
Why Did Jesus Have to Suffer?

*“For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things,
in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings”
(Hebrews 2:10).*

As we survey Jesus’ earthly life and death, we are constrained to ask, “Why did Jesus have to suffer the way He did? Why did He have to endure the rejection, the beatings, and the cross?” These questions must be addressed in the face of the clear testimony of the Scriptures. Jesus told two of His disciples on the road to Emmaus that it was “necessary” for the Christ to suffer before He entered into His glory (Luke 24:26). Hebrews 2:10 says that it was “fitting” or “proper” for Him to go through “sufferings.” Therefore, let us reverently ask, “Why was it essential for the Christ to suffer?” For our answers, we will go to the Book of Hebrews.

First, the writer of Hebrews said that Christ had to suffer because God required that man have a Savior who had lived perfectly as a member of the human race. Hebrews 2:14 says, “Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same.” To fulfill the human requirement of the Father, Jesus had to become a man. Taking upon Himself the flesh and blood of humanity would necessitate suffering. Living as God in flesh would involve facing the full force of temptations, experiencing the difficulties of the human struggle, and being subject to death. Hebrews 2:9 says that Christ “was made for a little while lower than the angels . . . so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.” God required humanity, and humanity requires suffering.

Jesus had to qualify Himself to be the kind of High Priest that God wanted us to have. Hebrews 2:17 further says, “Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so

that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.” Even in Old Testament times, God had willed that the people’s high priest be chosen from among them. The man who represented the people had to understand their situation and their needs. This enabled him to serve them as a merciful and faithful high priest.

As Jesus prepared Himself to fill the office of High Priest, He was made perfect through suffering (Hebrews 2:10). As He faced the tempter, the common trials of life, and the rigors of humanity, He never committed a sin (1 Peter 2:22). He did not need to become perfect in moral integrity or in sinlessness, for He already had that kind of perfection. However, He became perfectly qualified to intercede for us before the Father by demonstrating His perfection in the context of true humanity. He was “tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15b).

Second, the Book of Hebrews says that God required a Savior who could taste of death for every man. Jesus was sent from the Father to bear the sins of the human race. That burden was so immense that He would need the character of God Himself in addition to His humanity to carry it. A perfect human and divine sacrifice was necessary: “Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil” (2:14).

The weight of the world’s guilt could not

be carried by a human being alone. The holy counsel of God decreed that a member of the Godhead would have to come to the earth, become totally and fully man, and offer Himself as the perfect sacrifice for our sin. Jesus' death was the greatest event of all time and eternity.

No angel could have borne the sins of the world as Jesus did. We are told by the writer of Hebrews, "When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they" (1:3b, 4). Angels are mighty celestial beings, but no angel is as great as Jesus. He is God the Son, the Creator of the angels and all other beings and things.

No angel could His place have taken,
Highest of the high though He;
The loved One on the cross forsaken
Was one of the Godhead three!¹

Third, the writer of Hebrews emphasized that God required a sacrifice that could be rejected and spurned. In this ultimate manifestation of divine love, God extended His compassion to all the people of the earth, offering them a way of sal-

¹W. Owen, "O Listen to the Wondrous Story," *Songs of the Church*, comp. and ed. Alton H. Howard (West Monroe, La.: Howard Publishers, 1977).

vation through the cross. However, He chose not to intrude upon the free will of man. Even though an eternal sacrifice has been made, a sin-offering that tasted of death for every man, God allows each member of the human race to accept or reject it. He permits multitudes of people to "crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame" (Hebrews 6:6b). The divine Savior placed before the world evidence that would convince any honest heart of His deity and what He came to do, but He will not coerce or manipulate a sinner.

When we understand more about why Jesus had to come and why He had to suffer, we are overwhelmed by the thought of it. We bow our heads and cry, "How great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God" (1 John 3:1a). We cannot understand all that Christ did, but we can and must believe it and stand on it!

Eddie Cloer



God, in His divine wisdom, chose for Jesus to come to the earth and pass through sufferings. God, in His great sympathy, decreed that Jesus should suffer so that He could understand our weaknesses and become our advocate at the Father's throne.