursuing.
- c. Other signs Paul received: Acts 16:25-36 (The Earthquake); 18:9-10 (Another Vision).

4. THIS IS VERY INTERESTING AND MUST BE UNDERSTOOD!! Paul's journey back to Jerusalem before his arrest. Here is an example of personal words being in conflict with the will of the Lord. (Or God is confused??? — Which we know he's not.)

- a. This is important enough I will give the scriptures.

"And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again."

Acts 20:22-23, 25

"We landed at Tyre, where our ship was to unload its cargo. Finding the disciples there, we stayed with them seven days. Through the Spirit they urged Paul not to go on to Jerusalem."

Acts 21:4

"Leaving the next day, we reached Caesarea and stayed at the house of Philip the evangelist, one of the Seven. He had four unmarried daughters who prophesied. After we had been there a number of days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. Coming over to us, he took Paul's belt, tied his own hands and feet with it and said, 'The Holy Spirit says, 'In this way the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.'" When we heard this, we and the people there pleaded with Paul not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, "Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." When he would not be dissuaded, we gave up and said, "The Lord's will be done."

Acts 21:8-14

b. The point here is that Paul knew from the beginning of his ministry that he was to go before Kings. In Acts 20:22 Paul says it is the Holy Spirit who is compelling him to go to Jerusalem. He didn't know it yet, but this was going to be the fulfillment of what he was told about going before Kings. Now here is where the problems begin. The Holy Spirit is warning Paul that prison and hardships are coming. (20:23, 25) In my opinion, the people began injecting their opinions and interpretations into what the Holy Spirit was really saying. (21:4) They were giving the Holy Spirit the credit for these words to Paul, but the problem is they are contradicting what Paul already had been told by the Holy Spirit. (Is the Holy Spirit confused???) Why is this important? Because it happens with Christians all the time. We hear something from God, and rather than take it at face value, or seek more direction, we interpret what we think it means and totally miss God. That's what they were doing. They didn't like the message that was being given, so they tried to re-interpret it. **THEY WERE WRONG, AND IT WASN'T THE HOLY SPIRIT SPEAKING THROUGH THEM.**

A huge lesson that we need to learn here is this: when the Spirit speaks to us, (esp. through a personal word via another person) what did he **ACTUALLY** say? And then rather than trying to interpret it, or add to it, or subtract from it — go with what he said. If it's not clear, seek **GOD** (Not Man) for more direction.

c. The prophecy by Agabus was very accurate. (21:10-11) This is what was going to happen to Paul. And this type of warning is what Paul must have been referring to when he said the Spirit is warning him of prison and hardships in every city as he travels back to Jerusalem. (20:23)

But here again, notice what the people did with an accurate word from the Lord. They mis-interpreted it. They tried to talk him out of what the Holy Spirit was telling him to do. (21:12) Why would they do that when the Holy Spirit had just spoken, and Paul already knew what his mission was?

These are excellent examples of how personal words from the Lord can be right on, or totally mess us up. We'll get messed up if we read into, or mis-interpret what the Holy Spirit is trying to say through someone. That's why **WE MUST BE THE FIRST ONE TO HEAR FROM GOD. (BY OURSELVES) THEN THE WORDS MAY COME TO CONFIRM OR GIVE MORE INFORMATION.** That approach is much more accurate than taking a word or prophecy given via someone as the **FIRST** (and sometimes the only) direction we receive from God.

Conclusion

God's desire is to lead each of us by his Spirit. He wants to be our guide and teacher via the voice of his Spirit.

It's one of the major points he covers in the Jeremiah prophecy of the coming New Covenant.

"The time is coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the LORD. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."

Jer. 31:31-34 (NIV)

We are living in that Covenant. What an Honor and Privilege to have God living on the inside of us, and speaking to us on an ongoing basis.

Why Would I Want to Look for some created Sign when I can talk directly to the Creator?

Godly signs are good. But pay close attention that you don't read into, or misinterpret them. And remember: they are NEVER to be the sole source of your hearing God's voice or leading in the New Testament.

Godly signs in the New Testament do four things:

- a. To confirm the word as being true. In our time we hear from God by his Spirit, and the sign comes (generally later) to confirm the Word of the Lord we have already been told. (Mark 16:20)
- b. Give God's approval on a person or something. (Acts 2:22; Heb. 2:4)
- c. To give us a 'general picture' of what is coming in the future. However, it is very general and does not give us specific, personal guidance. We still need to hear from the Holy Spirit concerning it. (Matt. 24)
- d. Get our attention and cause us to check in with God concerning something. (Luke 2:34; Acts 2:43; I Cor. 14:22; Matt. 24)

*** This is true for both the believer and the unbeliever.

Before we ever look to or depend on a sign — HEAR THE VOICE OF THE SPIRIT FOR YOURSELF. THAT'S THE NEW TESTAMENT WAY.