

Matthew 27:40

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.

Analysis

Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself—they twist Jesus's words about raising the temple of his body (John 2:19-21). **If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross**—echoing Satan's temptation: **If thou be the Son of God** (Matthew 4:3, 6). Both tempt Jesus to prove deity through self-preservation.

The ultimate irony: Jesus COULD save himself but then could not save us. **He saved others; himself he cannot save** (v. 42) is theologically precise—substitutionary atonement requires the Substitute to die. Coming down would abort redemption. Staying on the cross proves both deity and love.

Historical Context

The temple saying was central to accusations at Jesus's trial (Matthew 26:61). That this mockery appears at the cross shows how thoroughly his words had been distorted and weaponized against him throughout his trial and execution.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. Why was staying on the cross a greater proof of Jesus's divinity than coming down would have been?
2. How does this temptation parallel Satan's wilderness temptations—demanding Jesus prove his identity through self-preservation?

Interlinear Text

καὶ λέγοντες Ὁ καταλύων τὸν ναὸν καὶ ἐν
And saying G3588 Thou that destroyest G3588 the temple And it in
G2532 G3004 G2647 G3485 G2532 G1722

τρισὶν ἡμέραις οἰκοδομῶν σῶσον σεαυτόν, εἰ νίδιος
three days buildest save thyself If the Son
G5140 G2250 G3618 G4982 G4572 G1487 G5207

εἰ τοῦ θεοῦ κατάβηθι ἀπὸ τοῦ σταυροῦ
thou be of God come down from the cross
G1488 G2316 G2597 G575 G3588 G4716

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 26:61 (Temple): And said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.

Matthew 4:6 (References God): And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

Matthew 4:3 (References God): And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.

Revelation 11:10 (Parallel theme): And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth.

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