

Acts 26:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

Analysis

I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Paul reveals the depth of his pre-conversion conviction—Greek *edoxa* (ἔδοξα, "I thought") with *dei* (δεῖ, "it is necessary"), expressing moral obligation. He didn't persecute from malice but from sincere theological conviction that the Nazarene movement threatened biblical Judaism.

This confession is crucial: Paul acted *kata* (κατά, "contrary to") not merely "Jesus" but "the name" (*to onoma*, τὸ ὄνομα)—rejecting Jesus' messianic identity entirely. His former zeal mirrors the Pharisees who delivered Jesus to Pilate (Luke 23:2), believing they served God by opposing Christ. Paul's testimony shows that religious sincerity without truth leads to opposing God's purposes, making his Damascus encounter not a conversion from irreligion but from misdirected religion.

Historical Context

Paul speaks in 59 AD before King Agrippa II, defending himself against Jewish accusations. As a Pharisee trained under Gamaliel (Acts 22:3), Paul had viewed Jesus-followers as heretics corrupting Judaism. His persecution campaign (Acts 8:3, 9:1-2) was motivated by what he believed was covenant faithfulness, seeking to purge Israel of blasphemers who claimed a crucified criminal was Messiah.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does Paul's example warn against confusing religious zeal with true knowledge of God (Romans 10:2)?
2. What does Paul's willingness to confess his persecution of Christ teach about authentic testimony and humility?

Interlinear Text

ἐγὼ	μὲν	οὖν	ἔδοξα	ἐμαυτῷ	πρὸς	τὸ	ὄνομα	Ἰησοῦ
I	verily	G3767	thought	with myself	to	G3588	the name	of Jesus
G1473	G3303		G1380	G1683	G4314		G3686	G2424
τοῦ	Ναζωραίου		δεῖν	πολλὰ	ἐναντία	πραῖξαι		
G3588	of Nazareth		that I ought	many things	contrary	to do		
	G3480		G1163	G4183	G1727	G4238		

Additional Cross-References

1 Timothy 1:13 (Parallel theme): Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.

Acts 22:8 (References Jesus): And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest.