

What were the Real Sufferings of Jesus Christ?

Frequently Asked Question 6

When people think of the sufferings of Jesus Christ, many immediately think of what He suffered at the hands of those who crucified Him. However, the real sufferings of Jesus Christ were not what He suffered at the hands of man, but what He suffered at the Hand of God the Father who punished Him for the sins of the world!



Firstly, it is important that we do not minimise the sufferings of Jesus Christ caused by the Jewish religious leaders and Roman soldiers. The Bible tells us that upon His arrest and during His trial, He was spat on, beaten, slapped, scourged, stripped and mocked, with all these happening even before He was crucified (Matthew 26:67,68; 27:26-31; Mark 14:65; 15:15-20; Luke 22:63-65; 23:11; John 18:22; 19:1-3). Psalm 129:3 gives us a very graphic description of how He was scourged - “The plowers plowed upon my back: they made long their furrows.” He was so badly disfigured that Isaiah 52:14b records, “his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men:” Finally, He was led away to be crucified, which was the most cruel, painful and shameful form of execution known to man.

Nevertheless, if we were to only focus on the sufferings of Jesus Christ as described above, we would only be looking at the man-picture but not the God-picture. The man-picture is to look at the sufferings of Jesus Christ from man’s perspective, whereas the God-picture is to look at the sufferings of Jesus Christ from His perspective. Hence, it is vital to understand that from Jesus Christ’s perspective, His real sufferings were not the pain of suffering inflicted by man (the man-picture), but the punishment for sin inflicted by God the Father, and the pain of separation from God the Father (the God-picture).

1. The Punishment for Sin

“All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way;
And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” (Isaiah 53:6)

The Bible tells us that “it was the third hour [9 am], and they crucified Him” (Mark 15:25). From 9 am to 12 noon, Jesus Christ hung on the cross in broad daylight. At 12 noon, when the sun was supposed to be at its brightest, a divine miracle occurred. “Now when the sixth hour [12 noon] had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour [3 pm].” (Mark 15:33) It was as if God had intentionally “turned out the lights” from 12 noon to 3 pm, because it was during these 3 hours of darkness that God the Father was personally dealing with God the Son for the sins of the world.

The real sufferings of Jesus Christ happened during the 3 hours of darkness on the cross when God the Father poured out His wrath on Him. It was during this time that “He [God the Father] made Him [Jesus Christ] who knew no sin to be sin for us” (2 Corinthians 5:21a) by laying on Him the sins of the whole world – every sin that was ever committed and will ever be committed by every person in the world, from the beginning until the end of time, and punished Him for every single one of them even though He did not commit any one of them. As our perfect Saviour, substitute and sacrifice, He was “made a curse for us” (Galatians 3:13) and became “the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2).

Far greater than what Jesus Christ suffered at the hands of man (see paragraph 2) was what He suffered at the Hand of God the Father during the 3 hours of darkness on the cross. He was “smitten by God, and afflicted...Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief” (Isaiah 53:4b,10a). So great were His sufferings as He bore the punishment for sin on behalf of the world that Lamentations 1:12,13 tells us, “Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by? Look and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow, which was brought upon me, which the LORD inflicted on the day of his fierce anger. From on high he sent fire; into my bones he made it descend; he spread a net for my feet; he turned me back; he has left me stunned, faint all the day long.”



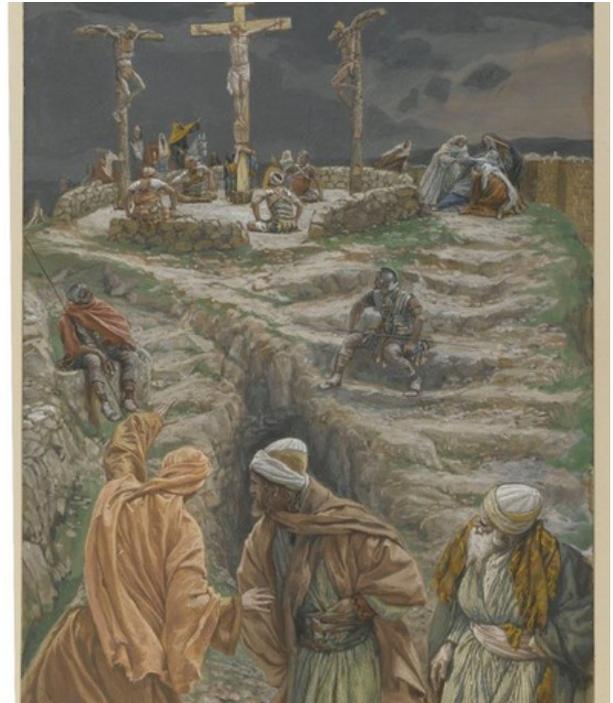
2. The Pain of Separation

My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (Matthew 27:46b; Mark 15:34b)

The real sufferings of Jesus Christ were not just the punishment for sin by God the Father, but also the pain of separation from God the Father. Habakkuk 1:13a says that God is “of purer eyes than to behold evil, And cannot look on wickedness”. In John 10:30, Jesus Christ Himself said, “I and My Father are one.” Therefore, when God the Father laid on Jesus Christ the sins of the world, the perfect union that had existed between God the Father and God the Son from eternity past was broken, as God the Father forsook His beloved Son and punished Him for the sins of the world.

When Jesus Christ was afflicted by man from His arrest to His trial to His scourging and even to the first 3 hours on the cross, the Bible does not record that He ever talked back, fought back or even cried out in pain. In fact, Isaiah 53:7 says, “He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth.”

for the sins of the world, He “cried out with a loud voice...My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34) This was because during the 3 hours of darkness on the cross, Jesus Christ experienced something that had never happened before between Him and His Father. For the very first time, He was completely alone, abandoned and forsaken – totally cut off from God the Father, as He bore the punishment for sin by His very own Father, and suffered the pain of separation from Him.



Why did Jesus Christ suffer the punishment for sin by God the Father and the pain of separation from God the Father? He did it because He loves us and does not want us to suffer the eternal punishment for sin by God and the eternal pain of separation from God in Hell. “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness...For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God,” (1 Peter 2:24a; 3:18a)

Sin has separated us from God (Isaiah 59:2a), but we are reconciled to God by Jesus Christ who suffered and died for us (Romans 5:8,10). Have you received Jesus Christ into your heart as your Saviour and Lord personally? “But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,” (John 1:12)