

The Necessary Christ

Luke 24:44-47

(Part 1 of 2)

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Note: The text below was prepared for oral delivery rather than for publication in print. As such, be aware that sentence fragments are intentionally used and that this document has not been edited to correct the errors in grammar, sentence structure, etc.

I. Introduction: Today's message will be the 1st of a 2 part series titled, "The Necessary Christ," and the scripture we'll consider is Luke 24, verses 44-47. As we begin, I want you to consider a question that is in keeping with that title, "The Necessary Christ." I would like for you to ask yourself, "Is the Christ I worship, in keeping with my understanding of how God saves sinners – Is that Christ and that understanding such that I now see the absolute necessity that He die and rise again from the dead? I want you to seriously consider that question as we proceed this morning.

Now to give you some context, the events recorded in Luke 24 took place after Christ had been crucified and buried in the tomb with a stone rolled in front to block the entrance.

A. As the chapter opens, some of the women who had seen Christ's lifeless body (after it had been taken down from the cross and placed in the tomb), had gone back there on the 1st day of the week to anoint the body with spices and ointments as was there custom. But they found the tomb empty and two angels appeared to them there and assured them that Christ was risen from the dead just as He had told them would be the case before He died. These women then proceeded to report all of this to the apostles and others gathered with them. But they didn't believe their report. Regardless, Peter decided to go and check it out for himself and saw the linen clothes lying in the otherwise empty tomb and we're told he left there wondering what had taken place.

B. As the chapter continues we read of the conversation our risen Savior had with two of these men on the road to Emmaus and of His eventually making Himself known to them there. And I mention this background because I will be referring back to these encounters with the risen Christ.

C. Well, these two men returned to Jerusalem and that evening they gathered again with the other disciples and told them of the Lord's resurrection. And as they were talking, Jesus appeared in their midst and they initially presumed Him to be a spirit (as in an apparition or a ghost). So our Lord showed them His nail pierced hands and feet and His wounded side and we're told they found it hard to believe, as in almost too good to be true. And so He ate with them, giving them further assurance of His bodily resurrection and with that, we pick up in verse 44...

II. Verses 44-47: *And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.* ⁴⁵*Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures,* ⁴⁶*And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:* ⁴⁷*And <or even> that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.*

- A. You will notice I underlined 2 words in that passage, the word “must” and the word “behoved.” In the Greek, these 2 words are the same. It’s the word spelled “d-e-i” and I believe it’s pronounced “die.” This little word is used 104 times in the New Testament and very often found within the same context as we see here in verse 46 where it is translated “behoved” and is speaking of the absolute necessity of Christ’s death and subsequent resurrection. The word’s usage is not intended to suggest that something should or might take place, but rather it denotes something that is binding, that is inevitable, that which must happen, or that which is absolutely necessary.
- B. I mentioned that this chapter opened with the women discovering the empty tomb and the two angels then appearing to assure them of Christ’s resurrection. Look with me at what the angels told the ladies, starting back in verse 5 where we read, “**And as they** <the women> **were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they** <the two angels who had appeared to them as men in shining garments> **said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead?** ⁶**He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee,** ⁷**Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.**” It was absolutely necessary – He must be delivered, crucified and rise again. The word “must” is that same little word ‘dei’ translated as ‘behoved’ in verse 46.
- C. And as I mentioned earlier, the risen Christ then appeared with the two men on the road to Emmaus. And we’re told their eyes were hidden so that they didn’t recognize Him initially. They were discussing among themselves all that had happened with Christ and His crucifixion and so our Lord asked them what this was about. So they related to Jesus (who was still a stranger in their eyes at that time) – they related how Jesus had been delivered up and crucified, they told Him the story of the empty tomb as related to them by the women, and then how others had gone to the tomb and also found the body missing. So picking up in verse 25 we read, “**Then he** <Christ, this stranger in their eyes> **said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken:** ²⁶**Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?** The word “ought” there is that same little Greek word, ‘dei.’ So in essence Christ is saying, “Was it not absolutely necessary for Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory?” That’s a good question for us as well. Do you see the absolute necessity of Christ’s death, burial and resurrection?

D. This word “dei” conveys that absolute necessity. It’s the same word Jesus used when He told Nicodemus, “Ye must be born again” (John 3:7). And I think the translation of that same word in Acts 17:3 enhances our understanding of the absolute necessity it signifies. There, we’re told Paul and Silas had traveled to Thessalonica and went into a Jewish synagogue, and picking up in Acts 17:2 we read, “***And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, ³Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.***” That same word, “dei” is here translated “must needs!”

E. Now back in Luke 24, Christ is telling them that this was absolutely necessary because all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning Himself. God’s purpose cannot fail to be realized and God cannot lie. Christ Himself said in His Sermon on the Mount, “***Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. ¹⁸For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.***” (Matthew 5:17-18). What a sure and certain salvation there is for those who truly trust in this necessary Christ. As we read in the book of Hebrews (Heb. 6:18-20), there is great consolation (a certain assurance) for those who flee to Christ as their refuge for all of their salvation because of two immutable things – 1) He purposed and 2) He promised it and God cannot lie. And in God’s Gospel we see how it all adds up – not only must Christ have suffered and rose again because God purposed it and promised it, but in salvation, in belief of God’s Gospel, it is revealed to true believers how there is no other way by which a holy and just God could save ungodly sinners such as we and remain true to Himself. I hope your appreciation for this will grow as we proceed.

III. That which is Necessary: So with these things in mind, I plan to spend the rest of our time today and next week talking with you about that which is set forth in our text as being absolutely necessary. And to help us remember I’ll use alliteration, giving you 5 R’s that are absolutely necessary for the salvation of any sinner. In this passage from the Gospel of Luke we see that...

In Salvation There is a Necessary:

1. Revelation to those who are saved
2. Redemption for those who are saved
3. Resurrection for those who are saved
4. Remission of sins for those who are saved
5. Repentance by those who are saved

And all of this speaks of the necessary Christ – His necessary work and the necessary, inevitable fruit and effects of that work.

A. A Necessary Revelation: So first let's consider how in salvation there is the necessity of a Divine Revelation.

1. Again in verse 44 we read, ***“And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. ⁴⁵Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures,”***
2. These disciples had been called to follow Christ (and had done so) yet here we see that even after the resurrection they had not yet understood the necessity of Christ's suffering and the inevitable resurrection that would follow. He had told them of this necessity. They had heard with their physical ears His words; but it took a divine intervention by God for them to see that the Old Testament scriptures available to them at that time spoke of Christ and the glorious accomplishment of His obedience unto death.
3. Now let's go back again to the beginning of the chapter when the angels appeared to the women at the tomb. We read from verse 6 how they told them, ***“He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, ⁷Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.”*** The Biblical record of Christ speaking to them in Galilee of His coming death and resurrection is found, first in Matthew 17 and then again in Mark chapter 9. In fact, when our Lord spoke of it in Matthew 16, and said He must go to Jerusalem and suffer these things, Peter rebuked Him and said be it far from thee and our Lord responded, Get thee behind me Satan. And it's interesting that in Matthew 17, we're told that in hearing of this in Galilee, the disciples had great sorrow. So, clearly they were not understanding at that time the glorious eternal salvation that would be accomplished by His obedience unto death, a death that was absolutely necessary for their eternal salvation and the salvation of all those for whom He lived and would die. And then in Mark chapter 9, we're told that in hearing these words from Christ that they did not understand them, but were afraid to ask Him about it.
4. But back in Luke 24, we're told that when the angels reminded the women of these words that they then remembered of His having told them of His necessary death that was approaching while in Galilee. And so in verse 9 we're told that when they returned from the tomb to where the eleven disciples and others were gathered, that they told all these things to them. And yet in verse 11, we read, ***“And their words <this report of all that the angels had told them> seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not.”***
5. Revisiting again the dialogue that took place on the road to Emmaus, we see that after Christ had told them in verse 26: ***“Ought not <or is it not absolutely necessary for...> Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?”*** – we read in verse 27, ***“And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.”***

- a. I like how a preacher acquaintance of ours once put it, pointing out how the whole Bible is a history book in this sense: It is His-Story – the story of redemption by the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. All the blood of the lambs slain from Abel’s offering and throughout the Old Covenant (as was set forth in the scriptures available to them at that time) – they all were types and pictures and prophecies of the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal lamb of God – His offering of the sacrifice of Himself to save His people from their sins.
 - b. Paul told the Galatians essentially the same thing when referring to the law given to Moses saying in Galatians 3:24, “***Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.***” That was the purpose of all the pictures and types of the Old Testament to point us to Christ – to see that by our doing, our law-keeping, by any obedience on our part that none could be justified, but rather that sinners are only justified by the blood of Christ – by His doing and dying, that which true genuine faith looks to for all of salvation.
 - c. Now back to Luke 24, as these two men with Christ reached the village of Emmaus, they asked Him to remain there with them. So He ate with them and at that point in verse 31 we read, “***And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight.*** ³² ***And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?***” Now this is much like we read in verse 45 where it says He opened their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures.
6. And this miraculous opening of the scriptures was clearly in order that they might see the absolute necessity of Christ’s death and subsequent resurrection. This is why Christ told Nicodemus that “***...Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.***” (John 3:3b). The Bible is clear on this. We are born spiritually dead, in need of spiritual life and the faculties of spiritual life. The bible teaches us that the natural man (i.e. – how we all are by nature apart from (or prior to) having been given spiritual life) – that the natural man cannot know the things of God for they are spiritually discerned (I Cor 2:14). Like me in years past (and even like these disciples prior to their understandings being opened) you may believe without a doubt that Jesus Christ lived, died, and even rose again – but until God the Holy Spirit gives you a new understanding so that with the spiritual eyes and ears of faith you are taught of God (through His appointed means – this preached Gospel of grace) – so as to learn, not just the historical facts of Christ’s death, burial and resurrection, but so as to see and value with the heart by God-given faith the absolute necessity of Christ’s death and resurrection in your place for your eternal salvation, then no matter how sincere you may be in presuming Christ to be your Savior – know that is precisely what it is – mere presumption on your part.

In salvation, there is a necessary divine revelation experienced by all who are saved. And while it is miraculous, it's not mystical. This revelation comes by the power of the Holy Spirit, through the God-given, blood-bought gift of faith, whereby we believe and value the preached Gospel – God's gospel of sovereign grace.

- B. A Necessary Redemption: Clearly salvation requires a divine revelation but what is revealed to us? As we see in verses 45-47, there is a necessary redemption. ***“Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, ⁴⁶And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: ⁴⁷And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”*** It behooved Him. It had to be for this, Christ's suffering and death, is the saving work of redemption for all the objects of God's everlasting love.
1. The Apostle Peter wrote to believers in I Peter 1:18-19, saying, ***“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; ¹⁹But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:”*** To redeem something is to buy it back. The Bible teaches God chose a people unto eternal salvation in Christ from before the foundation of the world and yet, in accordance with God's infinitely wise purpose, all of humanity (including God's elect) fell in sinful rebellion in their federal head and representative Adam. But the triune Godhead had also determined from all eternity to save some from their sins – those the scripture refers to as the election of grace. And by the shedding of the precious blood of Christ He redeemed them – everyone that He (the last Adam) represented. He bought them back. They are a purchased people as His church is called in Acts 20:28, purchased by His own blood. As you've heard me and others say before: Redemption is not a mere attempt made, but a price paid – and that in full.
 2. Now why was this absolutely necessary? It is because God is holy, righteous, and just and as such, He cannot and will not commune with sin. But the Bible says we all have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom.3:23). So how can any sinner be saved and enter into the presence of holiness – be accepted before a holy God in heaven? Their sins must be dealt with by a suitable Substitute who could deliver a sacrificial payment of such value before the strict justice of God, that it would equate to more than the totality of the just penalty of eternal banishment from the presence of God and the suffering in hell that would otherwise have been the destiny of those for whom He died. God's justice must be served. There's the necessity!
 3. Remember in our text Christ explained how all things written in the Old Testament scriptures must be fulfilled – all the types and pictures of the animal blood that was shed, that law being a schoolmaster to point us unto Christ, the eternal Lamb of God who died without spot and blemish. It took a sinless Substitute, pictured by the unblemished lambs that were offered, to establish a perfect righteousness for God's people.

And to do so, He had take into union with His Deity a sinless humanity, be made under the law – subject to the same requirements of all human flesh so that He might render a perfect obedience to the law in the place of those He saves, as their Substitute – perfectly obeying all of God’s revealed will for them. But this He did, not for Himself but for fallen, otherwise guilty sinners that God had graciously chosen out of Adam’s fallen race and for whom Christ had agreed from all eternity to stand in their place as their Substitute and Surety, to pay the debt that all of us owe, but none but this One who is both God and man could pay for us.

4. God doesn’t pretend that things are not as they are. He doesn’t just look the other way and then save us in spite of our sins. He is holy and just and the guilt or demerit of the sins of His chosen people must of necessity be removed, justly dealt with in order for them to be found acceptable before Him. As we read in Ephesians, they are accepted in the beloved – the Beloved Son of God. The penalty paid due unto their sins had to be of such infinite value that the debt owed to the justice of God would be wiped clean, paid in full. That’s what it took for God to justify a sinner – to declare him or her not guilty, but righteous in His sight. We’re talking about sinners like you and me.
5. So just as the priests under the Old Covenant chose spotless, unblemished lambs as prescribed by God to Moses and then shed their blood on a specified altar which denoted the value of the sacrifice, setting it apart for the purpose intended; likewise, the eternal Lamb of God, the God-man, offered up the sacrifice of His own humanity (He shed His blood) on the altar of His Deity – His Deity setting His sacrifice apart, making it an offering of infinite value – the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb (not one contaminated with sin), but a Lamb without spot or blemish. It behooved Christ (the sinless God-man) to suffer this death. It was absolutely necessary for the salvation of those He came to save.
6. So I ask, “Is your understanding of the Person and work of Christ such that it was absolutely necessary to the saving of your soul?” I know for years, while I sincerely thought I was worshipping the true Christ, calling this historical Jesus my Savior, my doctrine exposed I unwittingly was worshipping a counterfeit – another “jesus” as Paul described it in his warning to the Corinthians to not fall for such an imposter. I called what Christ did on the cross a work of redemption, but the truth is by my way of thinking, He really didn’t redeem or buy back anyone. I did not even believe that He had a chosen people from all eternity that needed buying back. I thought His precious blood simply made salvation possible if the sinner then would do his or her part and believe what was prescribed in order to seal the deal for themselves.
7. But in reality, not yet having been blessed with the necessary divine revelation (that revelation which God the Holy Spirit provides for His people through God’s preached Gospel of grace) my understanding was tragically flawed. In my spiritual blindness, I was oblivious to the evil of my own religious thoughts. (*Elaborate on how my “evil” thoughts did not mean I wasn’t sincerely religious*).

But regardless of my blindness to it, the reality was that in thinking that Christ died for all (even the multitudes who the scripture makes clear shall perish in hell) I had to view the payment of His precious blood as not quite so precious – actually inadequate to purchase anything – so actually of no value at all. I dared to place the real saving value on the work of man, his believing, his faith – and not solely on the precious blood of Christ which truly redeemed – paid the sin debt in full for each and everyone for whom it was shed.

8. Think about it. That deadly, false doctrine negates (does away with) the necessity of the death and resurrection of Christ. It simply demands that the sinner believe something. And while God does command us to believe on Christ in belief of His Gospel, and tells us that all who do are saved, nothing about my former view and understanding of Christ's work was necessary for my salvation. I believed He died and rose again, but it didn't really get the job accomplished by my way of thinking. His blood wasn't enough. That's not to believe on Christ. My faith at that time was in my faith.
9. In hindsight I see now that I only believed that He died and rose again because of the historical record of it, because I was not resting in that which the Bible teaches it actually accomplished to save His people. Accordingly, if the Bible had recorded some other arbitrary historical fact that was to be believed, it would not have changed anything about what I knew of God. And that is salvation – knowing God through Christ (Quote John 17:3). At that time, I didn't know God as both a just God and a Savior (Isa. 45). I thought God saved sinners by dispensing with His justice – agreeing to overlook their sins and apply whatever it was Christ did for everyone to them based on the condition I presumed made the real difference – the believing work of me, the sinner.

That's not salvation by grace no matter how many times it may be called grace by its many adherents. Believing salvation to be conditioned ultimately upon the sinner instead of solely upon the sinner's Substitute, His doing and dying alone, is to believe salvation by works. And God will not have it. As we read in Ephesians 2:8-9, "***For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: ⁹Not of works, lest any man should boast.***" God will accept no rival to Christ who is to have all the preeminence in salvation. To believe such denies the necessity of the redeeming work of Christ. By Christ's suffering and death on the cross, He did far more than make salvation possible. He redeemed a people. In salvation there is a necessary divine revelation, and in that revelation we are taught of His necessary redemption. That means He bought them back – His purchased church and concerning them Christ said in John 6:39, "***And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.***" He truly bought them back and He will not lose a one of them – they are His and they have been and shall be for all eternity! Now that is good news if this describes your Savior.

IV. Closing:

I pray that if God hasn't already done so, that He will grant you the necessary divine revelation through this preached Gospel of God's grace to see the necessity of Christ and His redeeming work – so that by His saving grace, you too will place all your hope for eternal life in Him as your Redeemer. Before God the Father, worthy is the Lamb that was slain and that makes this successful Savior worthy of our trust. Believers see their desperate need of Him – “The Necessary Christ.”

Footnote from the author: While this sermon was prepared and delivered by me, I often utilize the commentaries, study helps, and teachings of others to supplement my own prayerful study of the scriptures. Since this document was not originally prepared for publication in print, please excuse and recognize that it was unfeasible to properly identify and credit all of the various original sources used to develop the content herein. Ultimately, it is my sincere and foremost objective to accurately present the gospel of God's grace found in the only infallible source, God's word itself – the Bible.

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