

Matthew 10:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death.

Analysis

Jesus warns of family betrayal: 'the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death' (παραδώσει δε αδελφος αδελφον εις θανατον και πατηρ τεκνον και επαναστησονται τεκνα επι γονεις και θανατωσονται αυτους). This horrifying prediction describes family members betraying one another to death because of Christian faith. Jesus' coming brings 'not peace but a sword' (10:34), dividing families. Faith loyalty supersedes family loyalty, creating conflict when family opposes Christ. This isn't ideal but reality: gospel demands allegiance that threatens those who reject it. Family persecution is particularly painful—betrayal by those closest—yet Jesus predicts it to prepare disciples.

Historical Context

Ancient cultures were intensely family-centered. Honor and shame were collective, not individual. One family member's religious deviance brought shame on the entire family. Jewish families considered Christian faith apostasy warranting disownment. Roman families faced similar dynamics when members converted. Early Christian martyrologies record family betrayals: relatives turning Christians over to authorities to preserve family honor. Pliny's letters to Trajan describe children informing on Christian parents. Jesus' prediction proved tragically accurate.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How do we maintain Christian faithfulness when family opposes our faith?
2. What does this passage teach about the relationship between family loyalty and Christ loyalty?
3. How can we love family members while prioritizing allegiance to Christ?

Interlinear Text

παραδώσει δὲ ἀδελφὸν ἀδελφὸν εἰς θάνατον καὶ
shall deliver up And the brother the brother to death and
G3860 G1161 G80 G80 G1519 G2288 G2532

πατὴρ τέκνα καὶ ἐπαναστήσονται τέκνα ἐπὶ¹
the father the child and shall rise up the child against
G3962 G5043 G2532 G1881 G5043 G1909

γονεῖς καὶ θανατώσουσιν αὐτούς
their parents and cause them
G1118 G2532 G2289 G846

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 24:10 (Parallel theme): And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.

Zechariah 13:3 (Parallel theme): And it shall come to pass, that when any shall yet prophesy, then his father and his mother that begat him shall say unto him, Thou shalt not live; for thou speakest lies in the name of the LORD: and his father and his mother that begat him shall thrust him through when he prophesieth.

2 Samuel 16:11 (Parallel theme): And David said to Abishai, and to all his servants, Behold, my son, which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life: how much more now may this Benjamite do it? let him alone, and let him curse; for the LORD hath bidden him.

Job 19:19 (Parallel theme): All my inward friends abhorred me: and they whom I loved are turned against me.

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org