

Mark 9:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And when he came to his disciples, he saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them.

Analysis

Descending from the transfiguration mountain, Jesus 'saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them' (εἶδεν ὄχλον πολὺν περὶ αὐτοὺς καὶ γραμματεῖς συζητοῦντας πρὸς αὐτούς). The contrast is stark: on the mountain, divine glory and revelation; in the valley, human failure and demonic bondage. The disciples had attempted to cast out a demon (v. 18) but failed, and scribes seized the opportunity to discredit them through public questioning. This scene illustrates the Christian life's rhythm—mountain-top experiences of God's presence followed by valley struggles requiring faith. The scribes' questioning (sytzētountas, συζητοῦντας) implies contentious debate, likely mocking the disciples' powerlessness. Jesus' arrival shifts attention from the disciples' failure to His sufficient power.

Historical Context

The scribes were professional scholars of Mosaic law and oral tradition, often hostile to Jesus (Mark 2:6; 3:22; 7:5). Their presence suggests they were monitoring Jesus' movement, seeking grounds for accusation. The public nature of this confrontation—a 'great multitude'—increased pressure on the disciples. In first-century Judaism, inability to perform claimed miracles would discredit a teacher's authority. The disciples' failure (despite previous successful exorcisms, Mark 6:13) revealed that spiritual power isn't inherent but depends on faith and prayer (v. 29). This incident demonstrates that even Jesus' closest followers experienced spiritual inadequacy apart from reliance on God.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does the contrast between mountain-top glory and valley suffering reflect the pattern of Christian experience?
2. What does the disciples' failure teach about the danger of presuming upon past spiritual successes without present dependence on God?

Interlinear Text

καὶ ἐλθὼν πρὸς τοὺς μαθητὰς εἶδεν ὄχλον πολὺν
And when he came to his disciples he saw multitude a great
G2532 G2064 G4314 G3588 G3101 G1492 G3793 G4183

περὶ αὐτοῖς· καὶ γραμματεῖς συζητοῦντας αὐτοῖς·
about them And the scribes questioning them
G4012 G846 G2532 G1122 G4802 G846

Additional Cross-References

Mark 12:14 (Parallel theme): And when they were come, they say unto him, Master, we know that thou art true, and carest for no man: for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth: Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not?

Mark 2:6 (Parallel theme): But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts,

Mark 11:28 (Parallel theme): And say unto him, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority to do these things?

