

# 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

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**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 (ὁ λαὸς ἅπας, 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

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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

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**Psalm 19:1** — Heavens declare God's glory

**Colossians 1:16** — All things created through Christ

## Study Questions

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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

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ἐὰν	δὲ	εἵπωμεν	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

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**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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