

Acts 4:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.

Analysis

Peter and John's response - 'Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye' - appeals to the council's own conscience while asserting divine authority's supremacy. The Greek 'akouo' (hearken) implies obedient listening. This rhetorical question forces them to acknowledge their command's unrighteousness. The phrase 'in the sight of God' invokes ultimate judgment, before which their earthly authority means nothing.

Historical Context

This statement echoes Socrates' declaration that he must obey the divine voice despite Athenian prohibition. Peter's argument followed Jewish tradition prioritizing divine over human authority (Daniel 3:16-18, 6:10). The apostles modeled principled civil disobedience that would characterize church history when gospel and state conflict.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does appealing to opponents' conscience ('judge ye') serve gospel witness even when they reject it?
2. What principles guide Christian civil disobedience - when is it required, when prohibited?

Interlinear Text

ο	δὲ	Πέτρος	καὶ	Ἰωάννης	ἀποκριθέντες	πρὸς	αὐτούς
G3588	But	Peter	and	John	answered	unto	them
G1161	G4074	G2532	G2491	G611	G4314	G846	
εἰπον	Εἰ	δίκαιον	ἐστιν	ἐνώπιον	τοῦ	θεοῦ	ὑμῶν
and said	Whether	right	it be	in the sight	G3588	of God	unto you
G2036	G1487	G1342	G2076	G1799	G2316	G5216	
ἀκούειν	μᾶλλον	ἢ	τοῦ	θεοῦ	κρίνατε		
to hearken	more than	G2228	G3588	of God	judge ye		
G191	G3123		G2316	G2919			

Additional Cross-References

Acts 5:29 (References God): Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

Exodus 1:17 (References God): But the midwives feared God, and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men children alive.

1 Corinthians 10:15 (Judgment): I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say.

1 Timothy 2:3 (References God): For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;

Daniel 3:18 (References God): But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

Matthew 22:21 (References God): They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.

John 7:24 (Judgment): Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.

1 Kings 22:14 (Parallel theme): And Micaiah said, As the LORD liveth, what the LORD saith unto me, that will I speak.

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