

Acts 4:27

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together,

Analysis

For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, This prayer acknowledges God's sovereignty over Jesus' crucifixion. The Greek ἐπ' ἀληθείας (ep' alētheias, "of a truth") means "truly, certainly"—emphasizing factual accuracy. "Holy child" (hagion paida, ἅγιον παῖδα) can mean "holy servant" or "holy child," connecting to Isaiah's Suffering Servant prophecies. "Whom thou hast anointed" (echrisis, ἔχρισας) identifies Jesus as Messiah (Christos = Anointed One).

The verse lists four distinct groups: Herod (representing Jewish political authority), Pontius Pilate (Roman imperial power), Gentiles (pagan nations), and Israel (God's covenant people). This comprehensive coalition fulfills Psalm 2:1-2, proving Scripture's prophetic accuracy. The verb "gathered together" (sunēchthēsan, συνήχθησαν) echoes Psalm 2's "assembled," showing deliberate biblical fulfillment.

Theologically, this demonstrates that history's greatest injustice—executing God's innocent Son—occurred within divine sovereignty. Human evil and God's redemptive plan intersected at the cross. The disciples don't excuse human responsibility (these actors sinned grievously) but recognize God's providence working through even rebellious human choices. This paradox grounds Christian

confidence: if God sovereignly accomplished salvation through Jesus' death, He can orchestrate all circumstances for His purposes.

Historical Context

This prayer occurred shortly after Peter and John's release from Sanhedrin custody (Acts 4:1-22). The Jerusalem church faced its first official persecution from Jewish religious authorities. The apostles had healed a lame beggar, preached Christ's resurrection, and attracted thousands of converts, threatening established religious power.

Herod Antipas (4 BC-39 AD) ruled Galilee and Perea, interrogating Jesus during His trial (Luke 23:6-12). Pontius Pilate governed Judea (26-36 AD) as Roman prefect, ultimately condemning Jesus despite finding no fault. "Gentiles" refers to Roman soldiers executing crucifixion and mocking Jesus. "People of Israel" includes the Sanhedrin, chief priests, and crowd demanding crucifixion.

Historical records (Tacitus, Josephus, Talmud) corroborate Jesus' execution under Pilate around 30 AD. The early church's bold proclamation that Jewish and Gentile authorities murdered God's Messiah was politically dangerous and socially scandalous. Yet this prayer shows Christians didn't seek revenge but recognized divine sovereignty. They appealed to Psalm 2, a royal messianic psalm, reinterpreting it through Jesus' death and resurrection, establishing Christian hermeneutics for understanding Old Testament prophecy fulfilled in Christ.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How do we reconcile human responsibility for sin with God's sovereign control over history?

2. What does the diverse coalition against Jesus teach about universal human sinfulness?
3. How should Christians respond to persecution knowing God remains sovereign?
4. Why did God allow His holy Son to suffer at human hands rather than preventing it?
5. How does viewing life's injustices through this lens of divine sovereignty bring comfort?

Interlinear Text

συνήχθησαν	γὰρ	ἐπὶ	ἀληθείας	ἐπὶ	τὸν	ἅγιον
were gathered together	For	against	a truth	against	G3588	holy
G4863	G1063	G1909	G225	G1909		G40
παῖδά σου Ἰησοῦν	ὃν	ἔχρισας	Ἡρώδης	τε	καὶ	
child thy Jesus	whom	thou hast anointed	Herod	both	and	
G3816	G4675	G2424	G3739	G5548	G2264	G5037 G2532
Πόντιος Πιλάτος	σὺν	ἔθνεσιν	καὶ	λαοῖς	Ἰσραήλ	
Pontius Pilate	with	the Gentiles	and	the people	of Israel	
G4194	G4091	G4862	G1484	G2532	G2992	G2474

Additional Cross-References

Acts 4:30 (Holy): By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.

Matthew 27:2 (Parallel theme): And when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor.

Luke 9:22 (Parallel theme): Saying, The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day.