

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 ὧδε εἶναι)—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 ὃ 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	G3588	departed	him	from	him		
G2532	G1096	G1722		G1316	G846	G575	G846		
εἶπεν	ὁ	Πέτρος	πρὸς	τὸν	Ἰησοῦν	Ἐπιστάτα	καλόν		
said	G3588	Peter	unto	G3588	Jesus	Master	good		
G2036		G4074	G4314		G2424	G1988	G2570		
ἐστιν	ἡμᾶς	ᾧδε	εἶναι	καὶ	ποιήσωμεν	σκηναὶς	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	Ἠλίᾱ	μὴ	εἰδὼς
G1520	thee	And	Moses	G1520	And	G1520	Elias	not	knowing
	G4671	G2532	G3475		G2532		G2243	G3361	G1492
ὃ	λέγει								
what	he said								
G3739	G3004								