

Matthew 21:27

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.

Analysis

We cannot tell—The Greek οὐκ οἶδμεν (ouk oidamen) means 'we don't know'—a lie. They knew but wouldn't admit it. **Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things**—Jesus honors their choice. Since they refused to acknowledge God's authentication through John, they'd proven themselves incapable of recognizing divine authority in Jesus.

Jesus's refusal wasn't evasion but righteous judgment. He wouldn't cast pearls before swine (Matt 7:6). Those who willfully suppress truth forfeit further revelation. God's authority authenticates itself to honest seekers; it's hidden from those who've hardened their hearts (Matt 13:11-15).

Historical Context

In Jewish legal tradition, witnesses who refused to testify forfeited their right to bring charges. The leaders' claimed ignorance disqualified them as judges of Jesus's authority. Their intellectual dishonesty—obvious to all observers—undermined their credibility while preserving Jesus's teaching authority.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. When have you claimed 'I don't know' to avoid uncomfortable truth you actually recognized?
2. How does persistent rejection of clear truth eventually lead to judicial hardening where God withholds further light?

Interlinear Text

καὶ ἀποκριθέντες τῷ Ἰησοῦ εἶπον, Οὐκ οἶδαμεν.

And **they answered** G3588 **Jesus** **and said** **We cannot** **tell**
G2532 G611 G2424 G2036 G3756 G1492

ἔφη αὐτός, καὶ αὐτός, Οὐδὲ ἐγὼ λέγω ὑμῖν ἐν

he said **unto them** **And** **unto them** **Neither** **I** **tell** **you** **by**
G5346 G846 G2532 G846 G3761 G1473 G3004 G5213 G1722

ποίᾳ ἐξουσίᾳ ταῦτα ποιῶ

what **authority** **these things** **I do**
G4169 G1849 G5023 G4160

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