

Luke 9:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he straitly charged them, and commanded them to tell no man that thing;

Analysis

And he straitly charged them, and commanded them to tell no man that thing (ο δὲ ἐπιτιμήσας αὐτοῖς παρήγγειλεν μηδενὶ λέγειν τοῦτο, ho de epitimēsas autois parēngeilen mēdeni legein touto)—The verb epitimaō (ἐπιτιμήσας, "sternly warned, rebuked") indicates strong, urgent command. The double verb construction (epitimēsas and parēngeilen, "charged and commanded") emphasizes Jesus's insistence on silence. This is the "messianic secret" motif prominent in Mark's Gospel—Jesus repeatedly silences demons, healed persons, and disciples about His identity.

Why the silence? Premature public proclamation of Jesus as Messiah would trigger several problems:

1. Political uprising—the crowds wanted a military-political Messiah to overthrow Rome (John 6:15), not a suffering servant
2. Misunderstanding—popular messianic expectations centered on earthly kingdom, not spiritual salvation
3. Premature opposition—open messianic claims would accelerate confrontation with authorities before the appointed time
4. Incomplete revelation—the disciples don't yet understand the cross (v. 22).

Jesus must redefine messiahship around suffering before public proclamation. Only after resurrection will the full truth be ready for proclamation (Luke 24:46-49). The command to silence follows immediately after Peter's confession (implied in v. 20, explicit in Matthew 16:16) to prevent misguided messianic fervor.

Historical Context

First-century Jewish messianic expectation was predominantly political and nationalistic. The Messiah was expected to overthrow Roman occupation, restore Israel's sovereignty, and establish God's kingdom on earth from Jerusalem. The Psalms of Solomon (circa 50 BC) and other intertestamental texts describe a warrior-king Messiah who would destroy Israel's enemies. Jesus's mission directly contradicted these expectations—He came not to conquer Rome but to conquer sin, not to establish political kingdom but spiritual reign. Premature proclamation would attract zealot followers and provoke Roman intervention. The charge to silence protected Jesus's mission until the cross and resurrection could redefine messiahship correctly.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. Why does Jesus command silence about His messianic identity, and what does this teach about the danger of right confession with wrong understanding?
2. How does the need to redefine messiahship around suffering (v. 22) before public proclamation challenge contemporary triumphalist versions of the gospel?
3. In what ways might premature or incomplete proclamation of Christ today create similar misunderstandings that distort the gospel message?

Interlinear Text

Ο	δὲ	ἐπιτιμήσας	αὐτοῖς	παρήγγειλεν	μηδενὶ	εἰπεῖν
G3588	And	he straitly charged	them	and commanded	no man	them to tell
G1161		G2008	G846	G3853	G3367	G2036
τοῦτο						
that thing						
G5124						

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 16:20 (Parallel theme): Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.

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