

Matthew 21:30

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not.

Analysis

I go, sir: and went not—The second son's false compliance (ἐγώ, κύριε, egō, kyrie, 'I will, sir') represents the chief priests and elders. Respectful words (κύριε, 'lord/sir') masked disobedience. **And went not**—no action followed the promise.

This cuts at performative religion: prayers without obedience, confession without transformation, 'Lord, Lord' without doing the Father's will (Matt 7:21-23). The religious leaders spoke correctly about God, maintained proper forms, yet rejected His messengers (John, Jesus). Polite religiosity that refuses actual surrender is more dangerous than open rebellion that turns to repentance.

Historical Context

The Pharisees excelled at religious performance—tithing mint and cumin while neglecting justice and mercy (Matt 23:23). They said 'yes' to God publicly but refused prophetic calls to genuine repentance. Their religious credentials gave false security while actual obedience was absent.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. What 'yes' have you spoken to God that remains unactioned in your daily life?
2. How does comfortable church attendance without costly discipleship mirror the second son's empty promise?

Interlinear Text

καὶ προσελθὼν τῷ δευτέρῳ εἶπεν ὡσαύτως ὁ δὲ
And he came to the second and said likewise And
G2532 G4334 G3588 G1208 G2036 G5615 G3588 G1161
ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν Ἐγώ κύριε καὶ οὐκ ἀπῆλθεν
he answered and said I go sir And not went
G611 G2036 G1473 G2962 G2532 G3756 G565

Additional Cross-References

Titus 1:16 (Parallel theme): They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.

Ezekiel 33:31 (Parallel theme): And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness.

Matthew 23:3 (Parallel theme): All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.