

Mark 9:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he asked the scribes, What question ye with them?

Analysis

Jesus asked the scribes, 'What question ye with them?' (Τί συζητεῖτε πρὸς αὐτούς;). This direct confrontation shifts focus from the disciples' inadequacy to Jesus' authority. By addressing the scribes publicly, Jesus protects His disciples and reasserts control of the situation. The verb *syztēteite* (συζητεῖτε, 'question' or 'dispute') implies contentious argument. Jesus' question exposes the scribes' motives—they weren't genuinely seeking understanding but exploiting the disciples' failure to undermine Jesus' ministry. Throughout Mark, Jesus demonstrates authority over human opposition and demonic powers. His simple question silences scribal criticism and redirects attention to the real issue: human need for divine deliverance.

Historical Context

Rabbinic culture in first-century Judaism valued vigorous debate, but the scribes' questioning here was hostile, not scholarly. They represented religious establishment opposition to Jesus' authority. Earlier conflicts involved accusations of blasphemy (Mark 2:7), Sabbath-breaking (Mark 2:24), and demonic collusion (Mark 3:22). The scribes likely saw the exorcism failure as evidence that Jesus' movement lacked divine sanction. Jesus' direct question forced them to publicly articulate their criticism or remain silent. Ancient Mediterranean honor-shame culture made public confrontation significant—Jesus reasserted authority before witnesses.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus' direct confrontation of critics model appropriate pastoral protection of struggling believers?
2. What does the scribes' silence in response to Jesus' question reveal about the emptiness of criticism rooted in hostility rather than truth-seeking?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	ἐπηρώτησεν	τοῦς	γραμματεῖς,	Τί	συζητεῖτε	πρὸς
And	he asked	G3588	the scribes	What	question ye	with
G2532	G1905		G1122	G5101	G4802	G4314
αὐτούς						
G846						

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