

Matthew 17:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.

Analysis

Peter's proposal to build three tabernacles reveals misunderstanding of the moment's significance. He treats Jesus as equal with Moses and Elijah rather than recognizing His supremacy. The suggestion to preserve this experience through building structures shows human tendency to institutionalize divine encounters rather than submit to God's purposes. Peter's 'it is good for us to be here' prioritizes comfort over mission—they must descend the mountain to accomplish Jesus' redemptive work.

Historical Context

The 'tabernacles' (Greek 'skenai') Peter proposed recall the Feast of Tabernacles, commemorating wilderness wandering and anticipating messianic kingdom. Peter may have thought the kingdom was arriving immediately. His suggestion to honor all three equally missed Jesus' unique role. The Father's voice (v. 5) corrects this misunderstanding, commanding attention to Jesus alone.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How do you sometimes try to preserve spiritual experiences rather than apply them?
2. When does honoring spiritual heroes become distraction from Christ alone?
3. What 'mountaintop experiences' must you leave to serve in the valley?

Interlinear Text

ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ ὁ Πέτρος εἶπεν τῷ Ἰησοῦ Κύριε
answered Then G3588 Peter and said G3588 unto Jesus Lord
G611 G1161 G4074 G2036 G2424 G2962

καλόν ἔστιν ἡμᾶς ὅδε εἶναι· εἰ θέλεις ποιήσωμεν
good it is for us here to be if thou wilt let us make
G2570 G2076 G2248 G5602 G1511 G1487 G2309 G4160

ὅδε τρεῖς σκηνάς, σοὶ μίαν καὶ Μωσῆς μίαν καὶ
here three tabernacles for thee G1520 and for Moses G1520 and
G5602 G5140 G4633 G4671 G2532 G3475 G2532

μίαν Ἡλία
G1520 for Elias
G2243

Additional Cross-References

Luke 9:33 (Temple): And it came to pass, as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias: not knowing what he said.