

Matthew 20:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.

Analysis

Ye shall drink indeed of my cup (τὸ μὲν ποτήριόν μου πίεσθε)—The emphatic men particle confirms their future martyrdom; Jesus prophesies that James and John will participate in His sufferings. Church history validates this: James was beheaded by Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12:2), becoming the first apostolic martyr; John suffered imprisonment and exile, likely dying naturally in old age as the last living apostle.

But to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give (τὸ δὲ καθίσαι... οὐκ ἔστιν ἐμὸν δοῦναι)—This striking statement has puzzled interpreters. Jesus affirms submission to the Father's sovereign decree; positions in the kingdom are **prepared** (ἡτοίμασται) by divine foreordination, not political maneuvering. Ironically, at Calvary, two thieves occupy the right and left positions (Matthew 27:38)—the 'throne' is a cross.

Historical Context

Within a decade, James was executed (AD 44), fulfilling Jesus's prophecy. John survived Domitian's persecution (AD 81-96), was exiled to Patmos, and wrote Revelation. Tradition records he was boiled in oil but miraculously survived. The Father's preparation of kingdom positions echoes Ephesians 2:10—good works

foreordained before creation. Jesus's self-limitation here reflects His incarnate submission to the Father's will.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus's prediction of their suffering redefine what 'greatness' means in God's kingdom?
2. What does Jesus's deference to the Father's sovereign appointment teach about humility and submission within the Trinity?
3. How should the irony of the two thieves occupying the 'right and left' positions at the cross shape our understanding of kingdom values?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	λέγει	αὐτοῖς	Tὸ	μὲν	ποτήριόν	μου	πίεσθε	καὶ
And	he saith	unto them	G3588	indeed	cup	my	Ye shall drink	And
G2532	G3004	G846		G3303	G4221	G3450	G4095	G2532
τὸ	βάπτισμα			οἵς		ἐγὼ		
G3588	with the baptism	it shall be given to them for whom		G3739		I		
	G908					G1473		
βαπτισθήσεσθε·	βαπτισθήσεσθε·	Tὸ	δὲ	καθίσαι	ἐξ			
am baptized with	am baptized with	G3588	but	to sit	on			
G907	G907		G1161	G2523	G1537			
δεξιῶν	μου	καὶ	ἐξ	εὐωνύμων	μου	οὐκ	ἔστιν	ἐμὸν
right hand	my	And	on	left	my	not	is	mine
G1188	G3450	G2532	G1537	G2176	G3450	G3756	G2076	G1699
δοῦναι	ἀλλ᾽		οἵς		ἡτοίμασται	ὑπὸ	τοῦ	
to give	but	it shall be given to them for whom			it is prepared	of		
G1325	G235		G3739		G2090	G5259		G3588
πατρός	μου							
Father	my							
G3962	G3450							

Additional Cross-References

Revelation 1:9 (Parallel theme): I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Acts 12:2 (Parallel theme): And he killed James the brother of John with the sword.

Mark 10:40 (Parallel theme): But to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared.

Matthew 25:34 (Parallel theme): Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

Romans 8:17 (Parallel theme): And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

1 Corinthians 2:9 (Parallel theme): But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

Hebrews 11:16 (Parallel theme): But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.

Colossians 1:24 (Parallel theme): Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church:

2 Corinthians 1:7 (Parallel theme): And our hope of you is stedfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation.