

Luke 7:24

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And when the messengers of John were departed, he began to speak unto the people concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? A reed shaken with the wind?

Analysis

Jesus's rhetorical questions about John defend his forerunner's character: 'What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? A reed shaken with the wind?' The reed (Greek 'kalamon') symbolizes weakness and vacillation—swaying with every breeze of opinion. John was anything but—his uncompromising preaching offended both religious leaders and political authorities. The question 'A man clothed in soft raiment?' contrasts John's rough camel-hair garment with royal luxury. John lived ascetically, not seeking comfort or patronage. Reformed theology values prophetic boldness that speaks truth regardless of consequences. Jeremiah was called to be 'a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brasen walls' (Jeremiah 1:18). True ministers prioritize divine approval over human applause.

Historical Context

John's imprisonment raised questions about his ministry. Some wondered if his harsh treatment indicated God's displeasure. Jesus's defense vindicated John—his suffering resulted from faithfulness, not failure. Herod imprisoned John for denouncing his unlawful marriage (Luke 3:19-20). John could have avoided persecution through silence or compromise, but prophetic calling demanded truth-telling. Early church faced similar pressures—conform to avoid persecution or maintain integrity despite cost. Church history records how compromise undermines witness while persecution purifies it. Modern application includes resisting cultural pressure to soften biblical truth to avoid offense.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does John's example challenge Christians to prioritize truth over comfort or popularity?
2. What is the difference between appropriate cultural sensitivity and sinful compromise?
3. How should ministers balance speaking prophetically with pastoral gentleness?

Interlinear Text

Ἀπελθόντων δὲ τῶν ἀγγέλων Ἰωάννου ἤρξατο
were departed And G3588 when the messengers John he began
G565 G1161 G32 G2491 G756

λέγειν πρὸς τοὺς ὄχλους περὶ Ἰωάννου Τί¹
to speak unto G3588 the people concerning John What
G3004 G4314 G3793 G4012 G2491 G5101

ἐξεληλύθατε εἰς τὴν ἔρημον θεάσασθαι κάλαμον ὑπὸ²
went ye out into G3588 the wilderness for to see A reed with
G1831 G1519 G2048 G2300 G2563 G5259

ἀνέμου σαλευόμενον
the wind shaken
G417 G4531

Additional Cross-References

Ephesians 4:14 (Parallel theme): That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

Luke 3:2 (References John): Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.

Luke 1:80 (Parallel theme): And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel.

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