

John 18:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.

Analysis

John's parenthetical comment recalls Caiaphas's unwitting prophecy: "**it was expedient that one man should die for the people**" (συμφέρει ἔνα ἄνθρωπον ἀποθανεῖν ὑπὲρ τοῦ λαοῦ/sympherei hena anthrōpon apothanein hyper tou laou). The verb συμφέρει (sympherei) means "it is advantageous, profitable, beneficial"—cold political calculus. Caiaphas had spoken this at the Sanhedrin council after Lazarus's raising (John 11:49-50), arguing that sacrificing Jesus would prevent Roman crackdown on the Jewish nation.

The preposition ὑπέρ (hyper, "for, in behalf of, instead of") can mean representation or substitution. Caiaphas meant it politically—better one troublemaker die than the whole nation suffer Roman reprisal. But God meant it soteriologically—one man (the God-man) would die as substitute for His people, bearing their sins. John explicitly notes this dual meaning in 11:51-52: Caiaphas "prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation...that also he should gather together in one the children of God."

This ironic prophecy demonstrates God's sovereignty over even hostile human counsel. The high priest, despite corrupt motives, spoke divine truth he didn't comprehend. His expedient political sacrifice became the basis for cosmic redemption—Christ died for His people, not to spare them Roman judgment but to bear God's judgment in their place.

Historical Context

Caiaphas's original statement (John 11:49-50) came during the Sanhedrin's emergency session after Jesus raised Lazarus. The miracle had created a groundswell of belief, threatening Jewish leaders' position and potentially provoking Roman intervention. The delicate political balance—Roman occupation tolerating Jewish self-governance in exchange for stability—could be upset by a messianic movement. From Rome's perspective, any self-proclaimed king was a rebel to be crucified. Jewish leaders feared that if Jesus's movement grew, Rome would destroy the temple and nation—a fear realized in AD 70, ironically after they had rejected their true Messiah.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does Caiaphas's unwitting prophecy demonstrate God's sovereignty over human evil and hostile counsel?
2. What is the difference between political expediency (Caiaphas's intent) and substitutionary atonement (God's intent) in Christ's death?
3. How should the ironic fulfillment of Caiaphas's words shape our confidence in God's control over current events?

Interlinear Text

ἡν δὲ Καϊάφας τοῦ συμβουλεύσας τοῦ Ἰουδαίοις
was he Now Caiaphas which gave counsel which to the Jews
G2258 G1161 G2533 G3588 G4823 G3588 G2453

ὅτι συμφέρει ἔνα ἄνθρωπον ἀπολέσθαι ὑπὲρ τοῦ
that it was expedient that one man should die for which
G3754 G4851 G1520 G444 G622 G5228 G3588

λαοῦ

the people

G2992

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