

John 19:24

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did.

Analysis

They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. The soldiers' decision to gamble rather than tear the seamless tunic fulfills Psalm 22:18 with remarkable precision. That messianic psalm, written 1,000 years before crucifixion was invented, predicted both the dividing of garments AND the casting of lots for clothing.

The phrase ἵνα ἡ γραφὴ πληρωθῇ (hina hē graphē plērōthē, 'that the scripture might be fulfilled') is John's recurring formula (12:38, 13:18, 15:25, 17:12, 19:28, 19:36). The purpose clause emphasizes divine orchestration—even the casual gambling of pagan soldiers accomplishes God's prophetic word. They act freely, with their own motives (greed), yet fulfill Scripture exactly.

The double fulfillment—dividing AND casting lots—shows biblical prophecy's precision. The soldiers didn't study Psalm 22 and deliberately enact it; they followed crucifixion custom unknowingly. Yet they fulfilled two distinct predictions in one event. This vindicates Jesus as Messiah and Scripture as divinely inspired. Every detail of redemption unfolds according to God's eternal decree.

Historical Context

Psalm 22, written by David circa 1000 BC, contains numerous crucifixion details: pierced hands and feet (v.16), bones out of joint (v.14), intense thirst (v.15), public mockery (v.7-8), and this dividing of garments. Crucifixion as execution method wasn't invented until the Persians developed it around 500 BC and Romans adopted it centuries later. David's psalm is thus prophetic, not experiential.

Roman soldiers regularly gambled, particularly with dice (tesserae). Lots could be cast using dice, marked pottery shards, or stones. The winner claimed the seamless tunic—a valuable prize worth more intact than torn into pieces. Their practical decision served transcendent purposes.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does the precise fulfillment of detailed prophecy strengthen confidence in Scripture's divine origin?
2. What does it reveal about God's sovereignty that pagan soldiers unknowingly fulfilled Scripture through ordinary greed?
3. How should the doctrine of divine providence affect our view of seemingly random or unjust events?

Interlinear Text

εἰπον οὖν πρὸς ἀλλήλους Μὴ σχίσωμεν αὐτοῦ
They said therefore among themselves not Let us it
G2036 G3767 G4314 G240 G3361 G4977 G846

ἀλλὰ λάχωμεν περὶ αὐτοῦ τίνος ἔσται· ἵνα Οἱ
but cast lots for it whose it shall be that which
G235 G2975 G4012 G846 G5101 G2071 G2443 G3588

γραφὴ πληρωθῆ Οἱ λέγουσα· Διεμερίσαντο Οἱ
the scripture might be fulfilled which saith They parted which
G1124 G4137 G3588 G3004 G1266 G3588

ἱμάτιά μου ἐαυτοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ Οἱ ἱματισμόν μου
vestment my among them and for which vesture my
G2440 G3450 G1438 G2532 G1909 G3588 G2441 G3450

ἔβαλον κλῆρον Οἱ μὲν οὖν στρατιῶται ταῦτα
they did cast lots which G3303 therefore the soldiers These things
G906 G2819 G3588 G3767 G4757 G5023

ἐποίησαν
did
G4160

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 22:18 (Parallel theme): They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.

John 19:28 (Word): After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst.