

Luke 9:56

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village.

Analysis

Jesus rebukes James and John: 'For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.' The brothers wanted to call fire from heaven on a Samaritan village that rejected Jesus (v. 54). Jesus' rebuke clarifies His mission—salvation, not destruction. The verb 'destroy' (Greek 'apolesai,' ἀπολέσαι) and 'save' (Greek 'sōsai,' σώσαι) create stark contrast. Jesus came to rescue, not judge (though judgment will come at His return). His first advent brings grace; His second brings judgment. The disciples' vengeful impulse revealed misunderstanding of Jesus' present mission and character.

Historical Context

The incident occurred during Jesus' journey to Jerusalem through Samaria (v. 51-53). Jews and Samaritans had centuries-old hostility. Samaritan rejection of Jesus traveling to Jerusalem was typical ethnic-religious animosity. James and John's suggestion echoed Elijah calling fire from heaven on soldiers (2 Kings 1:10-12), but Jesus' mission differed from Elijah's. The church age is marked by grace, not judgment. Jesus later died for Samaritans too—gospel later flourished in Samaria (Acts 8). This rebuke teaches patience with rejectors and trust in God's timing for judgment. Our mission is evangelism, not vengeance.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. What does Jesus' mission statement 'not to destroy...but to save' teach about His first advent versus second coming?
2. How should Jesus' rebuke of James and John's vengeful impulse shape Christian response to rejection and opposition?

Interlinear Text

ὁ	γὰρ	ὑἱὸς	τοῦ	ἀνθρώπων	οὐκ	ἦλθεν	ψυχὰς
G3588	For	the Son	G3588	men's	not	come	lives
	G1063	G5207		G444	G3756	G2064	G5590
ἀνθρώπων	ἀπολέσαι,	ἀλλὰ	σῶσαι	καὶ	ἐπορεύθησαν		
men's	to destroy	but	to save	them And	they went		
G444	G622	G235	G4982	G2532	G4198		
εἰς	ἑτέραν	κώμην					
to	another	village					
G1519	G2087	G2968					

Additional Cross-References

Romans 12:21 (Parallel theme): Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

Matthew 20:28 (Parallel theme): Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

John 3:17 (Salvation): For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

John 10:10 (Parallel theme): The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

Matthew 18:10 (Parallel theme): Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.

Luke 19:10 (Salvation): For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

John 12:47 (Salvation): And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.

1 Timothy 1:15 (Salvation): This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

Luke 23:34 (Parallel theme): Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.

Luke 22:51 (Parallel theme): And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And he touched his ear, and healed him.