

Why Was Christ's Passion Necessary?

Most people have different feelings after seeing Mel Gibson's powerful movie, *The Passion of the Christ*. Many feel gratitude that Jesus suffered so much on our behalf. Many also feel deep sadness because our sins and shortcomings helped do that to Jesus.

However, we may also come away from this movie trying to understand more fully why such brutality would be the will of a loving and merciful God. Many times we have heard it said that "Christ died for our sins." But, after seeing such a realistic depiction of Christ's scourging and crucifixion, we may ask ourselves why was that necessary for our salvation. This massive suffering seemed like what would be done to appease an angry and vengeful God—not a loving and merciful One.

A key realization to better understand the need for Christ's passion and death is to recognize that even though God is perfectly loving, God

is also perfectly just. Since God is just, he cannot merely sweep our sins under the rug.

What criminal court judge would let all contrite felons who come before his bench go free without any imprisonment or punishment at all? That would make a mockery of our legal justice system and would not be tolerated.

In a similar way, God's justice cannot be a mockery. We all deserve punishment because of our sins. None of us deserve, on our own, the reward of heaven. We will never fully feel the love of God until we realize the seriousness of our sins and the justice of the punishment we are due.

So, if God was not just, there would be no need for His Son to suffer and die. Yet, if God was not loving, there would be no willingness for His Son to suffer and die. But, ***God is both just and loving. Therefore, God's love is willing to satisfy the needs of His justice.***

By willingly suffering on our behalf out of love and obedience, Christ made satisfaction to God as compensation for all the sins of humanity. Christ's passion and death set things right with God. Jesus, out of perfect love for us, voluntarily and obediently suffered on our behalf to obtain God's pardon for our sins. The debt was now paid. His love paid the price.

As the prophet Isaiah wrote 700 years before: "He was pierced for our offenses, crushed for our sins. He bore the punishment that makes us whole, by his stripes we were

healed" the Lord laid upon him the guilt of us all (Isaiah 53:5-6).

From a human perspective, it is inconceivable that the God of perfect holiness would subject Himself to such suffering at the hands of sinful, selfish creatures like ourselves. Yet that is exactly what happened! God loves each of us so much that he lovingly and mercifully chose to rescue us at the cost of His own Son's life.

Jesus freely became human for our sakes and accepted the cruelest of human sufferings to win for us the possibility of eternal life with God in heaven. ***Christ paid the highest price possible to give us the greatest gift possible.***

Of course, we did nothing to earn this undeserved and gracious manifestation of God's love. By Christ's passion and death, God made clear how much He loves us and how much He wants us to spend eternity in His love and presence.

God is now offering that payment to us as a pure gift—one that we are free to accept or reject. If we believe in and follow Christ as his disciple, God no longer holds our sins against us and offers us the gift of eternal life. That is indeed really good news!