

Luke 23:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves.

Analysis

And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves. This verse records one of the ironies of Christ's passion—two political enemies reconciled through their shared rejection of Jesus. The Greek word egenonto phili (ἐγένοντο φίλοι, "became friends") indicates a transformation from active hostility to political alliance, demonstrating how worldly powers unite against God's kingdom.

Pilate, the Roman procurator of Judea, and Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee, had been at echthra (ἕχθρα, "enmity")—a term denoting deep-seated hostility and animosity. Their previous conflict likely stemmed from jurisdictional disputes and Pilate's actions in Galilee (see Luke 13:1). Yet when confronted with Christ, they found common ground in their cowardice and political expediency.

This reconciliation ironically fulfills Psalm 2:2—"The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed." While they sought to preserve their earthly authority, they unknowingly participated in God's sovereign plan of redemption. Their friendship, forged in shared guilt, stands in stark contrast to the genuine reconciliation Christ came to accomplish between God and humanity. The verse exposes how human alliances often form around shared sin rather than shared righteousness.

Historical Context

Pontius Pilate governed Judea from AD 26-36, known for his brutal governance and insensitivity to Jewish customs. Herod Antipas ruled Galilee and Perea from 4 BC to AD 39, infamous for executing John the Baptist. Historical sources (Josephus, Philo) describe Pilate as ruthless and provocative, while Herod was characterized by political cunning and moral corruption.

Their enmity likely arose from multiple incidents. Luke 13:1 references Pilate killing Galileans (Herod's subjects) in the temple, a serious jurisdictional violation. Additionally, Pilate had erected Roman standards in Jerusalem and seized temple funds, creating tension with all Jewish leaders including Herod. The relationship was further strained by competing power bases—Pilate answered to Rome directly, while Herod maintained his position through political maneuvering.

During Jesus' trial, Pilate's sending Christ to Herod (Luke 23:7-11) represented both legal protocol (returning a Galilean to his proper jurisdiction) and political strategy. Herod, honored by this gesture, returned the favor by sending Jesus back without formal charges. This diplomatic exchange repaired their relationship, creating a political alliance that would last beyond Christ's crucifixion. Their reconciliation demonstrates how first-century political leaders navigated complex power dynamics in Roman-occupied Palestine.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does the reconciliation of Pilate and Herod through rejecting Christ challenge us about the basis of our own relationships and alliances?
2. In what ways might we be tempted to form 'friendships' based on shared rejection of God's truth rather than shared commitment to it?
3. How does this verse illuminate the contrast between worldly unity (built on political expediency) and Christian unity (built on Christ)?
4. What does this ironic fulfillment of Psalm 2:2 reveal about God's sovereignty even when worldly powers conspire against Him?
5. How should understanding that Jesus faced unified opposition from both Jewish and Gentile authorities strengthen our resolve when facing persecution?

Interlinear Text

ἐγένοντο δὲ φίλοι ὥ τε Πιλᾶτος καὶ ὥ Ἡρώδης
were made And friends G3588 G5037 Pilate and G3588 Herod
G1096 G1161 G5384 G4091 G2532 G2264

ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ μετ' ἀλλήλων· προϋπῆρχον γὰρ
at G846 G3588 day together G240 before G4391 for G1063
G1722 G2250 G3326

ἐν ἔχθρᾳ ὄντες πρὸς ἑαυτούς
at enmity they were between themselves
G1722 G2189 G5607 G4314 G1438

Additional Cross-References

Acts 4:27 (Parallel theme): 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,