

Luke 9:33

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And it came to pass, as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias: not knowing what he said.

Analysis

And it came to pass, as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias: not knowing what he said.

As Moses and Elijah were leaving (en tō diachōrizesthai autous, ἐν τῷ διαχωρίζεσθαι αὐτούς), Peter impulsively spoke. His address Epistata (Ἐπιστάτα, "Master") is Luke's preferred term—respectful but less than "Lord." Peter declares **it is good for us to be here** (kalon estin hēmas hōde einai, καλόν ἐστιν ἡμᾶς ὡδε εῖναι)—the mountaintop experience was glorious, and he wanted to preserve it.

His proposal to build skēnas (σκηνάς, "tabernacles" or "tents")—three shelters equalizing Jesus with Moses and Elijah—reveals theological confusion. The Feast of Tabernacles commemorated wilderness wandering and anticipated Messianic kingdom (Zechariah 14:16). Peter may have thought the kingdom was arriving and wanted to stay. Luke's parenthetical comment, **not knowing what he said** (mē eidōs ho legei, μὴ εἰδὼς ὅ λέγει), gently rebukes Peter's misunderstanding. Jesus cannot be equated with Moses and Elijah—He is their Lord and fulfillment.

Historical Context

The Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot) was one of three major Jewish pilgrimage festivals, celebrating the harvest and commemorating Israel's wilderness dwelling in tents. During the feast, Jews built temporary shelters (sukkot) and lived in them for seven days. Rabbinic tradition associated the feast with the Messianic age—when Messiah comes, all nations would celebrate Tabernacles (Zechariah 14:16-19). Peter likely connected the glory, Moses, Elijah, and Messianic expectations with the feast. His desire to build booths was theologically confused but understandable—he recognized this as a Messianic moment but didn't yet grasp that Messiah must first suffer before reigning.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. Why was Peter's desire to build three tabernacles—equalizing Jesus with Moses and Elijah—theologically mistaken?
2. What spiritual danger exists in trying to prolong mountaintop experiences rather than descending to serve in the valley?
3. How does Peter's confusion about the kingdom's nature (glory now vs. suffering first) mirror contemporary misunderstandings of Christian life?

Interlinear Text

καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ διαχωρίζεσθαι αὐτοῦ ἀπ' αὐτοῦ
And it came to pass as departed him from him
G2532 G1096 G1722 G3588 G1316 G846 G575 G846

εἶπεν ὁ Πέτρος πρὸς τὸν Ἰησοῦν Ἐπιστάτα καλόν
said Peter unto Jesus Master good
G2036 G3588 G4074 G3588 G2424 G1988 G2570

ἐστιν ἡμᾶς ὅδε εἶναι καὶ ποιήσωμεν σκηνὰς τρεῖς
it is for us here to be And let us make tabernacles three
G2076 G2248 G5602 G1511 G2532 G4160 G4633 G5140

μίαν σοὶ καὶ Μωσεῖ μίαν καὶ μίαν Ἡλία μὴ εἰδὼς
G1520 thee And Moses G1520 And G1520 Elias not knowing
G4671 G2532 G3475 G2532 G2243 G3361 G1492

ὁ λέγει
what he said
G3739 G3004

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