

Luke 7:33

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil.

Analysis

The contrast: 'The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!' Jesus's sociability—attending dinners, relating to outcasts—drew opposite criticism. Where John was too severe, Jesus was too lenient. The Greek 'phagos kai oinopotēs' (glutton and drunkard) echoes Deuteronomy 21:20's description of rebellious son deserving death. The accusation was serious, not merely social disapproval. Jesus's association with 'publicans and sinners' violated Pharisaic separation standards. Reformed theology observes that Jesus's incarnational ministry required entering sinners' world without adopting their sin. He was 'holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners' (Hebrews 7:26) yet accessible to them.

Historical Context

Table fellowship in ancient Mediterranean culture signified intimate association and acceptance. Pharisees avoided eating with sinners to maintain ritual purity. Jesus's regular dining with tax collectors and notorious sinners scandalized religious leaders. His presence at feasts demonstrated kingdom inclusion of unlikely candidates. The accusation of gluttony and drunkenness was slander—Jesus lived righteously while engaging culture. Early Christians faced similar tensions—separating from pagan immorality while remaining accessible for witness.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How can Christians engage culture and befriend sinners without compromising holiness?
2. What does Jesus's example teach about balancing separation from sin with accessibility to sinners?
3. How do we discern when criticism of our ministry reflects biblical faithfulness versus actual failure?

Interlinear Text

ἐλήλυθεν	γὰρ	Ἰωάννης	ὁ	βαπτιστῆς	μήτε	ἄρτον	
came	For	John	G3588	the Baptist	neither	bread	
G2064	G1063	G2491		G910	G3383	G740	
ἐσθίω	μήτε	οἶνον	πίνων	καὶ	λέγετε	Δαιμόνιον	ἔχει
eating	neither	wine	drinking	and	ye say	a devil	He hath
G2068	G3383	G3631	G4095	G2532	G3004	G1140	G2192

Additional Cross-References

Luke 1:15 (Parallel theme): For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.

Mark 1:6 (References John): And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey;

