

Luke 12:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me.

Analysis

And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me—This verse introduces an abrupt interruption, shifting from Jesus' teaching on persecution to a request for arbitration in a family dispute. The petitioner addresses Jesus as didaskale (διδάσκαλε, Master/Teacher), recognizing His authority, but his request reveals misunderstanding of Jesus' mission. He asks Jesus to speak to my brother (εἰπε τῷ ἀδελφῷ μου) to divide the inheritance (μερίσασθαι τὴν κληρονομίαν)—a legal matter regarding estate division.

Rabbinic teachers commonly arbitrated such disputes, applying Mosaic inheritance laws (Numbers 27:8-11, Deuteronomy 21:15-17). The petitioner likely felt wronged, perhaps as a younger son receiving less than the firstborn's double portion. His timing is remarkable—interrupting Jesus' discourse on persecution and the Holy Spirit to demand earthly justice. The request exposes how easily people miss Jesus' true purpose, treating Him as a means to material ends rather than the Savior from sin. This man wanted Jesus to solve his financial problem, not his spiritual problem.

Historical Context

Inheritance disputes were common in first-century Palestine, where land was the primary form of wealth and its division among heirs crucial for family survival. Mosaic law provided clear guidelines: the firstborn son received a double portion

(Deuteronomy 21:17), with remaining property divided among other sons (daughters inherited only if no sons existed). Disputes arose when families disagreed on property valuation, boundaries, or special circumstances. Rabbis regularly served as mediators, applying legal principles to specific cases. The petitioner's expectation that Jesus would intervene suggests Jesus' growing reputation as a teacher of Moses' law. His refusal would have been surprising and perhaps offensive to those viewing Him merely as another rabbi. This incident parallels Moses' experience arbitrating disputes (Exodus 18:13-27), though Jesus' response differs radically from Moses' willingness to judge.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. What does this man's interruption of Jesus' teaching about persecution with a question about inheritance reveal about misplaced priorities?
2. How do contemporary Christians sometimes treat Jesus as a means to material ends rather than worshiping Him as Lord?
3. What is the difference between bringing legitimate needs to God and demanding He serve our material agenda?

Interlinear Text

εἰπὲ δέ τις αὐτῷ ἐκ τοῦ ὄχλου Διδάσκαλε εἰπὲ
said And one unto him of the company Master said
G2036 G1161 G5100 G846 G1537 G3588 G3793 G1320 G2036

τῷ ἀδελφῷ μονού μερίσασθαι μετ' ἐμοῦ τὴν κληρονομίαν
G3588 brother to my that he divide with me G3588 G1700 G2817
G80 G3450 G3307 G3326 G1700

Additional Cross-References

1 Timothy 6:5 (Parallel theme): Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.

Luke 6:45 (Parallel theme): A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.

Ezekiel 33:31 (Parallel theme): And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness.