

to the law as handed down in the traditions of the elders, and well acquainted with their ancient prophecies, were now fully expecting that the long foretold son of David would soon show himself. They abhorred the rule of the Idumæan, Herod ; and had Jesus been in a situation to seize at once on the government, probably they would have supported him with their whole power ; hoping to rule by his means, as they had already done under some of the Asmonæan princes. But the poor Carpenter was too contemptible a leader ; and they feared nevertheless, that the people might make some mad outbreak which would draw on them the Roman arms. Hence the endeavor to hush the matter up, when any supernatural work of the new preacher created enthusiasm among the people : hence the unwillingness to believe in his prophetic mission even : hence the stern resolution to cut him off, lest he should be the remote cause of their losing that independence which he could not assist them in preserving. The general belief in prodigies ; in the influence of evil spirits ; in magic ; and other superstitions, prevented the miraculous acts of Christ from being thoroughly convincing. Those who *wished* to disregard his Divine Mission could easily satisfy their own minds by concluding him to be a skilful magician ; and it was only among the common people, whose straight forward reasoning went no farther than “whereas I was blind, now I see ;” and “if this man were not of God he could do nothing ;”^{*} that he found a hearing. “Have any of the rulers or Pharisees believed on him ?”[†] was the triumphant question of the Jewish authorities, when their

* John ix. 25-33.

† John vii. 48.