

Matthew 25:38

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

Analysis

When saw we thee a stranger? (πότε δέ σε εἶδομεν ξένον, pote de se eidomen xenon)—The continued interrogatives underscore their genuine bewilderment. The Greek structure emphasizes you (σε, se)—'When did we see you?'—revealing they never imagined serving Christ Himself.

Or naked, and clothed thee? (ἢ γυμνὸν καὶ περιεβάλομεν, ē gymnon kai periebalomen)—The simple conjunction ē (or) links these acts of mercy as one seamless pattern. Their righteousness wasn't selective (helping some categories of need while ignoring others) but comprehensive, flowing from transformed character.

Historical Context

Hospitality to strangers was foundational to ancient Mediterranean ethics, rooted in divine visitation stories—Abraham entertaining angels unaware (Hebrews 13:2 cites Genesis 18). Clothing the naked fulfilled prophetic religion: 'Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry... when thou seest the naked, cover him?' (Isaiah 58:7). The righteous embodied what Israel's prophets had demanded.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How might we 'entertain angels unawares' by showing hospitality without recognizing Christ's presence?
2. What does comprehensive mercy (addressing multiple needs) reveal about the scope of gospel transformation?
3. In what ways does modern individualism prevent us from seeing strangers as worthy of sacrificial care?

Interlinear Text

πότε	δέ	σε	εἶδομεν	ξένον	καὶ	συνηγάγομεν	ἢ
When	G1161	thee	saw we	a stranger	and	took thee in	or
G4219		G4571	G1492	G3581	G2532	G4863	G2228
 γυμνὸν καὶ περιεβάλομεν							
naked	and	clothed					
G1131	G2532	G4016					