

“I wish I could use more colorful language in describing this tragedy because no literary artistry could overrate the tragedy and drama that inhered in Jesus’ hour of passion. I could not begin to impact on you the stark terror that overwhelmed Jesus and the stress rampant throughout creation at that awful moment. . .”

Why The Cross?

“I ...have not yet grasped the full drama and pathos in Jesus’ passion nor do I have the skill to tell the little I already know. May the Lord open our eyes...”

Why the Cross?

Jesus was completely alone on the cross. He felt no quickening power and no miraculous infusion of zeal and joy. There was no anointing. All He felt was the cruel pain that was at once physical, mental and emotional. It was a savage combination that no other human could know or endure. His body was torn and twisted (Isa. 52.14, 53.3-6 - NIV) and – bitterest wound of all! – His Father was actually abandoning Him to His fate. Of course the dreaded fate lay in the same soul-wrenching agony of the Father’s tearing Himself from the bosom of Jesus. (Mat. 27.46, Mark 15.34)

We cannot begin to imagine the hell into which this plunged Jesus. Ever since His conception Jesus had been one with the Father; He was a part of the Godhead or essence of Deity; He was the literal Son of God. (Mat. 1.20, 21; Luke 1.26-35) If you had a good relationship with your father, imagine the exceptional closeness there had to be between Jesus and His Father. They were more than a dynamic duo – they were one. Love bound them together. (John 3.35, John 5.20) But now the same love was driving a cruel wedge between them. The darkness of a thousand nights was closing in on Jesus as He cried, “My God, my God! Why have you forsaken me?” (Mat. 27.46, Mark 15.34)

When Adam sinned, God ejected him from the Garden of Eden. (Gen. 3.23, 24) Now, as the Father abandoned Jesus, Jesus was necessarily evicted from the Godhead. The Father cast Jesus out because Jesus had voluntarily assumed the sins of a wicked and uncaring race. The Father's righteousness compelled Him to forsake Jesus. Jesus, you see, had become a sacrifice for the sins of mankind, and, under God's own law, all sacrifices for sin were laden with the sin for which they had become the sacrifice. The sinner's laying his hands on the head of the animal symbolically transferred the sin from the sinner to the sacrificial animal. (Lev. 4.4,15,24,29; 2 Cor. 5.21)

Now you have a question, "You say that 'love bound them (the Father and the Son) together' and you have claimed on more than one occasion that love will find a way. Then why didn't the Father's great love for Jesus find a way to prevent His nightmarish plunge into hell?"

Love was going according to The Plan, the plan of salvation. (Acts 4.12, Rom. 1.16,17, 1 Thes. 5.9) Love knew that the justice¹ of God would be satisfied

¹ See Gen. 3.24. The flaming sword was the sword of Justice barring the way to the tree of life until a perfect life would be given in exchange: "Life for life."

by Jesus' death and then this magnificent Love would restore Jesus to Sonship and power and glory. (Mat. 25.31, Col. 3.4) The Plan was conceived from an eternity ago, before there was a physical Jesus. The Logos²/Word/Holy Ghost and the Father – all one God! – drew up the Plan that would present to a universe the greatest show of love and wisdom it could ever know. (John 1.1-3, Col. 1.13-17, Heb. 1.3) Love is a magnificent concept: It gave the maximum of itself and saved the sons of men with its Plan.

Some Bible authorities claim it is sacrilege to say that Jesus became sin. It is blasphemous, they assert, to equate the divine with every low and despicable sin known to mankind.³ But there is no need to debate the

² Adam Clarke, "Clarke's Commentary," Vol. 5, notes on John 1.1.

³ The sin offering was identified with the sin for which it was offered. Christ Himself was made "to be sin for us, who [Christ] knew no sin..." I Cor. 5:21. [In Gen. 4.7] "...sin lieth at the door" meant that an animal for a sin offering was at Cain's door, waiting for Cain to use it as an acceptable sacrifice." ("Essays on Pentecostal Terms and Concepts." "Sacrifices," note 47.)

issue as all agree that the sacrifice as required by the law (especially Jesus the Lamb of God) was at the minimum graphically **representing** the sin for which atonement was made. Whether the sacrifice is considered to be the sin of the sinner or only representative of the sin, the animal is still horribly blackened with guilt and condemned to death.

There were only two instances I can recall in which the worshipers did not kill the sin symbol. One of these was in the ritual of the “scapegoat.” (Lev. 16.8-10, 20-22) In the ritual two goats were selected for sacrifice. Lots were cast and one goat was chosen to be slain. The worshipers laid their hands on the head of the second goat and imposed on it their sins. This unfortunate animal was then taken into an uninhabitable wilderness where it presumably died from hunger or at the claws and fangs of predators. The first animal was slain because and for the atonement of sin; the second animal carried the sinner’s sins far away. (Psa. 103.11, 12, Heb. 6.12, Heb. 10.17) So graphically did God portray His salvation.

Jesus was the fulfillment of both types. He was our slain sacrifice there on the cross and He was also our sacrifice that was left in a desert waste when the

Father wrenched Himself from His Son. I wish I could use more colorful language in describing this tragedy because no literary artistry could overrate the tragedy and drama that inhered in Jesus' hour of passion. I could not begin to impact on you the stark terror that overwhelmed Jesus and the stress rampant throughout creation at that awful moment. (Is it possible that there were some in the Jerusalem area who neither knew or cared about Jesus' plight when even the sun hid its face and the earth quaked at the sight? Mat. 27.45, 51) I can't describe it any more than I have because of my woeful inadequacy. I the supposed teacher have not yet grasped the full drama and pathos in Jesus' passion nor do I have the skill to tell the little I already know. May the Lord open our eyes to the ravaging of sensitivity and the physical debasement and the beauty and moral abomination contained in the passion of Christ! No one and nothing forced Him to do what He did but love. (Mat. 27.27-50, Mark 15.16-37, Luke 23.24-46)

God by definition is holy and righteous and does not coexist with sin. (Ex. 23.7; Psa. 22.3; 99.9; 145.17) He was now compelled to abandon the filthy abomination of sin that Jesus had become. Now Jesus could no longer sense the divine Presence that was life itself to Him. Because of this unthinkable rift between Jesus and His Father, Jesus died in torment,

bearing the sins of the entire human race. (Mark 15.37, Luke 23.46)

We have many questions about this, a situation that should not have occurred. Why did the Almighty God have to go to such extreme lengths in order to save mankind? If He is all-powerful, why could He not just have waved an imperial hand and decreed salvation for all men? Who or what power could force the God we know to evict His Son Jesus from the ivory palaces in the Godhead and compel Him to condescend to life in this hovel called Earth? Why did Jesus have to submit to all the indignities of a sin-cursed race, endure the tortures inflicted on Him by the same sin-cursed men and die a grotesque death on a cross of shame? What happened in the heavenly realm that events could go so horribly wrong? It defies all reason and makes no earthly sense.

Of course it makes no earthly sense, and that is fortunate for mankind. The plan of salvation is based on heavenly principles and truth that are as far above the reasoning of this earth as heaven itself is higher than earth. (Isa. 55.8, 9) If God had reacted according to human reason, we all would have become permanent inhabitants of hell. Only love and wisdom and a power infinitely greater than ours could have devised and implemented the Plan of Salvation. (Rom. 8.38, 39) The Great Plan is marvelous in its intricacy and its

simplicity. It is extremely complicated and yet simple enough that no great intellect is required to grasp it sufficiently to accept it. We who are nestled safe within this cocoon don't fully understand it. We see the principles on which the Plan is based, but the love and wisdom that engineered it are beyond our comprehension.

Let me tell you this story of love that knows no bounds and accepts no limitations:

There was once, in the unimaginably far off past, a God who was the essence of love. There was only God, no angels or any other creatures, but He was not lonely nor was He alone. He had His own multiple-dimensional Self to keep Him from being lonely or alone. There are within God a multitude of manifestations and personalities that are constantly pushing outward for expression.

One of these manifestations is love and we know that love has to have an object toward which to direct itself.⁴ Love cannot exist in a vacuum. Even after God

⁴ 1 Cor. 13 is concerned with the expending of love (charity) on a human object. If there were no object toward which love could direct itself, there would be no 1 Cor. 13 in the Bible. Indeed, there would be no Bible.

had created the angels, the love that was God yearned for someone made in His own likeness on which He could expend His love – and that love was the Almighty God Himself. (Rom. 5.8, 1 John 4.10, 16)

It is clear that man was in the mind of God from forever. We say “from forever” because God does not change. He did not suddenly realize that He needed someone to love. God doesn’t improvise as He goes along as we do. God has all foreknowledge. (Jer. 1.5, Mal. 3.6, Jas. 1.17, Psa. 139.1-18, Acts 15.18) He has known all along about the crises that erupt in our lives, surprising and panicking us. God knew about them from forever and from that long ago He knew what He would do about them. It takes no great mental powers, then, to conclude that God had forever determined to create man.

So God created Adam, man’s ancestor and prototype. You know the story: Adam sinned and God expelled him from the Garden of Eden. (Gen. 3.1-24) He evicted man (in Adam), but He did not kill him. Love would not permit such an outrage committed against outrageous man. In the long view the righteousness of God will not tolerate sin. It must be obliterated once and for all from God’s creation. In the short view, however, God in His mercy allows sin to exist because it is an integral part of His favored species: Man. (Lam. 3.22, 23) If God had eradicated

sin He would have terminated the entire future race of men. Nevertheless the justice of God still brings upon all men, saved or unsaved, the inevitable temporary consequences of sin. (Rom. 6.23, Jas. 1.14, 15)

Despite sin and its unavoidable consequences, the love of God decreed that mankind had to live regardless of man's damnable nature. So love did what it had to do. (Rom. 5.8) It found the only way that was compatible with the righteousness of God. It conceived a Plan. The Plan brought an initial blackness of soul and incredible pain to the One who loved mankind, but if the cruel way is the only way to save the object of its devotion, love does not let that hinder its persistent working. The love of God personified in Jesus Christ thrust itself on the cross in the most horrible and most glorious sacrifice of all time and eternity. Now eternal life is available to all who want it.

Humankind has long sought for the so-called fountain of youth and has not found it. In the Plan of Salvation they have something immeasurably better than a fountain of youth. Unending youth does not eliminate sin and its dire consequences; eternal life does. In fact, the Great Plan is the spiritual fountain of eternal life springing from the veins of a crucified Savior. Now the fountain is there for you to plunge into and be healed of the plague of sin. You must

understand that sin is always a fatal disease. (Rom. 6.23, Jas. 1.14, 15)

Now – if you are not a believer, I have many questions to ask **you**. Tell me: Why do you insist on dying? Do you have some kind of eternal death wish? You are presumably of average or better intelligence, but even if you, by some genetic flaw, do not have average intelligence, you still are likely to grasp the message of eternal love and life in Jesus Christ. It doesn't require a Ph.D. You don't have to fully understand the Plan; all you are required to do is to accept it by faith in Jesus Christ. If you can do that, you become as valid a child of God as the rare genius who surrenders himself to God. There are many people who have low IQ's but who are beautifully saved because they had sense enough to turn to Jesus for their help and their salvation. The people whom, in your superior intellect, you have treated with contempt are pushing into the Kingdom ahead of you – where they will have an intellect greater than Einstein's.

Evidently you are the one who is mentally handicapped.

[3] Accepting the view that Jesus **became** sin does grate the believer's sensibilities when he thinks about

it, but think of the horrendous effect it had on the immaculate Son of God Himself! Jesus came with the intent of being degraded and being made a spectacle. Think of the love that deity must have had for man that would push Him to such an unthinkable extreme!

