

Why the Cross?

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What is the point of the cross? I was taught the same, generally, as most Christians seem to believe, that because I am a sinner, I am subject to eternal death. Since Jesus gave himself a sacrifice in my place, therefore, when I accept Christ as my Savior, then, my personal sins are laid on him, and I avoid death. The sacrifices and various New Testament scriptures seem to indicate this idea. **1 Pet 2:24:** *Who his own self bare⁽³⁹⁹⁾ our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.* Here are other quotes from Isaiah: *Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all; he bare the sin of many* (Isa 53: 4, 5, 6, 12). But how does one reconcile these references with **2 Cor 5:19:** *To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them...* If God is not charging my sins to me, why would Jesus have to take my personal sins on himself? Better yet, why would he have to die such a cruel death as the cross?

First, the word ‘penalty’ is not in the entire Bible. It is assumed by men in their understanding of the results of sin. **Rom 6:23:** *For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.* “Wages” would be better translated “consequences”, as death is the natural result of sin. A “gift” on the other hand, is not based on any merit of the receiver. Jesus’ death was not a natural result of anything he did, since he did not sin. So, if Jesus did not die to pay man’s penalty for sin, and his death was not a natural result of sin, why did God allow it, and how does it help me?

God laid our ‘iniquity’ on Jesus by giving him the same nature with which we are born. A natural result is that he bore our griefs and carried our sorrows, yea, he was tempted in all points as are we (Heb 4:15), yet he did not sin. Therefore, in order to receive the consequence of sin, which is death, Jesus had to be made to look like a sinner. **2 Cor 5:21:** *For (this reason, that God was in Christ) he hath made him to be sin for (the sake of) us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.* (Author’s comments) The only way for the Son of God to look like a sinner was to allow him to be tried and executed like a criminal, in the eyes of man. He was made to be sin only by the Father removing His spirit from him at the cross. **Mt 27:45-46:** *45. Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. 46. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* We see how Christ, as son of man, who did not sin, died the ultimate death of a sinner. But again, how does that help me overcome sin?

John 12:31-33: *31. Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. 32. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. 33. This he said, signifying⁽⁴⁵⁹¹⁾ what death he should die.* Three times John uses the Greek word *semaino*⁽⁴⁵⁹¹⁾ in reference to the cross. He used the same word to indicate the writing of Revelation is in symbols. The noun form of the word goes back to the Hebrew word *'owth*⁽²²⁶⁾, which means ‘sign, or symbol.’ Literal circumcision is a ‘symbol’ of cutting sin away from the heart (Dt 30:6), or spiritual circumcision (Rom 2:29). The activity surrounding the cross is also to be viewed allegorically, so that we can see our sinful condition and the consequence of sin. And yes, sin will eventually lead to literal death, but the primary death God wants us to avoid is the eternal one.

Jn 3:14-15: *14. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: 15. That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.* In the wilderness, the brass serpent was raised up on a wooden pole. When bitten by a serpent, an Israelite could look at the serpent on the pole and

live. Jesus applied the type to himself - look at the cross and live. What does the serpent represent? The religious leaders are referred to as serpents, vipers - Mt 3:7; 12:34; 23:33; Lk 3:7. To the ancients a serpent represented 'cunning and wisdom.' In the Bible, the serpent represents man's cunning and wisdom. The serpent is more subtle, or crafty than any beast of the field (Gen 3:1); he crawls on his belly and eats dust (Gen 3:14). There could not be a more appropriate symbol for man's 'iniquity', Strong's number 5771, the root (5753) of which means 'to bend, twist, distort.' A serpent represents man's twisted and distorted understanding of God. It is a symbol of my 'old man', or man's carnal way of thinking, which Jesus put to death on the cross. Jesus took man's nature and physical form, and to man, appeared for the most part, to be an ordinary man. To lift up Jesus and the cross is to look at them from God's perspective - then, I can see my iniquity and allow God to cleanse me of it.

Jn 3:16-17: *16. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. 17. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.*

God did not send His only son into the world to condemn anyone. If God does not condemn me, then why is He keeping a record of my sins? HE IS NOT keeping a record - we are recording everything we do in our own minds (books)! **2 Cor 5:19:** *To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.* If God is not keeping a record of my sins, why would he lay them on His Son? He doesn't, and if He did not lay them on the Son, how am I to understand 1 Per 2:24, Isaiah 53, etc? Here is **1 Pet 2:24** more literal to the Greek: *Who himself lifted up ⁽³⁹⁹⁾ the sins of our's in his body on the tree, so that having died to the sins, we might live of the righteousness: by whose wounds you were healed.* The Greek word translated 'bare' has the meaning of 'up' included. Look at **verse 5** in the same chapter: *Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up ⁽³⁹⁹⁾ spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.* (also cf Mk 9:2; Lk 24:51; Heb 7:27) Jesus carried our sins in the sense that he was born of a human mother, and trained in human ways. Our personal sins are not laid on Christ - WE are responsible for them! God 'lifts up' our understanding, so that, by looking at, and receiving God's understanding of the cross, we have the power to resist acting on our evil thoughts. The Son died, not to condemn us, but because the Father and Son loves us. The cross is an act of love!

Peter indicated that by Jesus lifting up our sins, we become dead to the sins. Paul comments on these ideas: **Rom 6:4-7:** *4. Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. 5. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: 6. Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. 7. For he that is dead is freed from sin.* To walk in 'newness of life' is to be resurrected out of spiritual death by a new way of understanding that is from the Father, and revealed in the Son. Anyone truly abiding in Christ is being made free from sin - not the sin nature, but the sinful way of thinking.

Here is another scripture reference, which has a perverted translation, that shows God is not imputing sin: **Rom 3:24-25:** *24. Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: 25. Whom God hath set forth [a mercy seat] through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the [passing over] of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;* When we accepted Jesus Christ as our Savior, God passed over, or, disregarded all our past sins, and set about to deliver us from our present sins. 'Mercy seat' is put for 'propitiation' because that is the way the Greek word is translated in Hebrews 9:5. The mercy seat was a covering for the ark, and the verb root of the word means 'to cover', translated many times as 'to make atonement.' (Cf Lev 4:20, 26, 31) This idea is conveyed in the New Testament as 'make reconciliation.' The mercy seat was a

solid gold covering (Ex 25:17) on which was sprinkled blood on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:14), and from above it, God spoke to the Moses (Ex 25:22). The gold is a symbol for the faith of Christ (Rev 3:18; 1 Pet 1:7). When we come to Jesus, God begins to cover us with His understanding, which is His righteousness. The mercy seat is not a symbol for the cross, but the blood sprinkled there is indicative of God's teaching concerning the law and how the priesthood and sacrifices were a shadow of good things to come (Heb 10:1).

Summary: Eph 4:20-32: *20. But ye have not so learned Christ; 21. If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: 22. That ye put off concerning the former conversation (or, conduct) the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; 23. And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; 24. And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. 25. Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another. 26. Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: 27. Neither give place to the devil. 28. Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needs. 29. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. 30. And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. 31. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: 32. And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*

Jn 12:32: *And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.* If anyone is to be delivered from sin, they must lift up the cross from their earth (own understanding) into the heavens (God's understanding). (Cf Isa 55:7-9) Then, and only then, can the serpent, the old man, man's twisted, crooked and distorted way of thinking about the Father and the Son be revealed, and be replaced by a new way of thinking. It is by receiving and applying God's understanding in our manner of life that we can resist sin. By changing our thoughts, our outward actions will be changed, and become God's works.

Heb 10:19-20: *19. Having, therefore, brethren, boldness for the entrance into the holy places, in the blood of Jesus, 20. which way he did initiate for us - new and living, through the veil, that is, his flesh.* (Young's literal Bible) **Mk 4:13:** *And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables? God bless your understanding. Amen.*