

Matthew 21:25

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men?
And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say,
From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe
him?

Analysis

The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men?—Jesus forces binary choice: divine origin (ἐξ οὐρανοῦ, ex ouranou) or human invention (ἐξ ἀνθρώπων, ex anthrōpōn). John's baptism represented his entire prophetic ministry, which authenticated Jesus (John 1:29-34). Their answer would reveal whether they recognized God's voice.

If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him?—The leaders' political calculation (διελογίζοντο, dielogizonto, 'reasoned among themselves') exposes hearts seeking advantage, not truth. John had testified that Jesus was the Lamb of God—acknowledging John's divine authority meant confessing Jesus's Messiahship.

Historical Context

John's baptism had attracted massive following, including Pharisees and Sadducees whom he denounced (Matt 3:7). The people revered John as a prophet (v.26), creating political pressure. The religious leaders had rejected John's call to repentance, maintaining their self-righteousness—the root issue with Jesus.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. When has fear of consequences kept you from acknowledging truth you knew in your conscience?
2. How does political calculation ('what will people think?') compete with truth-seeking in your spiritual decisions?

Interlinear Text

τὸ βάπτισμα Ἰωάννου πόθεν ἦν Ἐξ οὐρανοῦ ἢ
G3588 **The baptism** **of John** **whence** **was it** **From** **heaven** **or**
G908 G2491 G4159 G2258 G1537 G3772 G2228

Ἐξ ἀνθρώπων οἱ δὲ διελογίζοντο παρ' ἑαυτοῖς
From **men** G3588 **And** **they reasoned** **with** **themselves**
G1537 G444 G1161 G1260 G3844 G1438

λέγοντες Ἐὰν εἴπωμεν Ἐξ οὐρανοῦ ἔρεϊ ἡμῖν
saying **If** **we shall say** **From** **heaven** **he will say** **unto us**
G3004 G1437 G2036 G1537 G3772 G2046 G2254

Διατί οὖν οὐκ ἐπιστεύσατε αὐτῷ
Why **then** **not** **believe** **him**
G1302 G3767 G3756 G4100 G846

Additional Cross-References

1 John 3:20 (Parallel theme): For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.

John 3:18 (Faith): He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

John 1:15 (References John): John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me.

Luke 20:5 (Faith): And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why then believed ye him not?

John 1:6 (References John): There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

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