

Luke 20:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say,
From heaven; he will say, Why then believed ye him not?

Analysis

If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why then believed ye him not? The leaders' private deliberation (συνελογίσαντο, synelogisanto, "they reasoned together") reveals political calculation, not pursuit of truth. They recognize the logical trap: acknowledging John's divine commission requires explaining why they rejected his ministry and refused his baptism of repentance.

The phrase "believed ye him not" (οὐκ ἐπίστεύσατε, *ouk episteusate*) exposes the heart issue. Belief (πιστεύω, *pisteuō*) means trust, commitment, acceptance—not mere intellectual acknowledgment. They didn't believe John because accepting his message would require repentance, and repentance would mean admitting their religious system needed fundamental reform. Their rejection of John wasn't theological but moral—they loved their position more than truth. This same resistance now blinds them to Jesus, whom John testified about.

Historical Context

Luke 7:29-30 records that "all the people that heard [John], and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him." The religious establishment's rejection of John was deliberate and public. They couldn't now claim he was God's prophet without admitting they'd rejected God's messenger—an intolerable admission for those claiming to represent God's authority on earth.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does political calculation about religious truth reveal a heart that has already rejected God?
2. What does the leaders' reasoning process teach about the difference between seeking truth and protecting position?
3. In what ways do believers today sometimes reject clear divine authority because accepting it would require uncomfortable change?

Interlinear Text

οἱ	δὲ	συνελογίσαντο	πρὸς	ἑαυτούς,	λέγοντες,	ὅτι	Ἐὰν
G3588	And	they reasoned	with	themselves	saying	G3754	If
	G1161	G4817	G4314	G1438	G3004		G1437
εἰπωμεν	Ἐξ	οὐρανοῦ,	ἐρεῖ	Διατί	οὖν	οὐκ	
we shall say	From	heaven	he will say	Why	then	not	
G2036	G1537	G3772	G2046	G1302	G3767	G3756	
ἐπιστεύσατε	αὐτῷ;						
believed ye	him						
G4100	G846						