

Matthew 27:38

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left.

Analysis

Two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left (δύο λῃσταί, dyo lēstai)—not petty thieves but lēstai, bandits or insurrectionists (same word for Barabbas, John 18:40). Jesus is numbered with transgressors (Isaiah 53:12), literally between them.

The positioning fulfills the request of James and John's mother: **Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom** (Matthew 20:21). Jesus replied, **Ye know not what ye ask.** Now we see: the right and left positions in his kingdom are crosses. Glory comes through suffering.

Historical Context

Crucifixion was reserved for slaves, pirates, and insurrectionists—never Roman citizens (except for treason). That Jesus was crucified between two lēstai reinforced the charge of sedition: he was treated as the ringleader of a revolutionary movement.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus's position between two criminals fulfill both prophecy and the request in Matthew 20:20-23?
2. What does one thief's repentance (Luke 23:39-43) reveal about the sufficiency of Christ's grace even in the final moments?

Interlinear Text

Tότε	σταυροῦνται	σὺν	αὐτῷ	δύο	λησταί	εῖς
Then	crucified	with	him	were there two	thieves	another
G5119	G4717	G4862	G846	G1417	G3027	G1520
ἐξ	δεξιῶν	καὶ	εῖς	ἐξ	εὐωνύμων	
on	the right hand	and	another	on	the left	
G1537	G1188	G2532	G1520	G1537	G2176	

Additional Cross-References

John 19:18 (Cross): Where they crucified him, and two other with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.

Isaiah 53:12 (Parallel theme): Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

Mark 15:27 (Cross): And with him they crucify two thieves; the one on his right hand, and the other on his left.

Matthew 27:44 (Cross): The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth.

Luke 22:37 (Parallel theme): For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end.

