

Matthew 27:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus.

Analysis

But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus (ἔπεισαν... ἵνα αἰτήσωνται... ἀπολέσωσιν)—The Greek *epeisan* (persuaded) and *apolesōsin* (destroy) show deliberate manipulation toward murder. Religious leaders used their authority to incite judicial murder of the innocent.

This reversal from Sunday's 'Hosanna' (Matthew 21:9) to Friday's 'Crucify' demonstrates mob psychology's volatility and the power of authority figures to manipulate public opinion. The same mouths that praised now demanded death—a portrait of human fickleness and the danger of religious authority corrupted by self-interest.

Historical Context

The crowd was likely composed of chief priests' dependents, temple workers, and supporters—different from the Galilean pilgrims who welcomed Jesus. In the early morning, leaders could gather their faction while Jesus's supporters were absent.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How do spiritual leaders today sometimes use their influence to persuade people away from Christ?
2. What does the crowd's manipulation teach about the importance of personal conviction versus following religious authorities?

Interlinear Text

Οἱ δὲ ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ οἱ πρεσβύτεροι ἔπεισαν τοὺς
G3588 But the chief priests and G3588 elders persuaded G3588
G1161 G749 G2532 G4245 G3982
ὄχλους ἵνα αἰτήσωνται τὸν Βαραββᾶν τὸν δὲ Ἰησοῦν
the multitude that they should ask G3588 Barabbas G3588 But Jesus
G3793 G2443 G154 G912 G1161 G2424
ἀπολέσωσιν
destroy
G622

Additional Cross-References

Mark 15:11 (Parallel theme): But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them.

John 18:40 (Parallel theme): Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber.