

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FROM JOEL (4/20/19)¹

Q: What is your interpretation when Jesus said, “My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?”

A: Well of course, I’ve never yet found anyone who heard him say it. We don’t have any eye-witnesses or ear-witnesses. He was way, way up there on a cross, where it’s doubtful if anybody could have heard him if he had said it. So the question is whether or not he said it.

If he said it, it could be in the self-same spirit that you and I might say it. If we get into a problem that’s pretty deep, and we’re not finding our way out as quickly as we think we should, I haven’t a doubt that we’re apt to say, “Oh God, where are you? Why don’t you come to my rescue now?” Or, “Why hast thou forsaken me? Look, like Job, I’ve been a good man; been very charitable; good to my wife and good to my children. But look at all these boils!” And we do that; we do that. We get all of a sudden to thinking, “You know, I can’t remember having done anything wrong. I haven’t broken any laws and look at this claim that’s come upon me.” And then we say, “I guess God has forsaken me.”

It is for that reason that we have Scripture to remind us that though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, Thou art there; that if I make my bed in hell, Thou art there. It shows us that those who have gone before us, even though they were good men and spiritual men and noble men and true men, came to a valley of the shadow of death, or even came to something that they called hell. And they left this message for us—that when you go through those waters, just remember God is going through with you. Even this Mr. Isaiah—and he was a wise man. ...

¹But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine.

²When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.

³For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Savior: ...

¹⁰Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.

¹¹I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no savior.²

And so you see that the promise does not say that we will not walk through waters or that we will not walk through fires. It tells us that if or when we walk through the waters and the fires, they will not harm us. And so it is that it may well be that the Master ... oh, well, we do know that in the Garden of Gethsemane, he was led to doubt for a minute. The pressure was very severe. He asked the eleven disciples to pray with him, to hold him up. And not only that, but

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² Isaiah 43:1-3; 10-11

he even prayed God to “let this cup pass from me, if it be Thy will.” It was a heavy cup he was about to face. And so it may well be that in those moments of despair, the sense of God deserted him, but evidently it came back in time to lift him out of the tomb.