

Luke 3:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him,
Master, what shall we do?

Analysis

That 'publicans also came to be baptized' demonstrates the gospel's reach to despised sinners. Tax collectors, considered traitors collaborating with Rome and known for extortion, seeking baptism shows that no one is beyond God's grace. Their coming 'also' (Greek 'kai') indicates they joined the general multitudes, showing the gospel creates community transcending social barriers. Their question (v12) shows awareness of their specific sins and need for particular guidance. The inclusion of publicans foreshadows Jesus's ministry among sinners (Luke 5:27-32; 15:1-2; 19:1-10) and demonstrates that conviction of sin overcomes social stigma to seek repentance.

Historical Context

Jewish tax collectors (publicans) were despised as traitors working for Rome and notorious for extortion and corruption. That they sought baptism despite public shame demonstrates powerful conviction. Their inclusion among the repentant challenged Jewish exclusivism and social hierarchies.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. What does the publicans' seeking baptism teach about who can receive God's grace?
2. How does the gospel break down social barriers and unite diverse people?
3. Why is recognizing one's specific sins important in genuine repentance?

Interlinear Text

ἦλθον	δὲ	καὶ	τελῶναι	βαπτισθῆναι	καὶ	εἶπον	πρὸς
came	Then	also	publicans	to be baptized	also	said	unto
G2064	G1161	G2532	G5057	G907	G2532	G2036	G4314

αὐτόν	Διδάσκαλε	τί	ποιήσομεν
him	Master	what	shall we do
G846	G1320	G5101	G4160

Additional Cross-References

Luke 7:29 (Baptism): And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John.