

Luke 20:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But and if we say, Of men; all the people will stone us: for they be persuaded that John was a prophet.

Analysis

But and if we say, Of men; all the people will stone us: for they be persuaded that John was a prophet—The leaders fear popular opinion (οἱ λαοὶ ἄπιας, ho laos hapas, "all the people") more than God's truth. The threat of stoning (καταλιθάσει, katalithasei) wasn't hyperbole—crowds could become violent mobs. The people were "persuaded" (πεπεισμένος, pepeismenos, convinced, confident) of John's prophetic status based on his ministry's evident marks: powerful preaching, ascetic lifestyle, fulfillment of prophecy, and martyrdom.

This verse exposes tragic irony: religious leaders who should discern God's voice are paralyzed by fear of crowds, while common people recognize the prophet the experts reject. Their concern isn't "What is true?" but "What is safe?" They're trapped between truth and convenience, unable to acknowledge either option. This reveals how institutional religion can become self-preserving rather than truth-seeking. When leaders value position over truth, they forfeit the authority they claim to protect.

Historical Context

Public opinion held significant power in first-century Judea. The Sanhedrin needed popular support to maintain authority under Roman occupation. The people's reverence for John stemmed from prophet-hunger—no widely recognized prophet had arisen in 400 years since Malachi. John's appearance, message, and lifestyle evoked Elijah, and his execution by Herod made him a martyr. The crowds who

heard Jesus teach included many who had been baptized by John and accepted his testimony about Jesus as the Coming One.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does fear of popular opinion compromise religious leaders' ability to speak truth?
2. What does the contrast between the people's recognition of John and the leaders' rejection teach about spiritual discernment?
3. In what ways do church leaders today sometimes prioritize institutional preservation over prophetic truth-telling?

Interlinear Text

ἐὰν δὲ εἴπωμεν Ἐξ ἀνθρώπων πᾶς ὁ λαὸς
if But and we say Of men all G3588 the people
G1437 G1161 G2036 G1537 G444 G3956 G2992

καταλιθάσει ἡμᾶς πεπεισμένος γάρ ἐστιν Ἰωάννην
will stone us persuaded for they be that John
G2642 G2248 G3982 G1063 G2076 G2491

προφήτην εἶναι
a prophet was
G4396 G1511

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 21:26 (Prophecy): But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet.

Matthew 11:9 (Prophecy): But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet.

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