

WHY DID JESUS HAVE TO SUFFER THE HORENDOUS DEATH OF THE CROSS?

This study was formulated to answer some fundamental questions asked by a brother in Christ, questions that are often asked, but seldom answered. For example,

Why did Jesus Christ have to suffer such a cruel death on the cross?

Why couldn't He have shown us the nature and will of God, and then when He was resurrected infill us with His Spirit and life?

How can an unblemished holy God dwell within sinful man?

How can one person justly bear the punishment of all mankind and make them righteous before God?

To rightly understand the truth about these questions, we should know and understand certain spiritual laws that provide the basis for the answers. The first is that **justice and righteousness are the foundation of God's throne**, or governmental working. Psalm 89:14 states, "**Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; mercy and truth go before Your face.**" In all of His working, God never violates righteousness and justice, - even affording them to Satan and his fallen angels. For instance, if man wittingly and consistently obeys Satan rather than God, Satan is entitled to implant demon spirits in him to further his control.

The next spiritual law to consider is that **all of God's created beings have a free will**. God desires a creation in which all beings willingly submit to His will and way for their lives, trusting that in Him all is for their own well-being because His wisdom and ways are so much higher than ours.

The fall of Satan.

Satan, or Lucifer as he was known then, was a beautiful archangel, trusted with the guardianship of God's throne, until he became jealous of God and fell into sin.

"How you are fallen from heaven, o Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: "I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars (angels) of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest side of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the

Most High.” Yet you will be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest part of the Pit.” Isa 14:12-19.

When Satan, or Lucifer revolted in heaven, he drew a third of the angels into his rebellion by his lies and deception. **“And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. His tail (the tail is a symbol of lies) drew a third of the stars (a symbol of angels) of heaven and threw them to the earth.”** Rev 12:3-4.

Justice decreed that Satan and his fallen angels be cast out of heaven. **“And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer.”** Rev 12:7-8.

God could have utterly destroyed Satan and his followers but in His wisdom, God allowed them to exist, for if a free will is to be exercised, man must have a choice between good and evil.

The fall of Man

At a certain point in man’s evolution, God created the Garden of Eden, and Adam and Eve as a new creation of man empowered by His spirit so that they could communicate with Him. Before man could enter into a complete relationship with God, justice demanded that he be tested to see what belonged to God and what Satan was entitled to.

Satan has demanded this right before a person has a certain destiny or ministry to fulfil. Jesus was tempted for forty days and nights. Before he entered into his ministry Jesus told Peter, **“Simon, Simon! Indeed Satan has asked for you that he may sift you like wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, (Peter was to deny Jesus three times) strengthen your brethren.”** Luke 22:31-32.

The testing of Adam and Eve.

In the Garden of Eden, Adam was atypical man and Eve atypical woman, and so they were representatives of the human race that would evolve. God gave Adam and Eve a special command to test their loyalty. **“And the Lord God commanded the man, saying ‘of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”** Genesis 1:16-17.

Satan, speaking through a serpent, said to the woman, **“Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’ And the woman said to the serpent, ‘We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it lest you die.’ Then the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will**

not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” (This was the very nature of Satan’s envy of God.) Gen 3:1-5.

Eve was deceived, and obeyed Satan rather than God by partaking of the forbidden fruit, and Adam followed Eve into disobedience. Because Adam and Eve chose to obey Satan rather than God, justice demanded that Satan have the right to control man by imparting his influence and ways into his life.

The death sentence imposed on man was twofold. As well as physical death he became separated from God because his spirit lost its power to converse with Him. The end result was stated by the apostle John, who said, “**...the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.**” 1 John 5:19.

How could God redeem and reconcile man to Himself?

The way of redemption may be explained by its use in the Old Testament times. When a man fell into debt he could not repay, he was sold into slavery. When his family could afford to pay for the cost of the slave, he was redeemed by money and returned to his family. Man had fallen into bondage to Satan, and the question was, who could pay the cost of his redemption back to God? The only price that could be paid to redeem man was God’s Son, Jesus Christ, who had created mankind and bore the responsibility for him. - **“For by Him all things were created (including mankind) that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.”** Col 1:16. To redeem man back to God, Jesus had to do two things.

1. He had to surrender His life to death to pay for the cost of the lives of all mankind.
2. As the representative of mankind He had to display the obedience to God that mankind had forsaken. He knew the horror of the cross that confronted Him. He knew the suffering that was portrayed in Psalm 22 verses 6-18. **“But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised by the people. All those who see Me ridicule Me; they shoot out the lip, they shake their head, saying, ‘He trusted in the Lord, let Him rescue Him; let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him! But you are He who took Me out of the womb; you made me trust while on My mother’s breasts. I was cast upon You from birth. From My mother’s womb You have been My God. Be not far from Me, for trouble is near; for there is none to help. Many bulls have surrounded Me; strong bulls of Bashan (proud leaders of Israel) have encircled Me. They gape at Me with their mouths, like a raging and roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; it has melted within Me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and My tongue clings to My jaws; You have brought Me to the dust of death. For dogs have surrounded Me; the congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet; I can count all My bones. They divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots.”**

When faced with the reality of such suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus first prayed that if it were possible, that this cup of suffering would be taken from Him - but then prayed **“Nevertheless, let your will be done.”** From then on He endured the complete suffering of the cross with its separation from God who could not associated Himself with the sin that Jesus represented.

Why did justice demand that Jesus endured such sufferings on the cross?

Justice decreed that Jesus was to pay the penalty of every heinous sin and atrocity committed by man. He had to pay a just punishment for the most terrible sins that man would commit, to the end that every single person could claim that Jesus had paid the full penalty for his or her sins.

Who was Jesus on the cross?

The reality is that it was not Jesus who had to be judged and punished on the cross. Jesus bore the responsibility for mankind whom He had created, and become their representative. He was mankind on the cross, or more pertinently, the sin of mankind being judged and punished. Paul said that **“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”** 2 Corinthians 5:21. Jesus has in reality borne the punishment for everyone’s sins - your sins and my sins, so that we are righteous before God. The end result is that everyone can say, ‘Jesus has borne the penalty for my sins on the cross. I am redeemed back to God, I am forgiven and accepted as His son, eternally saved.’

How could Jesus justly pay the debt of mankind?

The scales of justice demand that man should pay a penalty that justice might be fulfilled. This question has been asked often and very seldom answered, creating a stumbling block to some people’s faith. The fact is that God did pave the way for perfect justice to be fulfilled through Abraham who became the spiritual father of those who are saved, because Jesus Christ was of his lineage.

When Abraham lived in Ur, a pagan land, God manifested Himself in a vision, promising him that if he obeyed Him, He would settle him in a new land and make his descendants as the sand of the sea in number. Abraham obeyed God and was settled in Israel, but at the age of 85 he still had no son to fulfil the promise. God again spoke to Abraham promising him that his wife would bear him a son. However it was many years later when Sarah was ninety years old and Abraham one hundred years old, that Sarah conceived and bore a son whom they called Isaac. The fact that Sarah was well past the age of childbearing was proof that the promised son was of God. When Isaac was a lad, about 11 years old, God tested Abraham by asking him to offer his son through whom the promise rested, as a sacrificial offering to Him. Abraham obeyed, and after taking Isaac to the destination of God’s choosing, which was Mount Mariah the site of Solomon’s future temple, Abraham built an altar, laid the wood on it, bound Isaac on it, and raised the knife to slay his son. At this point God intervened through His angel messenger. **“But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham, so he said, “here I am.”**

And he said, “ Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son from Me”Then the angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said: “By Myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son - blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gates of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you obeyed My voice.”

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul verified that the seed of Abraham was Jesus Christ. **“Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, “and to seeds,” as of many, but as of one,” And to your Seed”, who is Christ.” Gal 3:16.**

In expanded words this is what God was saying to Abraham - ‘As the father of future Christendom, because you were prepared to obey Me, and offer the son of the promise of your future destiny, I can now offer My own Son with justice, on the altar of the cross, to redeem all those who will believe in Him.’

How can a perfectly holy God indwell sinful man?

To understand how this can be so, we should realise that there are two forms of truth and reality - spiritual or heavenly truth, which is eternal, and earthly or physical truth, which is always temporary. Paul declares this in his second letter to the Corinthians. **“Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things that are seen are temporary, but the things that are not seen are eternal.”**

The unseen spiritual things that are eternal are the blessing’s Christ acquired for us by His death on the cross. E.g. Our sins are forgiven, we are righteous before God - holy and blameless. These spiritual truths apply to us and they are eternally true. The physical things seen in our earthly behaviours are temporary continually changing as we are God’s workmanship. Considering the spiritual realities of our bodies, Jesus removed the power of sin over our bodies when He bore the punishment for our sins in His body on the cross. In Isaiah we read **“But He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.” Isa 53:5.** Peter also said **“...who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree (the cross), that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness - by whose stripes you were healed.” 1 pet 2:24.** Because the power of sin was removed from our bodies Paul was able to say, **“Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?” 1 Cor 6:19.** It is by the application of the eternal spiritual truth of what Jesus has done, that He can indwell our mortal bodies.