

Luke 23:35

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God.

Analysis

And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God. The scene divides into two groups: passive spectators and active mockers. "The people stood beholding" (ho laos heistēkei theōrōn, ὁ λαὸς εἰστήκει θεωρῶν)—the crowd watched, stunned into silence, perhaps sensing they had demanded something monstrous. But "the rulers" (hoi archontes, οἱ ἄρχοντες)—the Sanhedrin members, chief priests, and scribes—"derided" (exemyktērizon, ἔξεμυκτήριζον), literally "turned up their noses" in contemptuous mockery.

Their taunt—"He saved others; let him save himself"—drips with irony. They meant it sarcastically, but spoke profound truth. Jesus did save others through healings, exorcisms, and resurrections. But the salvation He now accomplished infinitely surpassed those temporal deliverances—He was purchasing eternal redemption. The condition "if he be Christ, the chosen of God" (ei houtos estin ho Christos tou Theou ho eklektos, εἰ οὗτος ἐστιν ὁ Χριστὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ ὁ ἐκλεκτός) reveals their blindness. He was Christ, the Anointed One, but proved it by not saving Himself.

Here lies Christianity's paradox: Christ saved others precisely by not saving Himself. Had He come down from the cross, He would have saved only His own life but forfeited ours. His refusal to save Himself was the very means of saving us. As Hebrews 5:7-9 explains, "though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal

salvation unto all them that obey him." The mockers unwittingly proclaimed gospel truth.

Historical Context

Public mockery of crucifixion victims was common in Roman executions, designed to humiliate and deter. Victims were typically crucified naked along major roads, exposed to insults and abuse. Jewish leaders participating in this mockery reveals their intense hatred and determination to destroy Jesus' reputation completely. Their presence at Golgotha—outside the city walls, a place of ritual uncleanness—demonstrates how thoroughly they abandoned normal piety to ensure Christ's death.

The title "Christ, the chosen of God" (ho Christos tou Theou ho eklektos) echoes Isaiah 42:1: "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth." The rulers unwittingly testified to Jesus' identity while attempting to disprove it. At Jesus' baptism and transfiguration, God declared Him "my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Luke 3:22, 9:35). Now at the cross, the Father remained silent—not because He rejected His Son, but because Jesus was bearing sin's curse and experiencing the abandonment our sins deserved (Matthew 27:46).

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does the paradox that "Christ saved others by not saving Himself" reveal the nature of substitutionary atonement?
2. What does the rulers' mockery despite witnessing Jesus' miracles teach about the hardness of unbelief and the insufficiency of signs to produce faith?
3. How should we respond when God's apparent inactivity (silence during Christ's suffering) is interpreted as absence or impotence by unbelievers?

Interlinear Text

καὶ εἰστήκει ὁ λαὸς θεωρῶν ἐξεμυκτήριζον δὲ καὶ
And stood the people beholding derided And And
G2532 G2476 G3588 G2992 G2334 G1592 G1161 G2532

οἱ ἄρχοντες σὺν αὐτοῖς, λέγοντες ἄλλους σωσάτω
the rulers with them him saying others He saved
G3588 G758 G4862 G846 G3004 G243 G4982

σωσάτω ἐαυτόν εἰ οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ Χριστὸς ὁ τοῦ
He saved himself if he be Christ G3588 G3588
G4982 G1438 G1487 G3778 G2076 G5547

θεοῦ ἐκλεκτός
of God the chosen
G2316 G1588

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 22:17 (Parallel theme): I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me.

Isaiah 42:1 (Parallel theme): Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.

1 Peter 2:4 (References God): To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious,

Isaiah 53:3 (Parallel theme): He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Matthew 12:18 (Parallel theme): Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles.

Luke 16:14 (Parallel theme): And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him.

