

Matthew 9:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?

Analysis

Jesus' question—'Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?' (ὅτι τι ἐνθυμείσθε πονηρά ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν)—demonstrates His omniscience. The verb ἐνθυμεομαι means 'to ponder, reflect, consider,' indicating deliberate thought rather than passing notion. Jesus identifies their thoughts as 'evil' (πονηρά/ponēra), not merely mistaken but morally corrupt. Their skepticism stems from hard hearts unwilling to recognize God's work. Jesus perceives not only their words but their innermost reasoning, fulfilling messianic expectation (Isaiah 11:3). This divine knowledge terrifies those hiding sin but comforts believers—Jesus knows our hearts fully and loves us still. The question is rhetorical, exposing their evil intent before answering with demonstration of authority.

Historical Context

Jewish expectation held that the Messiah would possess supernatural knowledge and discernment (1 Kings 3:16-28 provided the model of Solomon's wisdom). Rabbis claimed no mind-reading abilities; if someone could perceive unspoken thoughts, it evidenced divine power or inspiration. Early Christians saw Jesus' omniscience as proof of deity (John 2:24-25, 21:17). This episode would have been particularly shocking because Jesus exposes religious leaders' secret thoughts, challenging their public piety with hidden corruption.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How should Jesus' knowledge of our thoughts shape our prayer life and inner thought patterns?
2. What does this passage reveal about the relationship between thoughts and sin?
3. How can we distinguish between honest questioning and evil skepticism toward God's work?

Interlinear Text

καὶ ἰδὼν ὁ Ἰησοῦς τὰς ἐνθυμήσεις αὐτῶν εἶπεν ἵνα
And **knowing** G3588 **Jesus** G3588 **thoughts** G1761 **their** G846 **said** G2036 G2532 G1492 G2443

τί ὑμεῖς ἐνθυμεῖσθε πονηρὰ ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις
Wherefore **ye** **think** **evil** **in** G3588 **hearts**
G2444 G5210 G1760 G4190 G1722 G2588

ὑμῶν
your
G5216

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 12:25 (References Jesus): And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand:

Luke 6:8 (Parallel theme): But he knew their thoughts, and said to the man which had the withered hand, Rise up, and stand forth in the midst. And he arose and stood forth.

Revelation 2:23 (Parallel theme): And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

Psalms 139:2 (Parallel theme): Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off.

Psalms 44:21 (Parallel theme): Shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart.

John 16:30 (Parallel theme): Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God.

Luke 11:17 (Parallel theme): But he, knowing their thoughts, said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house falleth.

Acts 5:9 (Parallel theme): Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out.

John 6:64 (References Jesus): But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.

John 6:61 (References Jesus): When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you?