

Luke 23:36

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar,

Analysis

And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar. The soldiers' mockery added a Gentile voice to the Jewish rulers' scorn, fulfilling Psalm 22:7-8: "All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him." The verb "mocked" (enepaixan, ἐνέπαιξαν) means to ridicule, deride, or make sport of—treating Christ's agony as entertainment.

"Offering him vinegar" (prosferantes auto oxos, προσφέροντες αὐτῷ ὄξος) describes presenting cheap, sour wine (oxos, ὄξος), the common drink of soldiers and laborers. This wasn't the wine mixed with myrrh offered earlier as an anesthetic (Mark 15:23, which Jesus refused), but a mocking gesture—offering refreshment while simultaneously taunting Him. Some scholars suggest this fulfilled Psalm 69:21: "They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink."

The soldiers' participation reveals the universality of human guilt. Jewish leaders represented religious humanity rejecting God's Messiah; Roman soldiers represented pagan humanity treating Him with contempt. Together they demonstrate Paul's assertion: "There is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10). Jew and Gentile, religious and secular, all participated in crucifying the Lord of glory (1 Corinthians 2:8). Yet Christ prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34), demonstrating grace toward the very mockers.

Historical Context

Roman soldiers conducting executions frequently abused and mocked victims, viewing crucifixion duty as crude entertainment. The offering of vinegar was standard practice—posca, a mixture of sour wine, water, and vinegar, served as the regular drink of Roman legionaries. Archaeological discoveries have uncovered Roman military camps with evidence of posca production and storage.

The soldiers' mockery likely stemmed partly from the charge against Jesus—"King of the Jews." To Roman soldiers, Jewish messianic claims were absurd. They had earlier dressed Jesus in a purple robe, placed a crown of thorns on His head, and mocked Him with "Hail, King of the Jews!" (Luke 23:11, John 19:2-3). Now at the cross, they continued the cruel jest. Their contempt for Jewish religion and Roman authority's willingness to execute a harmless teacher reveals the moral bankruptcy of pagan empire—power without justice, strength without mercy.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How does the soldiers' mockery alongside the Jewish leaders' demonstrate the universal guilt of humanity—both religious and secular—in Christ's crucifixion?
2. What does Jesus' prayer "Father, forgive them" while being mocked teach about responding to those who persecute or ridicule us for our faith?
3. How should the fulfillment of Psalm 22 and 69 in the crucifixion details strengthen our confidence in Scripture's inspiration and prophetic accuracy?

Interlinear Text

ἐνέπαιζον δὲ αὐτῷ καὶ οἱ στρατιῶται προσερχόμενοι
mocked And him also G3588 the soldiers coming
G1702 G1161 G846 G2532 G4757 G4334

καὶ ὄξος προσφέροντες αὐτῷ
also vinegar offering him
G2532 G3690 G4374 G846

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 69:21 (Parallel theme): They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

Matthew 27:48 (Parallel theme): And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink.

Mark 15:36 (Parallel theme): And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink, saying, Let alone; let us see whether Elias will come to take him down.

Matthew 27:34 (Parallel theme): They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink.