

Matthew 27:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For he knew that for envy they had delivered him.

Analysis

For he knew that for envy they had delivered him (διὰ φθόνον παρέδωκαν αὐτόν)—The Greek phthonon (envy, jealousy) reveals the true motive behind Jesus's execution. Pilate, pagan though he was, perceived what many miss: religious persecution often stems from envy of another's spiritual authority and following.

The chief priests envied Jesus's popularity (Matthew 21:46), His authority ('not as the scribes,' Matthew 7:29), His direct access to God. Envy drove Cain to murder Abel (Genesis 4), Joseph's brothers to sell him (Genesis 37), and Israel's leaders to crucify their Messiah. 'Phthonos is as cruel as the grave' (Song of Solomon 8:6).

Historical Context

The Sadducean chief priests held power through Roman appointment and temple control. Jesus threatened their authority by cleansing the temple (Matthew 21:12-13) and exposing their corruption. They faced loss of status, income, and political position.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does envy of others' spiritual gifts or effectiveness in ministry lead to destructive behavior even today?
2. What does Pilate's recognition of envy reveal about how obvious our motives are to those around us?

Interlinear Text

ἤδει	γὰρ	ὅτι	διὰ	φθόνον	παρέδωκαν	αὐτόν
he knew	For	that	for	envy	they had delivered	him
G1492	G1063	G3754	G1223	G5355	G3860	G846

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 27:4 (Parallel theme): Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?

Acts 5:17 (Parallel theme): Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation,

Mark 15:10 (Parallel theme): For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy.

Acts 7:9 (Parallel theme): And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him,

Acts 13:45 (Parallel theme): But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.

Genesis 37:11 (Parallel theme): And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying.

James 4:5 (Parallel theme): Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?