



WHY WOULD GOD PUNISH JESUS FOR WHAT I DID ? – *What is the meaning of the cross ?*

Imagine your house was burglarized, and after catching the thief, the authorities deliver him to a magistrate. On the day of sentencing, the judge unexpectedly summons one of your neighbors and sentences

this *innocent* man to the penalty the thief deserved. Would it be fair to punish one innocent man for the crimes of another? Absolutely not !

It is true that Jesus suffered a cruel, horrible and unjust death on the cross, but there are three things we need to realize:

First: Jesus was not a mere *human*

While it would be unfair to punish one man for the crimes of another, Jesus was *not* a mere man. Instead, the New Testament Gospels and letters describe Jesus as God *incarnate*. Jesus repeatedly identified Himself as God and demonstrated His divine power to create, forgive, judge and grant eternal life. He even rose from the grave and ascended into heaven.

That's why Paul described Jesus as "*...the image of the invisible God...—all things were created through Him and for Him.*" (Colossians 1:16-16)

God, according to Christianity, is triune in nature, one Being in three persons: God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This truth is important because it's impossible to understand what Jesus did for us on the cross if we mistake Jesus for a mere man.

Second: Jesus went to the cross *voluntarily*

God did not *force* Jesus to suffer the penalty for other humans. Instead, Jesus *voluntarily* took the form of a human and chose the path of the cross.

Paul wrote that Jesus "*...emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.*" (Philippians 2:7)

"*...God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them...*" (2 Corinthians 5:19)

God knew what He was doing. This was not an act of cruelty. It was an act of love, motivated by mercy and grounded in grace.

Third: The sacrifice of Jesus is not an act of abuse, but a *gift of God*

When Jesus submitted to the cross, He displayed God's concern and compassion for us:

"*...God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*" (Romans 5:8) God was not acting abusively toward *Jesus*; He was acting lovingly toward *us*.

Let's return to that courtroom where the thief is about to be sentenced. This time the judge, rather than summoning your innocent neighbor, steps down from the bench and tells the thief that he – the *judge* – will serve the penalty the thief deserves and that he is free to go.

That, my friends, is what God did for us on the cross. Our situation is much like that of the thief. We're fallen, human creatures standing before a perfect, holy Creator. We have repeatedly broken the moral law in one way or the other, in small missteps or broader leaps.

We deserve to be punished for our crimes, but our Judge – the Creator of the universe – was willing to step down from the bench in “the form of a bond-servant” to pardon us, taking the punishment we deserve *on Himself*.

That is the meaning of the cross.