

Luke 9:46

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest.

Analysis

Then there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest (διαλογισμὸς, dialogismos)—the disciples engage in a deliberative debate about rank and status. The Greek term suggests calculated, self-interested argumentation, not innocent curiosity. This dispute erupts immediately after Jesus predicts His suffering (9:44), revealing how completely they misunderstood the nature of Messiah's kingdom.

Their question **which of them should be greatest** (τίς εἴη μέζων, tis eiē meizōn) assumes a hierarchy of honor in the coming kingdom. They debate who deserves first rank—Peter for his confession? James and John for witnessing the Transfiguration? Judas for managing finances? Jesus will answer by redefining greatness itself: true megas (greatness) means becoming the least, servant of all (9:48). The disciples sought crowns; Jesus offered a cross.

Historical Context

This dispute reflects first-century Palestinian culture where honor and social rank were fiercely contested. Disciples of rabbis often jockeyed for position, expecting their master's elevation would mean their own advancement. The Twelve expected Jesus to establish an earthly Davidic kingdom imminently, complete with cabinet positions and governmental authority. Jesus's teaching would radically invert these expectations.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. When have you found yourself mentally calculating your rank or importance compared to other believers, and what does this reveal about your understanding of kingdom values?
2. How does the disciples' concern for greatness immediately after Jesus predicts His suffering expose the fundamental conflict between worldly ambition and cross-bearing discipleship?

Interlinear Text

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|-----------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|-------|-----------------------|------|
| Εἰσῆλθεν | δὲ | διαλογισμὸς | ἐν | αὐτῶν | τὸ | τίς | ἂν |
| there arose G1525 | Then G1161 | a reasoning G1261 | among G1722 | of them G846 | G3588 | which G5101 | G302 |
| εἶη | μείζων | αὐτῶν | | | | | |
| should be G1498 | greatest G3187 | of them G846 | | | | | |

Additional Cross-References

Philippians 2:3 (Parallel theme): Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

3 John 1:9 (Parallel theme): I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not.