

Matthew 21:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they were sore displeased,

Analysis

After cleansing the temple, 'when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they were sore displeased.' The ironic contrast is stark: children recognized and worshiped Jesus as Messiah ('Son of David') while religious leaders burned with indignation. The phrase 'sore displeased' (ἡγανάκτησαν/ēganaktēsan) indicates deep anger and resentment. What provoked this rage? The 'wonderful things' (τὰ θαυμάσια/ta thaumasia)—miracles, likely healings—demonstrated divine power. The children's worship acknowledged Jesus's messianic identity using the same 'Hosanna to the Son of David' the crowds proclaimed at His entry (v.9). The religious leaders' anger reveals their spiritual blindness: confronted with undeniable evidence of Jesus's divine authority, they responded not with worship but hostility. Their concern was institutional control—Jesus threatened their power, exposed their corruption (v.13), and undermined their authority. Reformed theology recognizes this pattern: those most invested in religious systems often most fiercely resist genuine moves of God that disrupt their control. Children, with simple faith unencumbered by political calculations, saw what scholars missed.

Historical Context

The 'chief priests and scribes' constituted Jerusalem's religious aristocracy—the Sadducean high-priestly families who controlled the temple establishment and the scribal experts in Torah. These groups had enormous political and economic power: they managed the temple treasury, controlled the sacrificial system's lucrative commerce (which Jesus disrupted), and collaborated with Rome to maintain order. Jesus's cleansing of the temple (v.12-13) directly attacked their economic interests—the money changers and merchants operated with their approval, likely paying fees. His healings in the temple demonstrated authority that bypassed their religious gatekeeping. The children's acclamation echoed Psalm 118:25-26, a messianic psalm, applying it explicitly to Jesus. This public messianic claim in the temple courts was politically explosive. The religious leaders feared Roman response to messianic movements (John 11:48) and resented competition for popular loyalty. Their 'displeasure' would quickly escalate to plot Jesus's death (Matthew 26:3-4).

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. Why do religious institutions and their leaders sometimes most fiercely resist genuine moves of God?
2. What does it reveal about the kingdom that children recognized Jesus while religious experts rejected Him?
3. How do economic interests, institutional power, and theological pride combine to blind people to God's work today?

Interlinear Text

ιδόντες δὲ οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ οἱ γραμματεῖς τὰ
saw And G3588 when the chief priests and G3588 scribes G3588
G1492 G1161 G749 G2532 G1122

θαυμάσια ἀ ἐποίησεν καὶ τοὺς παῖδας
the wonderful things that he did and G3588 the children
G2297 G3739 G4160 G2532 G3816

κράζοντας ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ καὶ λέγοντας Ὁσαννὰ τῷ
crying in G3588 the temple and saying Hosanna G3588
G2896 G1722 G2411 G2532 G3004 G5614

υἱῷ Δαβὶδ, ἡγανάκτησαν
to the Son of David they were sore displeased
G5207 G1138 G23

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 21:9 (References David): And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.

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