

Mark 14:44

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he that betrayed him had given them a token, saying,
Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; take him, and lead
him away safely.

Analysis

And he that betrayed him had given them a token (σύστημον, syssēmon)—a prearranged signal, military term suggesting coordination. **Saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he**—the kiss (φιλήσω, philēsō) was the customary disciple-to-rabbi greeting, making Judas's betrayal use of it especially heinous. He weaponizes affection's gesture for arrest's purpose.

Take him, and lead him away safely (ἀσφαλῶς, asphalōs, "securely")—Judas ensures effective capture, perhaps fearing supernatural escape or crowd rescue. The adverb suggests both "safely" (protecting the guards) and "securely" (preventing escape). Judas's thoroughness in betrayal—identifying, securing, ensuring capture—reveals how completely he'd turned from discipleship to treachery. Yet even this betrayal serves God's redemptive purpose, fulfilling Psalm 41:9: "Mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me."

Historical Context

The kiss greeting (Hebrew נֶשֶׁק, neshiqah; Greek φίλημα, philēma) expressed respect and affection in ancient Near Eastern culture. Rabbis were customarily greeted thus by disciples. Judas's perversion of this sacred gesture parallels Joab's kiss-and-murder of Amasa (2 Samuel 20:9-10). First-century readers would recognize the cultural horror of betrayal hidden in affection's guise.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does Judas's use of the kiss warn against religious gestures divorced from genuine heart-loyalty to Christ?
2. What does Judas's careful planning ("token," "securely") teach about how sin progresses from initial compromise to calculated evil?
3. In what ways might you be tempted to display external devotion ("kissing Jesus") while betraying Him through compromise or disobedience?

Interlinear Text

δεδώκει δὲ ὁ παραδιδοὺς αὐτὸν σύσσημον αὐτὸν
had given And G3588 he that betrayed him a token him
G1325 G1161 G3860 G846 G4953 G846

λέγων, Ὄντες ἀν φιλήσω αὐτὸν ἐστιν κρατήσατε
saying Whomsoever G302 I shall kiss him is he take
G3004 G3739 G5368 G846 G2076 G2902

αὐτὸν καὶ ἀπαγάγετε ἀσφαλῶς
him and lead him away safely
G846 G2532 G520 G806

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