

Luke 9:54

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?

Analysis

Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them (θέλεις εἴπωμεν πῦρ καταβῆναι, theleis eipōmen pyr katabēnai)—James and John, the 'Sons of Thunder' (Mark 3:17), propose calling down divine judgment. **Even as Elias did**—they reference Elijah's destruction of Ahaziah's soldiers (2 Kings 1:9-12), believing they possess comparable prophetic authority and that this situation warrants comparable judgment.

Their question reveals how completely they misunderstood Jesus's mission. They interpreted Samaritan inhospitality as covenant rebellion deserving fiery annihilation, applying Old Covenant patterns of holy war to gospel ministry. The apostles wanted to be Elijah; Jesus came to be the suffering servant. They sought vengeance; He sought mercy. This same John would later write 'God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved' (John 3:17)—a lesson learned here through Jesus's rebuke.

Historical Context

Elijah's fire from heaven (2 Kings 1) occurred in the context of covenant judgment against apostate Israel under Ahaziah. The prophets of the Old Covenant executed divine wrath against treaty violators. But Jesus inaugurates the New Covenant age of grace, where judgment is delayed to allow for repentance (2 Peter 3:9). The

disciples failed to recognize the shift in redemptive epochs—they lived in the age of gospel invitation, not covenant vengeance.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. When have you been tempted to call down judgment on those who reject or oppose Christ rather than extending the patience and mercy that brought you to salvation?
2. How does the disciples' appeal to Elijah's example warn against misapplying Old Testament narratives without understanding their place in redemptive history?

Interlinear Text

ἰδόντες δὲ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτούς Ἰάκωβος καὶ Ἰωάννης

saw **And** G3588 **disciples** **them** **James** **and** **John**
G1492 G1161 G3101 G846 G2385 G2532 G2491

εἴπωμεν Κύριε θέλεις εἴπωμεν πῦρ καταβῆναι
that we command **Lord** **wilt thou** **that we command** **fire** **to come down**
G2036 G2962 G2309 G2036 G4442 G2597

ἀπὸ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ ἀναλῶσαι αὐτούς ὡς καὶ Ἡλίας
from G3588 **heaven** **and** **consume** **them** **as** **and** **Elias**
G575 G3772 G2532 G355 G846 G5613 G2532 G2243

ἐποίησεν

did

G4160

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