

WAS IT NOT NECESSARY?

"And he said to them, O thoughtless and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Messiah to have suffered these things, and to enter his glory? And beginning at Moses and through all the prophets, he explained to them in all the Scriptures concerning himself." Luke 24:25-27 – Diaglott.

THE OCCASION of this utterance will be remembered: our Lord thus addressed two of his disciples on the way from Jerusalem to Emmaus after his resurrection. They were discussing the strange and wonderful event of the few days previous, when a stranger suddenly drew near and, walking with them, said, "What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another as ye walk and are sad?" And, not recognizing the stranger as the Lord himself, one of them said, "Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?" And he said unto them, "What things?" And they said unto him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how the chief priests and our rulers [R4160 : page 101] delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel; and beside all this, today is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women, also of our company, made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre, and when they found not his body, they came saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. And some of those with us went to the sepulchre and found it even as the women had said; but him they saw not."

Then follow our Lord's words, "O thoughtless and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Was it not

necessary for the Messiah to have suffered these things, and to enter his glory?" The *necessity* of those things was the great lesson which he endeavored to impart to these confused and bewildered but earnest disciples.

From the standpoint of Christians today, the necessity of those things is much more easily discerned than from the standpoint of the early disciples in close proximity to those marvelous events. But, nevertheless, there are some now who thoughtlessly stumble into very erroneous conclusions, drawn from a reckless and heedless interpretation of the Master's plain teaching. They say, Yes, it was necessary for Christ to suffer because the path of suffering is the only path to glory. Christ had to suffer and so all must suffer; and the glory will follow as a natural consequence, as these words of the Lord teach. This is a very plausible argument to many who lean too much to their own understanding. A more reflective mind would say, No, that is not sound logic; for the glory of Jehovah was not attained through suffering; neither was that of the angels, nor of the Son of God in his pre-human existence. And a more attentive mind would say, No, that was not the ground of necessity for his sufferings to which the Lord referred; for he called attention to the divinely inspired prophecies which of necessity must be thus fulfilled; that the suffering was necessary, because it was a feature of Jehovah's plan for human redemption, and was so expressed by the prophets; and we know that unless it were a feature of that plan, Jehovah would not have required it. The Apostle Paul tells why it was necessary to the plan, saying that it was in order to manifest Jehovah's righteousness in remitting the sins of the already condemned world, showing that he is just, and yet the justifier of the condemned ones who believe in Jesus, whom God sent forth to be a propitiation, a satisfaction, a substitute for them – who also freely gave his life as a man, his humanity, a ransom for the many – for the numerous posterity of Adam who had inherited his sin and condemnation. – Rom. 3:26.

Hear again the significant query of the Master, "Was it not *necessary* for the Messiah to have suffered these things?" The query is designed to awaken the thoughtless to a close observance of the justice and wisdom of Jehovah's course in this matter. Suppose for a moment that God had promised mankind salvation from death without this, which our Lord terms a "necessary" provision, what would have been the result? Thoughtful minds will at once see that such a course would have proved: (1) That God is a changeable God, declaring at one time that the wages of sin is death, and afterwards reversing his decision and granting life to the condemned; (2) That either in the first or in the second case he was unjust – either that the penalty of death was too severe and, therefore, unjust, or else, if it were not unjust but a righteous penalty, that he was unjust in reversing such a righteous decision; (3) Such a variable course would unsettle all confidence in God. We would be led to question continually his righteousness and wisdom, and could never feel assured against a sudden and unaccountable change of his attitude and dealing toward us. If he promised us life and happiness today, we could not know that tomorrow he would not take back his word and consign us to misery or death.

Such would have been our sad condition had not this necessity to which our Lord referred been fully met by the sufferings, even unto death, of "the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all," in compliance with the wise and just plan of God for human redemption. (I Tim. 2:6.) By this means mankind is justly released from the just penalty which God pronounced against us; for a loving, benevolent Redeemer took our human nature and then sacrificed it in our behalf – thus bearing, in our stead, the exact penalty due to Adam and inherited from him by all his posterity. Thus our debt was paid, and all who have faith to believe in the promise of life through Christ are now *legally* free from the condemnation under which they were born, though the appointed time for their actual release has not

yet come. They hold in their possession a promissory note – the sure covenant of Jehovah – sealed with the precious blood of Christ, and payable at the "time appointed," the Millennial Age. Thus they are free men in Christ; they are saved by faith, though they still "walk through the valley of the shadow of death." And, comforted by the rod of divine discipline and the staff of divine counsel and favor, they fear no evil, knowing that in due time the promise of everlasting life shall be fully verified to them.

But there was another feature of necessity in the divine plan, to which our Lord referred – "Was it not necessary" also "for the Messiah to enter his glory?" The question is to you and to me, as well as to those early disciples; and the fact of its being propounded implies our ability to discern the necessity. Yes, it was necessary. Why? Because we needed, not only a redeemer to assume and cancel our past indebtedness, but also an able teacher and leader – a prophet and king – to break the fetters of sin and death and lead us out of our bondage. If the promise of life and liberty were given alone, without such help, we would still be in the same sad state; for the prison-doors of death are strong and securely barred and bolted, and we cannot burst them open; and the fetters of sin and sickness, of mental, moral and physical imbecility, are firmly clasped about us, and we have not the power to shake them off. And so we feel the necessity of a mighty deliverer, as well as of a loving redeemer. And, thank God, in his only begotten and well beloved Son we have both. He is our Deliverer, as well as our Redeemer, our Saviour, our Prophet, our Priest, and our King – strong to deliver and mighty to save; for though as a man he sacrificed all that he then had – his humanity – even unto death, God, accepting that sacrificed **[R4160 : page 102]** humanity as the price of our redemption, renewed his existence in a higher nature – even in his own divine likeness. And thus this second necessity of the divine plan is met in the provision of one who has "all power in heaven and in earth given unto him," and who is therefore abundantly able, not only to

awaken the redeemed race from the silence of death, but also to establish fully all of those who desire and will accept of his favor in everlasting righteousness and consequent worthiness of eternal life. Thus, through the blessings of his kingly and priestly office, he will, in due time, present all the willing and obedient faultless before the presence of Jehovah's majesty, to receive his benediction and to enter fully into the eternal joys of his loving favor. "In his presence is fullness of joy, and at his right hand [in his favor] there are pleasures forevermore." – Psa. 16:11.

Consider, then, oh thoughtless ones, how necessary it was that the Messiah should both suffer death, and also enter his glory. Both the humiliation and the exaltation meet our necessities in such a marvelous way that we clearly recognize the fact that only divine wisdom and love and benevolence and grace could have planned the wondrous scheme. "Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Not only was the death and resurrection and exaltation of Christ thus necessary to God's plan of salvation as viewed from a philosophical standpoint, which the Lord would have us thoughtful enough to observe, but as viewed from the standpoint of prophecy the necessity is also clear; and we should not be slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.

Beginning at Moses, the Lord traced this line of prophesy for the two with whom he conversed, showing how it had been fulfilled in himself; and though his words are not recorded, we still have Moses and the prophets and can read them for ourselves. Moses said to Israel, "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him shall ye hearken." (Deut. 18:15.) And here, in the risen Christ, was the beginning of the fulfilment of that promise. Moses had also in the typical ceremonies of the Day of Atonement prefigured both the sacrificial sufferings and the

subsequent glory of Christ. The sacrifice of the bullock (Lev. 16:11) prefigured the former, and Aaron – in his robes of typical glory and beauty coming out of the tabernacle after the sacrifice had been accomplished and the blood presented in the "Most Holy" as a typical propitiation for the sins of Israel, and lifting up his hands and blessing the people, who until then were lying prostrate on the ground to represent the whole human race in death – prefigured the resurrection glory of Christ and his coming out of the Most Holy presence of Jehovah to bless the whole world in the Millennial Age. (See "*Tabernacle Shadows of Better Sacrifices.*") Was it not indeed *necessary* to the fulfilment of these divinely instituted types, says our Lord, for the Messiah to suffer these things and to enter his glory?

Again, Moses testifies of Christ in recording the incidents of the typical sacrifice of Isaac by his father, Abraham, who received him again from the dead in a figure (Gen. 22:1-18; Heb. 11:19), thus prefiguring Jehovah's offering of his only begotten Son and receiving him again from the dead.

Again, there were all those prophecies which so particularly described the circumstances of his death – "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth;" "He made his grave with the wicked (the sinful human race), and with the rich (in the tomb of the rich man, Joseph of Arimathaea – Matt. 27:57-60), in his death" (Isa. 53:7,9); "He keepeth all his bones; not one of them is broken" (Psa. 34:20); "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell (*sheol*, the grave), neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption" (Psa. 16:10); "They pierced my hands and my feet;" "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture;" "They gave me also gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." (Psa. 22:16,18; 69:21.) How minutely all of these have been fulfilled!

And Isaiah (53:5) said, "He was wounded [not for his own, but] for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." And Daniel (9:26) said, "Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself." And Zechariah (13:1) said, "There shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and uncleanness." Then they told of his glorious reign, saying, "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin,....the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand," "He will swallow up death in victory." – Isa. 53:10; 25:8.

Yes, it was necessary to the fulfilment of all these prophecies that Christ should both suffer death and that he should also enter his glory; and in these blessed facts all thoughtful believers may rejoice. A little while and all the faithful, as members of his Body, shall have filled up the measure of his sufferings and shall enter his glory. Then shortly his glory will be revealed, and all flesh shall see it; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. – Isa. 40:5.

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