

THE SAVIOUR - and the reasons for His tears  
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(John 11:35)

The shortest verse in the Bible is probably one of the greatest. Every student of the Bible appreciates the wonder of the miracles, yet it is problematical whether any supernatural display of healing power could ever present a greater sight than that of tears on the Lord's cheeks. It surpasses understanding that the King of angels should weep, and it is almost incomprehensible that He who had known eternal splendour should become acquainted with the heartbreaks of sinful men. There are three instances of such weeping recorded in the Scriptures. and a study of these texts reveals progression of thought.

He Wept Because Sin had Hurt the World

The death of Lazarus brought great grief to his sorrowing sisters. and it is easy for us to appreciate the poignancy of the scene described in John 11: 33. "When Jesus saw Mary weeping. and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit. and was troubled." And within a few moments the watching crowd saw that "Jesus wept." Some of the greatest thinkers of the Church have advanced reasons for this expression of divine grief. (i) He wept in sympathy for His friends. Yet this reason can hardly be acceptable, for why should Christ weep in sympathy when He knew that Lazarus would soon be restored to his sisters? (ii) He wept because He was about to bring Lazarus back into a world of sin. It is also difficult to accept this explanation, for the Saviour had already said that this event would bring glory to His Father. (iii) He wept because of the irreparable suffering which had been brought to God's fair world. Many graves would be in the vicinity of the tomb of Lazarus, and Christ knew that behind each burial-place was a tale of woe. Disease and death had appeared to mar man's joy, and the scene around Christ was anything but what God had intended. Sin had hurt the world, and the contemplation of the tragedy hurt the Saviour. He wept.

He Wept Because Sin Was A bout to Hurt His People

"And when He was come near, He beheld the city. and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round . . - and shall lay thee even with the ground . . . because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation" (Luke 19 :41-44). When the Lord Jesus Wept over the city of Jerusalem the crowds ceased their shouting "Hosanna to the Son of David," and as they slowly went away into the streets, the disappointed disciples realized they had lost their greatest opportunity of establishing the kingdom. The tears of their Master had banished thoughts of glory. He had wept because Israel's rejection of their Messiah would bring inescapable destruction to the city of David. The Lord knew all that would shortly take place, and the fact that their fate seemed to be thoroughly deserved could never take the pain from His heart. Had He been able to save the people, He would have done so; but, alas, there were certain things which even Christ could not do.

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He Wept Because Sin was Beginning to Hurt Him

"Christ . . . who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him who was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared" (Heb. 5 :7). In describing the scene in the garden of Gethsemane, Luke declares "His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." The writer to the Hebrews adds the significant detail that tears mingled with the blood. Already the Lord Jesus was feeling the weight of a world's iniquity; already He was beginning to taste the bitterness of His cup of sorrow. The garden conflict was the introductory stage of the triumph of the cross. The greatness of His desire to save the lost carried Him through that night of agony; but we shall never know how much our sins hurt the Son of God. It is significant that the Epistle to the Hebrews mentions "strong crying and tears." His anguish was not expressed in silent weeping, but in agonized sobs. "How greatly Jesus must have loved us."

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