

Luke 9:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And it came to pass, as he was alone praying, his disciples were with him: and he asked them, saying, Whom say the people that I am?

Analysis

And it came to pass, as he was alone praying (Καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ εἶναι αὐτὸν προσευχόμενον κατὰ μόνας, Kai egeneto en tō einai auton proseuchomenon kata monas)—Luke uniquely emphasizes Jesus's prayer life (3:21, 5:16, 6:12, 9:18, 28-29, 11:1, 22:41, 23:46). The phrase kata monas ("in solitude, privately") indicates Jesus withdrew from the crowd after the feeding miracle. John 6:15 explains why: the crowd wanted to make Him king by force, misunderstanding His messianic mission. Jesus escaped to pray.

His disciples were with him—Though "alone," Jesus had the Twelve with Him—alone from crowds but not from His inner circle. This sets up intimate teaching. **And he asked them, saying, Whom say the people that I am?** (ἐπηρώτησεν αὐτοὺς λέγων· Τίνα με λέγουσιν οἱ ὄχλοι εἶναι, epērōtēsen autous legōn: Tina me legousin hoi ochloi einai)—Jesus initiates a crucial conversation about His identity. The question tests the disciples' awareness of public opinion before probing their personal conviction. This pedagogical method moves from external observation to internal commitment, from what "they" say to what "you" believe. The timing is strategic—after demonstrating His power to create bread from nothing, Jesus presses the identity question that bread alone cannot answer.

Historical Context

This conversation likely occurred shortly after the feeding of the 5,000, during Jesus's withdrawal to pray. Luke's Gospel portrays Jesus at prayer before every major decision and revelation—before choosing the Twelve (6:12), before this confession at Caesarea Philippi, before the Transfiguration (9:28-29), before teaching the Lord's Prayer (11:1). The location (implied by parallel accounts) was near Caesarea Philippi, a heavily pagan area with shrines to Pan and Caesar, making the confession of Jesus as Messiah particularly significant. The question about popular opinion reflects the diverse speculation recorded in 9:7-8—John the Baptist, Elijah, or an ancient prophet resurrected.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. Why does Jesus ask about public opinion before asking the disciples' personal conviction, and what does this teach about moving from cultural Christianity to personal faith?
2. What does Luke's emphasis on Jesus praying before major events teach about the relationship between prayer and discernment of God's will?
3. How does the timing of this question—after a spectacular miracle—challenge the idea that displays of power alone produce correct understanding of Jesus's identity?

Interlinear Text

καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ εἶναι αὐτοὺς προσευχόμενον
And **it came to pass** **as** ^{G3588} **am** **him** **praying**
G2532 G1096 G1722 G1511 G846 G4336

κατὰμόνας, συνῆσαν αὐτοὺς οἱ μαθηταί καὶ
alone **were with** **him** ^{G3588} **disciples** **And**
G2651 G4895 G846 G3101 G2532

ἐπηρώτησεν αὐτοὺς λέγουσιν Τίνα με λέγουσιν οἱ
he asked **him** **say** **Whom** **that I** **say** ^{G3588}
G1905 G846 G3004 G5101 G3165 G3004

ὄχλοι εἶναι
the people **am**
G3793 G1511

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 26:36 (Prayer): Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder.

Luke 11:1 (Prayer): And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.