

Luke 12:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God.

Analysis

But he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God—This verse completes the warning begun in verse 8 about public confession and denial of Christ. The verb arneomai (ἀρνησάμενος, denieth) means to disown, reject, or repudiate—not merely remaining silent but actively denying relationship with Christ. The passive construction shall be denied (ἀπαρνηθήσεται) indicates divine action—Christ Himself will disown those who disowned Him.

The setting before the angels of God (ἐνώπιον τῶν ἀγγέλων τοῦ θεοῦ) situates this denial in the final judgment scene, where angels witness Christ's verdict on each person (cf. Matthew 25:31, 2 Thessalonians 1:7, Revelation 14:10). This sobering warning addresses those who, to save their lives or reputations, deny knowing Christ when challenged. Peter's threefold denial (Luke 22:54-62) exemplifies this sin, though his subsequent repentance demonstrated that even deniers can be restored through genuine contrition. The unrepentant denier, however, faces eternal exclusion from God's kingdom.

Historical Context

First-century disciples faced intense pressure to deny Christ during persecution. Roman authorities typically offered accused Christians opportunity to recant by offering incense to Caesar's image or cursing Christ. Those who refused faced execution; those who complied were released. Many believers wrestled with this choice—was temporary denial permissible to preserve life for future service? Jesus'

teaching offers no such loophole. Public denial of Christ demonstrates that one never truly belonged to Him (1 John 2:19). Early church practice varied—some bishops like Cyprian fled persecution to continue ministry, while others like Polycarp chose martyrdom. Debate raged over whether apostates (those who denied Christ under pressure) could be restored to fellowship. Jesus' warning emphasizes that denial has eternal consequences, though His treatment of Peter shows mercy remains available for the repentant.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. What forms of denying Christ exist beyond verbal denial—through lifestyle, silence, or compromise?
2. How does Christ's denial of deniers before angels demonstrate the perfect justice of final judgment?
3. What is the difference between Peter's denial (followed by repentance) and Judas's betrayal (followed by despair)?

Interlinear Text

ο	δε	ἀρνησάμενός	με	ἐνώπιον	τῶν	ἀνθρώπων
G3588	But	he that denieth	me	before	G3588	men
G1161		G720	G3165	G1799		G444

ἀπαρνηθήσεται	ἐνώπιον	τῶν	ἀγγέλων	τοῦ	θεοῦ
shall be denied	before	G3588	the angels	G3588	of God
G533	G1799		G32		G2316

Additional Cross-References

2 Timothy 2:12 (Parallel theme): If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us:

Mark 8:38 (Parallel theme): Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

Luke 9:26 (Parallel theme): For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels.

Matthew 10:33 (Parallel theme): But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.

Revelation 3:8 (Parallel theme): I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

Matthew 7:23 (Parallel theme): And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

1 John 2:23 (Parallel theme): Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: (but) he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.

Matthew 25:12 (Parallel theme): But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.