

“ My God, My God, Why Hast Thou Forsaken Me ? ”

Matthew 27. 46.

A GAIN and again a man has brought me this question. Shall I refuse to listen ? Shall I make light of it ? Far otherwise. It may be, among many, alas, who seek to make mockery, and among the multitude who repeat the objection as a parrot, there are some who are deeply concerned. In any case, there is a wonderful reply, and I should be unwise not to take the opportunity. If only dear Jewish and Gentile friends would listen, and think, instead of asking a question and then running away or interrupting, there would be precious opportunities. But the devil seeks to make men inattentive: he does not want them to stop and think, lest they see their danger, and their need, and the One Who so graciously meets it.

But NOW there is no one to interrupt. The reader may interrupt HIMSELF, and tear up the paper ; but, if so, he does not interrupt me: he only robs himself, and shows unwillingness to ponder that which is of eternal importance. The man who is afraid to read this message through, or too careless, himself shows his real peril, more than any words of mine. O that some might be warned not to play with eternity.

There is nothing wrong in the words, “ My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me ? ” Every earnest old-fashioned Jew must agree, for they are in the Book of Psalms (22. 1),—

אלי אלי למה עזבתני : תהלים כ"ב ב'

They are precious, holy words. Why do you object, my reader, to Messiah quoting the תהלים with His dying breath ? He loved the Scriptures.

But there is a fuller reason. Can you say David fulfilled all Psalm

22? If not, of Whom is it written? Have you ever compared it with Isaiah 53.

Ps. 22. 6(7*) with Isa. 53. 3.

Ps. 22. 15(16) with Isa. 53. 12.

Ps. 22. 16, 17(17,18) with Isa. 53. 7.

Ps. 22. 24(25) with Isa. 53. 3.

Ps. 22. 27(28) with Isa. 53. 12.

Ps. 22. 30(31) with Isa. 53. 8, 10, 11.

You cannot rightly make Psalm 22 national: it is personal, concerning One rejected by the wicked generally, but also by "a people" (6, cf. Isa. 49. 7). The One Who has a SEED to serve Him is plainly the Righteous One of Isaiah 53. 10, 11. No words can get rid of this parallel.

If you deny Messiah as the Fulfiller of Psalm 22, have you any one to fulfil it? The answer, "I do not know" is a poor one if it means, "I do not care." If we do not know we ought to be anxious, for here is One Who will praise God in the midst of the great congregation, and Whose righteousness is TO BE DECLARED (31). How can we declare if we do not know? "But," you reply, "if He was God why does He say, My God?" What about Psalm 45. 6, 7? "Thy throne, O GOD is for ever and ever . . . therefore God, THY GOD, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows." There is NO DIFFICULTY in One Who was God addressing One Who was God by this name, particularly in public for others to hear. Even men often speak thus, in the use of appropriate names for one another. If you say that the thought of God addressing God is not in the עֲלֵינוּ you have a harder task than you realize. You dare not say "God CANNOT be Three Persons," for who can by searching find out God? You must accept God's own statement. Is it not true that God said, "Let US make man," and "Whom shall I send, and who will go for US?" Is it not true that the words "Creator," "Maker" "Husband" and "Holy One" in Ecclesiastes 12. 1, Isaiah 54. 5 and Proverbs 9. 10 are plural? Yea, is it not a fact that in the well-known Deuteronomy 6, 4 we find both a plural and a singular, and that Israel

* Hebrew reckoning of verses.

only emphasize the singular ? Is it not a matter of importance that we find such an expression as " A Holy One, a Holy One, a Holy One is the Lord of hosts" in Isaiah 6. 3? Is not Isaiah 48.16 more than difficult without the Triune God ? Is it not a fact that the Lord revealed Himself to Moses as One Who would bear sins (Ex. 34. 7) forgiving, lit: bearing), and that the prophets refer to One of David's line as the LORD our Righteousness (Jer. 23. 6), though the Lord will not give the glory of His Name to another (Isa. 42. 8) ? Is it not true that verses can be found which speak of One as God and Man (Isa.9.5,6),as both the Root and Branch of David (Isa.11. 1, 10)? All these problems are clear if we recognize the Deity of the Messiah, but in no other way. Ah, dear reader, why do you reject this ?

But it may be you add, " If I agree that this is possible, I expect the words ' My Father,' and not ' My God.' " The beauty of God's truth shines out in meeting your very difficulty. The very book which tells you He said, " My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me ?" also tells you that He thrice used the word " Father," while on the cross. When the Lord interceded for others, when He emphasized His eternal Spirit, He said " Father." Have you ever studied the beauty of the use of various names for God in Genesis ?—E.g. " God " in Genesis 1. 1—2. 3 and " Lord God " in 2. 4—3. 23. Again, " As GOD had commanded him, and the LORD shut him in " (7. 16). The critic fails to see the difference between the names in Genesis 9. 26, 27, but all those who know the covenant grace unveiled in the name " LORD" have more than a mental interest in every name.

Hence it was fitting that Messiah, when He was made a Curse for guilty sinners, bearing their sin (Isa. 53. 12), should use the name " God " when He referred to this fact. True, in His personal holiness He remained spotlessly pure, but, as the Surety for His people, He took their place. Did they merit judgment ? He must be judged. Did they deserve the waves and billows of God's wrath ? Then all God's waves and billows must go over Him. Did they earn the dire doom of being forsaken ? Then He, as their Substitute, must utter that very word " Forsaken." The sin offering was under wrath (Lev. 5. 11). It is all too wonderful for human words, but it is God's grace. Ah,

dear Jewish friend, you need such a Saviour, whether you know it, or not.

But, possibly, you feel that, though these objections are met, one remains. You ask, "Is not the word 'Why?' a word of bitter complaint?" Not necessarily: Joel 2. 14 and Haggai 1. 9 will show this. A question may be asked, for others to ponder the answer. What if that is one object here? As many know, the New Testament was written in Greek, and the question here is not "Because of what?" but "With a view to what?"—implying a PURPOSE. Is not this quite in accord with Psalm 22? "A seed shall serve Him: it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation" (verse 30). Here is the purpose. Far from being a chiding, the language of Scripture, while it expresses deep feeling, is linked with a full recognition of the holiness of God in all that happened (Ps. 22. 3). If we realize that Messiah was God, Who took upon Himself the form of a Servant, and thus, in His perfect Manhood, became the Substitute for His people EVERY WORD FITS. And, if you refuse this, 'tis not only Matthew 27 that you refuse, but also Psalm 22. THE PROPHECY OF DAVID BREAKS DOWN unless you have the very Messiah, Whom we preach.

And does not Zechariah 13. 7 give a parallel? A sword awakes against God's FRIEND. Why, unless He had become the Surety for sinners? The Shepherd of Israel is smitten, but Who is the Shepherd? Psalm 80. 1 answers, "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel . . . Thou That dwellest between the cherubim." The same Psalm refers to the perfect humanity of Messiah in verses 15 and 17. Thus all parts of Scripture fit in with one another, and we can only bow the head, and WORSHIP. Ah, it is wonderful to know One Who FELT the word "Forsaken" that His believing people might hear the precious words, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Heb. 13. 5). Dear Jewish reader, your question only makes us praise more heartily for the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. May many among you also share the unending joy of this thankful praise.

—Percy W. Heward—