

1. Before the Reformation in Germany (1517-1580) the Roman Catholic Church practiced allegory to interpret the Bible. That means that the Bible has several levels of interpretation. Luther and his colleagues insisted that each passage of Scripture has only one intended sense. Our text, especially vs. 50-52 is unique. It has two meanings, that of Caiaphas and that of God. But that double meaning is the intended sense, for God tells us so.
2. The Gospel of John is composed around six signs or miracles: turning water into wine in chapter 2, the healing of the nobleman's son in 4, feeding the 5,000 in 6, healing the sick man at Bethesda in 5, healing the man born blind in 9 and the raising of Lazarus in 11. The first three happened in Galilee, the last three in Judea. As the signs progressed, Jesus' enemies became more vicious and hardened toward Him.
3. The unbelieving Jews wanted an earthly, physical kingdom of God, not a heavenly, spiritual kingdom of God. They wanted a secular Messiah who would throw off the yoke of Rome. But in the final analysis they did not want even that kind of Messiah. Unbelief is self-contradictory.
4. One scholar has said: "The alternative which Caiaphas presented was false because it was based upon a presupposition which was the exact opposite of the truth. His reasoning was: Follow Jesus, and the nation perishes; put Jesus to death, and the nation is saved. Conclusion: Jesus must be put to death. But by the irony of history the exact opposite was to happen: when the Jews murdered Jesus, they sealed their own doom.
5. Vs. 50 uses both "the people" and "the nation". Vss. 51 and 52 use only "the nation". That is important. "The people" means "the covenant people of the O.T.". In vs. 50 and 51 "the nation" means the Jewish people apart from the covenant. In vs. 52 "the nation" ^{means} also the Jewish nation but then also adds the redeemed of God among the Gentiles. When Jesus died, the Jews ceased to be the favored covenant people. From that point on salvation was open to all Jews and all Gentiles. Before His death Jesus limited the disciples' work to the Jews (see Mt. 10) but after His Ascension they were to teach all nations (see Mt. 28).
6. The preposition "instead of" occurs three times, once each in vss. 50, 51 and 52. It indicates Jesus' substitutionary death. Caiaphas thought of Jesus' death "instead of the people" as salvation from the Romans. God thought of Jesus' death "instead of the nation" as salvation for all people.
7. Caiaphas told the Sanhedrin that they knew absolutely nothing and that they could not even think correctly. That's how the unbelieving world speaks to people. But the unbelieving world in its ignorance of the truth is absolutely wrong. That's what St. Paul is discussing in I Cor. 1:18-2:16. The unbelieving world thinks it is so wise but is actually ignorant while the believers appear to be ignorant but are actually wise. They have the wisdom of the Gospel and the Holy Spirit.
8. Vs. 45 informs us that the miracles of Jesus caused many people to believe in Jesus. Vs. 48 informs us that Caiaphas feared that all would believe in Jesus. That is exactly what God wills. Natural man fears what God wills. That is why we are told in vs. 53 that from that day forward the members of the Sanhedrin plotted to kill Jesus. By the way, in vs. 50 Caiaphas speaks of Jesus "dying". Actually he meant that they must "kill" Jesus. He hides his real intention under nice words.
9. It is a principle of the Bible that, for His children, God turns evil into good. The brothers of Joseph meant evil but God meant good. See Gen. 50:20. All things work together for the Christian's good. Rom. 8:28. The death of Jesus, evil caused by Jesus' enemies, is for our good. Job's losses and crosses were turned into good. Trust in the Lord when when you innocently suffer evil. He will bring good out of it.
10. Caiaphas put ONE meaning into his words. God had ANOTHER meaning. To Caiaphas faith in Christ was a threat but the faith of Christians condemns the world. Heb. 11:7. His thinking was a mixture of envy, rejection, unbelief, lies, hatred and illogical thinking.

Sermon Outline on Jn. 11:47-52, Lent VI

Theme: EVIL TURNED INTO GOOD

Introduction: It is a principle of the Bible that for His children God turns evil into good (Gen. 50:20; Rom. 8:28). But the greatest example of that principle is the death of Jesus Christ. It was an evil thing which Satan and the world planned for Jesus. But God turned this curse into the greatest blessing (Gal. 3:13).

I-THE WORLD CHOOSES THE EVIL RATHER THAN THE GOOD

A-The chief priests and the Pharisees rejected the good. They were plainly jealous of Jesus (Mt. 27:18) because the people followed Jesus rather than the Sanhedrin. They resented Jesus' popularity and influence. Vss. 47-48. They regarded Him as a threat to their position of power. Furthermore, they feared the destruction of their nation. They feared the intervention of the Romans because of Jesus' popularity. And so they took counsel against Jesus. Vss. 48-50. They decided to kill Jesus. Vs. 53.

B-Unbelievers today still reject the good. They refuse to recognize their need of Jesus because of their own sinfulness. Ps. 51:5; Rom. 7:18. They are blind to the fact that their own works cannot save them. Eph. 2:8-9; Tit. 3:5. Because they have no faith they do not look to Jesus as their only hope for everlasting life. Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12. Many of them fear that faith in Christ will take away their pleasures. Perhaps they fear that membership in the church will cause them to be rejected by their friends. Or perhaps the things of this life are more important to them than the Word of God, forgiveness of sins and everlasting life.

The chief priests and the Pharisees were spiritually blind, dead and enemies of God. Therefore they were Jesus' enemies. That is still true of many people in our day.

II-BUT GOD TURNS EVIL INTO GOOD

A-The evil of the Sanhedrin was used to accomplish God's purpose. Jesus died for the salvation of all people. II Cor. 5:15. He is the payment for the sins of all people. I Jn. 2:2. He takes away the sin of the world. Jn. 1:29. That is what Caiaphas was actually predicting though he meant it for evil. Vss. 51-52. Through Jesus' death and resurrection the world was reconciled to God. II Cor. 5:18-21. This justified all people. Rom. 4:25. God made Jesus a curse to deliver all people from the curse of the Law. Gal. 3:13.

B-Throughout history God has turned evil into good for His children. The greatest O.T. example is Joseph. His brothers meant evil when they sold him as a slave. Gen. 37. He suffered much evil because of this. But God turned their evil into good both for the Egyptians and the brothers of Joseph. Gen. 45:1-15; 50:15-21. The greatest N.T. passage on this subject is Rom. 8:28. All the evil in the life of a Christian is turned into good by God. God has promised the crown of life to those who love Him and endure trial for His sake. Js. 1:12. See also Js. 2:5. God permitted Satan to take Job's wealth, family and health from him but Job trusted in the Lord. He knew that he would be saved eternally. Job 19:25-27. God promises the crown of life to all who remain faithful to Him. Rev. 2:10. He that endures to the end will be saved. Mt. 24:13.

Conclusion: What is the answer to the Christian who is suffering from pain? What is the answer to the believer who is racked by sickness? What is the answer to the faithful child of God who is plagued by temptation and doubt? What is the answer to the Christian who, at times, suffers from fear of death? We must through much tribulation enter the kingdom of God. Acts 14:22. God will never leave us or forsake us. Heb. 13:5. The disciple is not greater than his teacher. What happened to Jesus may happen to us. But, just as God turned evil into good for Jesus, so He turns evil into good for us. Trust Him.