

Luke 22:50

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear.

Analysis

And one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear. John's Gospel identifies this disciple as Peter and the servant as Malchus (John 18:10). The Greek *afeilen to ous autou to dexion* (ἀφεῖλεν τὸ οὖς αὐτοῦ τὸ δεξιόν, 'took off his right ear') indicates a deliberate slash aimed at the head. Peter, a fisherman trained in knife-work, likely aimed to kill but only struck the ear. The dexion (right ear) detail suggests eyewitness testimony—such specificity serves no theological purpose but authenticates the account.

Peter's action embodies misguided zeal—courage without wisdom, passion without principle. He would defend Jesus with violence but within hours would deny knowing Him (v. 57). This reveals the flesh's inconsistency: bold one moment, cowardly the next. The target, a servant of the high priest, held no real power—Peter struck someone powerless while the true enemies surrounded them. This mirrors how religious zeal often attacks symptoms rather than root problems.

Historical Context

Malchus, as the high priest's servant, was likely a trusted administrator, possibly overseeing the arrest party. His name (Hebrew Melek, 'king') is recorded despite his low status, perhaps because he became known in the early church. Cutting off an ear would disqualify someone from priestly service under Mosaic law (Leviticus 21:17-23), adding insult to injury. Peter's use of a machaira (μάχαιρα)—a short

sword or large knife—was practical for fishermen but illegal for common Jews to carry into public spaces.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. What does Peter's violent defense followed by denial reveal about human nature?
2. How can religious zeal become destructive when divorced from Christ's Spirit?
3. Why does Jesus heal an enemy's servant rather than reward Peter's 'defense'?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	ἐπάταξεν	εἷς	τις	ἐξ	αὐτοῦ	τὸν	δοῦλον	τοῦ
And	smote	one	G5100	of	his	G3588	the servant	G3588
G2532	G3960	G1520		G1537	G846		G1401	
ἀρχιερέως	καὶ	ἀφεῖλεν	αὐτοῦ	τὸ	οὖς	τὸ	δεξιόν	
of the high priest	And	cut off	his	G3588	ear	G3588	right	
G749	G2532	G851	G846		G3775		G1188	

Additional Cross-References

Mark 14:47 (Parallel theme): And one of them that stood by drew a sword, and smote a servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear.

Romans 12:19 (Parallel theme): Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

2 Corinthians 10:4 (Parallel theme): (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)

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