

Matthew 27:42

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him.

Analysis

He saved others; himself he cannot save—the mockers speak prophetic truth. Cannot (οὐ δύναται, ou dynatai) is theologically accurate: Jesus cannot save himself AND save us. The Sinless One must die for the sinful. **If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him**—a lying condition. They would not believe.

The great reversal: perceived weakness is actual power. **The foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men** (1 Corinthians 1:25). The cross appears as defeat but is victory. Staying on the cross demonstrates greater power than coming down.

Historical Context

Roman crucifixion was designed to make the victim appear utterly powerless—naked, suspended, gasping for breath. That the King of Israel would die this shameful death was 'foolishness to Greeks' and 'stumbling block to Jews' (1 Corinthians 1:23).

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does the phrase 'He saved others; himself he cannot save' express the heart of substitutionary atonement?
2. Why is the cross a greater demonstration of power than any miracle of deliverance would have been?

Interlinear Text

Ἄλλους	σῶσαι·	έαυτὸν	οὐ	δύναται	σῶσαι·	εἰ
others	He saved	himself	he cannot	G1410	He saved	If
G243	G4982	G1438	G3756		G4982	G1487
βασιλεὺς	Ἰσραήλ	ἐστιν	καταβάτω	νῦν	ἀπὸ	τοῦ
the King	of Israel	he be	come down	now	from	the cross
G935	G2474	G2076	G2597	G3568	G575	G4716
καὶ	πιστεύσομεν	αὐτῷ				
and	we will believe	him				
G2532	G4100	G846				

Additional Cross-References

John 1:49 (Kingdom): Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.

Matthew 27:37 (Kingdom): And set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.