

Matthew 25:35

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

Analysis

I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat (ἐπείνασα καὶ ἐδόκατέ μοι φαγεῖν, epeinasa kai edōkate moi phagein)—The aorist tense verbs indicate specific historical acts, not mere sentiment. The King identifies completely with His suffering people; ministry to the needy is ministry to Christ Himself.

I was thirsty... a stranger (ἐδιψησα... ξένος, edipsēsa... xenos)—Xenos means foreigner, outsider, one without legal protection. Biblical hospitality (philoxenia, Romans 12:13) wasn't optional courtesy but covenant obligation, rooted in Israel's memory: 'You were strangers in Egypt' (Exodus 22:21).

Historical Context

First-century Palestine knew desperate poverty; day laborers often went hungry without work (Matthew 20:1-7). Travel was dangerous; strangers depended on hospitality for survival. Roman roads brought many displaced persons through Judea. Jesus's criteria aren't arbitrary—they reflect Torah's core justice concerns: feeding the hungry (Isaiah 58:7), welcoming strangers (Leviticus 19:34), caring for the vulnerable.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does Christ's identification with the suffering ('ye gave me meat') transform our understanding of charity?
2. In what ways might our modern comfort insulate us from encountering the hungry, thirsty, and stranger?
3. What does 'took me in' (hospitality) require beyond material provision in contemporary contexts?

Interlinear Text

ἐπείνασα	γὰρ	καὶ	ἐδώκατε	μοι	φαγεῖν	ἐδίψησα	καὶ
I was an hungry	For	and	ye gave	me	meat	I was thirsty	and
G3983	G1063	G2532	G1325	G3427	G5315	G1372	G2532
ἐποτίσατε	με	ξένος	ἥμην	καὶ	συνηγάγετε	με	
drink	me	a stranger	I was	and	in	me	
G4222	G3165	G3581	G2252	G2532	G4863	G3165	

Additional Cross-References

Ezekiel 18:7 (Parallel theme): And hath not oppressed any, but hath restored to the debtor his pledge, hath spoiled none by violence, hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment;

Ezekiel 18:16 (Parallel theme): Neither hath oppressed any, hath not withholden the pledge, neither hath spoiled by violence, but hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment,

Hebrews 13:16 (Parallel theme): But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

James 1:27 (Parallel theme): Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

Romans 12:13 (Parallel theme): Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.

Job 31:32 (Parallel theme): The stranger did not lodge in the street: but I opened my doors to the traveller.

Romans 12:20 (Parallel theme): Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.

Hebrews 6:10 (Parallel theme): For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

Acts 16:15 (Parallel theme): And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.

Acts 10:31 (Parallel theme): And said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God.