

Mark 15:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews?

Analysis

But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews? (ο δὲ Πιλᾶτος ἀπεκρίθη αὐτοῖς λέγων, Θέλετε ἀπολύσω ὑμῖν τὸν βασιλέα τῶν Ἰουδαίων; ho de Pilatos apekrithē autois legōn, Thelete apolysō hymin ton basilea tōn Ioudaiōn?)—Pilate's question uses the verb θέλω (thelō, to will, desire, want) with deliberate political calculation. He employs the title 'King of the Jews' (βασιλέα τῶν Ἰουδαίων, basilea tōn Ioudaiōn) with apparent irony or contempt—perhaps mocking both Jesus's claims and Jewish nationalism.

Pilate's strategy is transparent: offer the crowd their 'king' expecting they'll choose Jesus over a common criminal. John 18:39 makes this explicit: 'But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews?' Pilate attempts to manipulate the amnesty tradition to extricate himself from condemning a man he knows is innocent. The plan backfires spectacularly.

Historical Context

Pilate's use of 'King of the Jews' was probably sarcastic—Roman sources portray him as contemptuous of Jewish sensibilities. He later antagonizes Jewish leaders by insisting the cross inscription remain 'King of the Jews' (John 19:21-22). Here he may be baiting the crowd: 'You want your king freed? Here he is!' Pilate underestimated both the crowd's volatility and the chief priests' influence (v. 11).

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. Is Pilate's use of 'King of the Jews' mocking Jesus, the Jewish people, or both?
2. Why does Pilate think offering Jesus as 'your king' will secure His release?
3. How does Pilate's political calculation demonstrate the weakness of compromise with evil?

Interlinear Text

ο	δὲ	Πιλᾶτος	ἀπεκρίθη	αὐτοῖς	λέγων,	Θέλετε
G3588	But	Pilate	answered	them	saying	Will ye
G1161		G4091	G611	G846	G3004	G2309
ἀπολύσω	ὑμῖν	τὸν	βασιλέα	τῶν	Ἰουδαίων	
that I release	unto you	G3588	the King	G3588	of the Jews	
G630		G5213	G935		G2453	

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