

John 7:49

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed.

Analysis

But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed. The Pharisees show contempt for common people. 'This people' (ho ochlos houtos) is dismissive. 'Who knoweth not the law' assumes the crowd is ignorant of Torah. 'Are cursed' (epikataroi eisin) consigns them to divine judgment. This reveals the Pharisees' elitism and pride. They view themselves as enlightened, the people as cursed ignoramuses. Jesus repeatedly challenged this attitude (Matthew 23:2-7), demonstrating God's heart for the lost and marginalized.

Historical Context

Rabbinic Judaism distinguished between the learned (talmidei chakhamim) and the ignorant common people (am ha'aretz). Some rabbis forbade eating with am ha'aretz or marrying their daughters. This created a religious caste system Jesus rejected. His association with sinners, tax collectors, and common people scandalized Pharisees (Matthew 9:11, Luke 15:2). The early church's inclusion of Gentiles, slaves, and the uneducated continued breaking down these barriers (Galatians 3:28, Colossians 3:11).

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does religious elitism contradict the gospel?
2. What does Jesus's ministry to the marginalized teach about God's heart?
3. How do we avoid similar attitudes of spiritual superiority?

Interlinear Text

ἀλλ' τὸν ὄχλος οὗτος τὸν μὴ γινώσκων τὸν νόμον
But who people this who not knoweth who the law
G235 G3588 G3793 G3778 G3588 G3361 G1097 G3588 G3551

ἐπικατάρατοι εἰσιν
cursed are
G1944 G1526

Additional Cross-References

John 9:34 (Parallel theme): They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out.

John 9:40 (Word): And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also?