

Matthew 21:26

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet.

Analysis

But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people—Raw political pragmatism: φοβούμεθα τὸν ὄχλον (phoboumetha ton ochlon), 'we fear the crowd.' **For all hold John as a prophet**—the same people who held Jesus as prophet (v.11, 46) yet would soon cry for His crucifixion. Popular opinion proved fickle foundation.

The leaders' fear of man became a snare (Prov 29:25). They knew truth (John was God's prophet) but suppressed it to preserve power and position. This self-aware hypocrisy—knowing right but choosing wrong for political gain—marks the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit: willful rejection of known truth.

Historical Context

The Sanhedrin's power depended partly on popular support. Rome granted them religious authority but watched for unrest. Condemning a beloved prophet could trigger riots, threatening their delicate political balance. Yet this same calculation led them to kill Jesus (John 11:48-50).

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. In what areas might fear of others' opinions be overruling your obedience to known truth?
2. How does the leaders' self-aware hypocrisy warn against comfortable Christianity that knows truth but refuses costly obedience?

Interlinear Text

ἐὰν δὲ εἴπωμεν Ἐξ ἀνθρώπων φοβούμεθα τὸν ὄχλον
if But we shall say Of men we fear G1437 G1161 G2036 G1537 G444 G5399 G3588 G3793
the people

πάντες γὰρ ἔχουσιν τὸν Ἰωάννην ὡς προφήτην
all for hold G3956 G1063 G2192 G3588 G2491 G5613 G4396
John as a prophet

Additional Cross-References

Mark 6:20 (References John): For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.

Matthew 11:9 (Prophecy): But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet.

Matthew 14:5 (Prophecy): And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet.

Matthew 21:46 (Prophecy): But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet.

John 5:35 (Parallel theme): He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light.