

John 19:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote him with their hands.

Analysis

Hail, King of the Jews! (Χαῖρε, ὦ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων)—The greeting *chaire* (hail, rejoice) parodies the imperial salutation "Ave, Caesar!" Each mocking hail was accompanied by blows—**they smote him with their hands** (έδιδοσαν αὐτῷ ρωπίσματα). The Greek *rapisma* denotes striking with fists or rods, fulfilling Isaiah 50:6: "I gave my back to the smiters...I hid not my face from shame and spitting."

The soldiers unwittingly proclaim truth while intending blasphemy. Jesus IS King—not just of Jews but of creation. Their mockery becomes involuntary worship, their theater of cruelty becomes divine revelation. This scene exposes sin's full malignancy: humans torturing incarnate Love. Yet Christ's silence and submission (1 Peter 2:23: "when he was reviled, reviled not again") demonstrate the invincible power of self-giving love over coercive violence.

Historical Context

Roman soldiers were hardened professionals, often recruited from provinces and brutalized by military culture. Mockery of condemned prisoners was standard practice—a form of psychological torture preceding execution. The soldiers' treatment of Jesus reflects systematic dehumanization inherent in imperial military apparatus. Their Jewish-specific mockery ("King of the Jews") suggests awareness of the religious-political tensions in occupied Judea.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does the soldiers' unwitting proclamation of truth ("Hail, King!") while intending mockery reveal God's sovereignty over human evil?
2. What does Jesus's refusal to retaliate teach about the nature of true power and kingdom authority?
3. In what ways do you mockingly acknowledge Christ's lordship in areas where you refuse to submit?

Interlinear Text

καὶ ἔλεγον Χαῖρε ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων· καὶ
! and said Hail King G3588 of the Jews ! and
G2532 G3004 G5463 G935 G2453 G2532

ἐδίδουν αὐτῷ ῥαπίσματα
they smote him with their hands
G1325 G846 G4475

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 27:29 (Kingdom): And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!