

Luke 22:24

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.

Analysis

Shockingly, moments after discussing who would betray Jesus, **there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest** (φιλονεικία, philoneikia—love of strife, contention). The Greek indicates this was no mere disagreement but competitive rivalry for status. The disciples' self-focus in Christ's darkest hour exposes the depth of human pride and spiritual blindness.

Luke uniquely places this dispute at the Last Supper (Matthew and Mark record similar incidents earlier), emphasizing the disciples' persistent failure to grasp Jesus's kingdom values even after years of teaching. The contrast is devastating: Jesus about to die as a servant, disciples arguing about greatness. This scene reveals why the cross was necessary—even the best human hearts default to self-exaltation.

Historical Context

Greco-Roman culture was intensely honor-focused, with elaborate social hierarchies and competition for status. Even Jesus's inner circle absorbed these values. They likely debated who would have the highest positions in the messianic kingdom they expected Jesus to establish. Reclining positions at meals indicated social rank, potentially triggering this dispute.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How do worldly definitions of greatness and success subtly infiltrate your thinking even in spiritual contexts?
2. What does the timing of this dispute reveal about the persistence of pride in the human heart?
3. In what areas of Christian ministry or service might competition for recognition replace genuine humility?

Interlinear Text

Ἐγένετο	δὲ	καὶ	φιλονεικία	ἐν	αὐτῶν	τὸ	τίς
there was	And	also	a strife	among	of them	G3588	which
G1096	G1161	G2532	G5379	G1722	G846		G5101
αὐτῶν	δοκεῖ	εἶναι	μείζων				
of them	should be accounted	G1511	the greatest				
G846	G1380		G3187				

Additional Cross-References

Luke 9:46 (Parallel theme): Then there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest.

Mark 9:34 (Parallel theme): But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest.