

“Why a Roman Cross?” and the Bible

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The Bible teaches that the blood of the Son of God is the only remedy for sin. The Old Testament sacrificial system was a bloody affair - and its primary purpose was to “prime the pump” for the One sacrifice that actually had the power to expunge wrongdoing. *“For it is **impossible** for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins ... Every priest stands daily ... offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can **never** take away sins; but He ... offered one sacrifice for sins for all time”* (Heb 10:4,11,12). The sacrifice? *“(T)he body of Jesus Christ”* (Heb 10:10). The Great High Priest presents His own blood in The Most Holy Place as payment for our sins.

But, ... why death on a Roman cross? Why nailed to wood for six hours of incomprehensible agony? And why the prelude to the cross - pummeled, spat upon, beard ripped out, scourged, crowned with thorns ... ? Well, I don't know. But, there is one thing I do know ... and I have some guesses about some other things.

I Do Know

... agony does not pay for sin. Only blood does. Jesus' anguish did not add any power to His blood. The Passover Lamb of the sacrificial system did not have its hair ripped out - nor was it beaten, spat upon, scourged, nailed upon chunks of wood - and hung up until it died. In the sacrificial system, **how** the blood was procured was not the issue. I am pretty sure the throat was simply slit, and the suffering lasted for just a few moments. *“The life of the flesh is in the blood”* (Lev 17:14) and life is required to pay for sin. Agony of the flesh has no pardoning power. Hell will have ample agony - but pardon empowered blood will be absent.

Some Knowledge and Some Guesses

The Cross - From the Roman's Viewpoint

The Roman cross was one of the most horrendous execution procedures ever instituted by a government. If not nailed to it, one would linger on it for days. It is probably true ... there are some fates worse than death. Official Rome decided that one convicted of a capital offense needed to be punished. *“Who knows ... maybe the human spirit just evaporates after death - or we may have a God who doesn't care about the affairs on earth. So, the condemned must suffer - now!”* The cross was designed to inflict the greatest amount of anguish possible. And it was a humiliating display. The convicted were hung naked. Also, these executions normally took place on main thoroughfares - a reminder to the populace as to who was boss.

The Cross - From the Jew's Viewpoint

The Jews would probably have been satisfied with simply stoning Jesus to death (Jn 8:59, 10:31 and Ac 7:54-60). But, as they decided to work through the Roman authorities for this execution, they were quite comfortable with a Roman cross for this blasphemer. They just wanted Him dead. There is no evidence any of them objected to handing this Jew over to a bunch of heathen Gentiles.

The Cross - From God's Viewpoint: Some Guesses

I think it is possible that we are going to find that much of the *“righteousness versus evil”* conflict of this age is centered in the realm of the angels. Theirs is the war of Titans, and we are in a

war of midgets. While many individual men have caused great harm and suffering, they are midgets compared to Satan and his ranks. The angels have life spans of thousands and thousands of years, have cumulative knowledge (of our realm and the angelic realm) and have pre-fall and post-fall experience in both orders. They also have much greater physical power, and are “other dimensional” beings. Examine Job 1:12-19 and look at what Satan was able to put together as he attacked Job - and God had even restrained Satan’s hands. There is no telling what he could do if he was granted full reign to act. Angels understand this entire conflict much more clearly than any of earth’s midgets. So, I think it is possible that execution **by a cross** - was for Satan.

Satan’s Opportunity

God gave Satan one last opportunity to make Jesus sin. He had failed at the eve of Jesus’ public ministry - and then “*departed from Him until an opportune time*” (Lk 4:13). While there were other attacks before the cross - the cross was surely an opportune time. Just one curse word ... just one evil thought toward the Father ... just one violation of any kind in any area - and Satan would be victorious.

But, ... what would he win? While it is clear that Satan’s personal sins have negatively impacted his logical reasoning powers (Rev 12:12), there is no indication he has ever believed he would be saved from his impending doom if he could get Jesus to sin. The lake of fire has been created by God “*for the devil and his angels*” (Mt 25:41), and there is no evidence he ever believed there was a possibility of reprieve. So, why the intense efforts to make Jesus fall? Well, his motives may be very simple ... and two-fold. First, if Jesus sinned, this would create chaos of unimaginable dimensions for the triune God. Second, all humanity would be damned. So, while Satan (and his) would secure no personal gain, the opportunity to eternally injure God - and have us all damned - well, he could not walk away. This opportunity matched his nature and demeanor. Incidentally, many midgets of earth imitate their father Satan. In their hate and anger, they are determined to take everyone down with them.

But, why would God grant this “opportunity” (and it was granted) to Satan? I think it is possible that since God has decided upon eternal damnation for Satan and his ranks, maybe the Father (and Son) decided to give Satan full opportunity at God Himself in a human body. The cross was more than a contest between Titans - it was a contest between the Creator and one titan. “*... this hour and the power of darkness are yours*” (Lk 22:53). While Jesus said this to the arresting party, we know who these children belonged to (Jn 8:44) and who was the principle behind this arrest and the coming events (Jn 13:26-30). I will not be surprised if we find that Satan invented crucifixion as an execution method, and then introduced and institutionalized it - with a view toward this moment. If I was in a position to grant or withhold such an hour, I could never grant it. I do not possess this much power of character.

I also think Jesus was at the zenith of His physical condition ... when He walked into the cross. He was in the prime of life, had been walking the environs of Israel for three years, and only ingested wholesome foods. We may find He was the most hardy of any physical specimen ever on this globe. Therefore, to squeeze the life out of Him may have required the greatest amount of pressure ever visited upon a human frame. Because unredeemed humans are also heading into eternal damnation, maybe Christ’s exit will be used to silence complaints of cruel injustices. By emerging from the cross sin free - no excuse for sin, even in the most extreme of circumstances, will find standing at the Judgment.

Satan lost at the cross (Col 2:15). This loss has given God an incontestable, undisputed, earned authority to now bind the strong man and plunder his house ... right before his eyes (Mk 3:27). God did not need to earn moral superiority, or win power by such a contest - but, ... He decided to anyway.

Undoubtedly,

... it causes Satan unspeakable anguish to see a vile, perverted, small-minded, cowardly, little fool like me ... saved. Eternal life? Heading into inconceivable glories forever and ever and ever? Even the thought of this - he cannot bear. And this anguish has been inflicted by God ... before the lake of fire. *“Woe to the earth and to the sea; because the devil has come down to you having great wrath, knowing that he has only a short time”* (Rev 12:12). O God, please keep the hedges up (Job 1:10).

I have been a Christian for over thirty years at the time of this writing. My sin frequency is still alarmingly high. From my viewpoint, He paid an immeasurably high price to purchase me ... and has been getting a lousy return on the investment. Fortunately, He has an eternal perspective and must see promise ahead. That must constitute the joy that was set before Him, making Him willing *“to endure the cross”* while *“despising the shame”* (Heb 12:2).

So, why a cross? Well, I guess there are a couple of other things I know about it. When I carefully think upon it, ***I know*** ... it humiliates ... and humbles me.

God expands ones mind - and experiences.
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