

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

Psalms 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	υἱὸς	
three	days	buildest	save	thyself	If	the Son	
G5140	G2250	G3618	G4982	G4572	G1487	G5207	
εἰ	τοῦ	θεοῦ	κατάβηθι	ἀπὸ	τοῦ	σταυροῦ	
thou be	G3588	of God	come down	from	G3588	the cross	
G1488		G2316	G2597	G575		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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