

THE TIME WAS COME

Lk. 9:51 When the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem.

As we come to the Lord's Table, we travel back through the Scriptures to almost two thousand years ago, to the most harrowing scene when our Saviour knew the time was fast approaching His cruel death. He knew He would be nailed upon a cross ... and there He would endure the rejection of His Father for bearing the offence of our sins. He was an innocent Man Who had done nothing to merit the anguish and affliction with which He would die. Even the criminal on another cross beside Him acknowledged to his fellow-companion in crime, Lk. 23:14 we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.

Our Saviour had done nothing that justified His condemnation ... except this ... He took your place and mine, - He took the place of the eternally condemned. That was what made Him guilty! He was crucified on the cross for sinners. And as He made His way into Jerusalem in that final week, God's eternal plan for the salvation of His people at Calvary was under way.

When the time was come ... God is not a prisoner of time, as we are, II Peter 3:8 one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. He is eternal. His thoughts and ways are limitless, - they know no bounds. ... And yet He condescended to work within the constraints of time to accomplish His will. Throughout the Old Testament, - for hundreds of years, - the prophets had foretold His coming and the impending cruelty which would accompany it ... and then, one day ... the time was come ... Jesus died on the cross.

This was not a time decided upon by the Jewish authorities or the Roman governor. The Pharisees had tried on many previous occasions to silence the Saviour. They longed to put Him to death, - it was the one common objective of His divided enemies (cf. Lk. 4:29 And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, ²⁹ And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. ³⁰ But he passing through the midst of them went his way). ... The only issue which united them was their hatred for Jesus ... The Pharisees didn't like Herod, and Herod didn't like the Pharisees ... and the Pharisees didn't like the Roman governor ... and Herod and the Roman governor Pontius Pilate didn't like each other either ... but on putting Christ to death, they all agreed ... and they made a pact! ... And the time was come ... the time which was set in God's eternal decree.

... Step back a moment and see it in the light of eternity, for this was more than the plans of ordinary men could ever have accomplished. You see, it wasn't the Jewish leaders or Pilate who had the final say over whether Jesus would live or die, but it was the Father's will when His Son would go to the cross. It was no less than the Lord Who would effectuate the bruising of His Son. Up until that time, Jesus was untouchable for His hour was 'not yet' (Jn. 2:4). He was beyond the reach of His enemy to harm Him!

Yes, but the time was *now* come that he should be received up ... and even before He left that upper room in the old city of Jerusalem He was already oppressed and afflicted within His spirit because He knew *the time was come*. It hadn't taken Him by surprise. It was the reason, - in God's plan and purpose, - He had arrived in Jerusalem for that Passover season.

... As He had looked out over the city He had wept tears for their salvation, - not tears that He was afraid He wasn't up to the task of saving His people, but tears over their rebellion and unwillingness to receive Him as their Messiah. He witnessed and confronted their defiance of the Law of Moses as He overturned the tables of the money-changers in the temple. He watched the people in the streets of Jerusalem practising a spiritually-anaemic religion, - blind people being led along by blind religious leaders ... And even as He sat at the table with His disciples, with whom He had shared His life for three and a half years ... *even there* man's unbelief because of their sinfulness was hindering their acceptance of His words.

He had said to them, Mt. 26:2 Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified. When He told them one of their number would betray Him, they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I? (Mt. 26:22), - they were no longer even sure of themselves ... He specifically warned Peter, Mt. 26:34 This night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. He told the rest of them how they would be scattered abroad as a sheep having no shepherd (v.31). Yes, the time was come when even His own would desert Him ... God was watching, and all things that had been purposed for the earthly life of the Lord Jesus would take place, just as had been written in the eternal decree ... *the time was come*.

As He sat with His disciples, and as they all took part in the festivities of the Passover Meal, He, - infinitely more than any other, - would already have been feeling the heaviness of the burden which was being set upon Him. ... This

was His last meal. These were His final moments of freedom before He would go into the Garden of Gethsemane to be arrested. He would then be returned to the old city of David, incarcerated in the most basic of prisons, hauled before courts that had already decided their sentence to kill Him. ... Imagine, they condemned Him, - God, in the Second Person, the Lord Jesus Christ, - ... they condemned Him to die! Since the creation of the world, there had never been such evilness as there was in Jerusalem during those days.

And yet, God permitted it in His plan. Often, throughout the Old Testament, these hours in the life of our Saviour had been prophesied so accurately. And that is why He was obediently determined to fulfil His Father's plan and purpose ... right down to the most minute detail. Every promise in the Old Testament relating to this period came to pass because *the time was come*.

... Incidentally, this is one of the factors which ought to determine how we believe concerning the second coming of Christ. The Scriptures *very literally* described His first coming, - they didn't speak about it in some figurative or bewildering symbolical terms ... No, those Old Testament prophecies about Christ's first described *literally* His first coming, and it indicates so clearly how we should also take *literally* the promises relating to His second coming.

And that leads us on to consider another aspect of this phrase, *that he should be received up*. Yes, in the initial context, as He sat at the Passover table the cross was only a few hours away, - the cross would be a time of judgment ... judged not only by the people, but more significantly, by His Father. ... However, there is another context here. Not only did the Lord Jesus know He was to be 'received up' onto the cross ... but as He sat there contemplating these thoughts at the table ... *after* His work on the cross was completed, He also knew He would be *received up into Glory*.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, as He spoke to His Father, with all the burdens that were so heavily pressing upon Him, He said, *Jn. 17:1 Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee*. Yes, He was speaking about the cross ... but He could also see *beyond* the cross, for the cross was not the end! The cross brought shame ... but what He achieved on the cross, and the subsequent resurrection, would bring Him eternal glory!

At Calvary, His Father's plan would require *sacrifice* to the most violent degree, *v.2 that he [God's Son] should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him*. ... That is Divine and Sovereign Election! *Jn. 6:37 All that the Father giveth*

me shall come to me ... for this is the blessed and glorious hope which lay beyond the cross, - this was why Jesus would die for His people ... and Jesus knew the outcome, v.3 this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. ⁴I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. ⁵ And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. ... After the cross Jesus knew He was going home, for after His grief would come His glory!

As the Saviour sat at the Passover meal He knew all things would be carried out according to the will of His Father. ... He planned for the disciples to go and meet a man bearing a water pot ... and they would follow him into his home where he would show them to a large room upstairs where they would celebrate the Passover meal. At that point, Luke, - again, - emphasises, Lk. 22:14 when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him.

Then, here was what He said to them ... Looking ahead to how He should be received up, - beyond the cross, - He said, v.15 With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: 16 For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God ... I'm going home! Jesus was going home by the way of the cross! ... On the other side of Golgotha was Glory ... the Glory of being received into His Father's presence again! On the other side of Calvary He would hear the choir of the Saved singing their Redemption Song, Rev. 5:9 Thou art worthy ... for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.

And as Jesus sat at the table on His final evening of freedom before His abduction, incarceration, interrogation, humiliation, and crucifixion, He knew all that was before Him because He, - along with the Holy Spirit and the Father, - had planned it. ... And when the actual time came, He didn't try to change a thing for it was the Divine perfect will He should die ... and though His death and the shedding of His precious blood, His people would be saved for time and eternity ... and the message would be preached across the world, and throughout the centuries (Mt. 28:19,20).

So then, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem ... He would not allow anything to divert Him from His path. When He came down the steps from that upper room where He had celebrated the Passover meal, and walked through the streets of the old city, and down and across the brook Kidron and into the Garden of Gethsemane, ...

The time had come for Him to be received up, - ... up into the hands of evil men ... up onto the cross, and then further on up to Glory ... and so He steadfastly firmly fixed His mind and His heart upon the fulfilment of the eternal purpose for which He had been sent into this world, **Jn. 3:16** For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. **17** For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

Long before time began ... and long before Jerusalem had been built ... long before the upper room had been constructed ... *that* was when God's plan for our salvation was prepared, in eternity, "He called me long before I heard, Before my sinful heart was stirred ... When from my guilt and grief, forlorn, In love He lifted me". ... As we come to take of the bread and of the cup, this is what our Saviour did ... when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem.