

Jesus' "Sacrifice"

While it might make sense for a god to punish humans for harm they cause each other – if no human authority is able to do it – it makes no sense for a god to punish an innocent third-party savior for the misdeeds of humans.

Thus the sacrifice of Jesus makes no sense. It violates justice to have an innocent person pay a penalty for a guilty person. And if an all-powerful god doesn't want to send us to Hell, he can presumably stop himself from sending us there.

If the Biblical god wanted to forgive us for something, he could simply have done it. No savior needed to die in order to accomplish this. *If one chooses a more difficult way than is necessary in order to accomplish a task, then, by definition, it is not a sacrifice.*

For Jesus to have suffered and died for humanity, when it wasn't necessary, makes Yahweh a sadist and Jesus either a masochist or an innocent victim. So Jesus deserves either our scorn or our pity, but not our gratitude.

But while Jesus' suffering makes no *logical sense*, it does make *emotional sense* in that it is often used as an emotional ploy to keep Christians guilt-tripped into remaining believers: "Jesus suffered and died for you. How can you abandon him?"

But Jesus did not die for your sins. He died for himself.

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Jesus Did Not Die For Your Sins

By August Berkshire

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

– John 3:16 (NIV)

According to Christians, all humans are "sinners" who need to be forgiven. Christians further believe that the Biblical character of Jesus is a savior who died for our sins. Those who are not "saved" by Jesus are presumably destined for eternal suffering in Hell.

This raises the following questions: What are these sins? Who are these sins committed against? Who should do the forgiving? Who should suffer the punishment? And, in what way does Jesus save us?

Sinful Human Nature

The first category of sin would be what Christians claim is the inherent sinful nature of humans. The sin we are born with – called "original sin" – requires baptism to "wash away our sin." Yet even after this, our sinful nature continues, and so we are supposedly in need of a savior.

But if the god who supposedly created us was dissatisfied with his creation, he should have started over and kept trying until he got it the way he wanted. (In fact, why didn't he get it right in the first place?) For this god not to do this shows that he is either incompetent or cruel (creating beings, some of which he knows are destined for eternal punishment in Hell).

Humans Sinning Against Humans

The second category of sin would be the willful harm humans do to each other. But such harm can only properly be forgiven by the person who has been injured, not by a third-party savior (or, today, by a priest acting on behalf of that savior).

And if a punishment is appropriate, it is unjust for anyone but the person committing the harm to suffer the penalty. It is unethical for a third-party savior to suffer for the sins of others, just as it would be unethical for any of us to go to prison for crimes committed by someone else.

Thus no divine third-party savior is needed for forgiveness or to suffer a penalty.

While a god might be *disappointed* in our behavior towards each other, this god is not *harmed* by it, nor should this god send a savior to *suffer* for it.

Humans Sinning Against A God

A third category of sin, according to Christians, are sins that humans commit against the Biblical god.

No one claims that the Christian god Yahweh has ever been physically injured by humans. And the only physical harm alleged against the Christian god Jesus was during the story of his crucifixion, and the people who supposedly committed that act are long dead.

Thus the only way we might be able to harm a Christian god today would be by causing this god *mental anguish*.

(However, it should be noted that it is not possible for an all-powerful god to experience mental anguish unless he himself allows it.)

If this god's mental anguish is caused by humans harming each other, then, as stated previously, the only being who can properly bestow forgiveness is the human who has been harmed. While a god might be *disappointed* in our behavior towards each other, this god not *harmed* by it.

However, if this god's mental anguish is caused by humans failing to believe in this god's existence, then that is easily remedied by this all-powerful god revealing himself in a convincing way. If this god fails to do this, then he has no one but himself to blame for any mental anguish caused by people not believing in his existence. To blame humans is to blame the victim, which is unethical.

If this god's mental anguish is caused by humans failing to have proper gratitude for his goodness, then this god must first demonstrate that there is something good in life that would not be possible without him. And, the proper punishment for not appreciating something good is the removal of that thing, not eternal torture.

Furthermore, this god must also explain the existence of natural evil – why he, as an all-powerful, all-loving god, allows it to happen. And, if he can't explain the problem of evil, then this god should ask *us* for forgiveness.

Finally, it should be mentioned that thought-crime should not be a sin because it harms no one and we cannot help what thoughts come into our head, nor are we always successful at banishing them.

Does Jesus Save Us?

In order to be “saved” you have to be “saved” *from something*. You have to be in danger of something bad happening to you.

According to Christians, what happens if our sins are not forgiven by the Biblical god? What happens if Jesus does not “save” us? The answer is that we go to Hell forever.

Who makes the determination of whether or not we go to Hell? It is obviously the Christian god, since no human in his or her right mind would send himself or herself to Hell. (We don't even know the directions to get there, wherever it is.)

In the Bible, sacrifices are made to a god to try to please him. For example, “Then burn the entire ram on the altar. It is a burnt offering to the LORD, a pleasing aroma, a food offering presented to the LORD.” (Exodus 29:18, NIV)

If Jesus' death was a “sacrifice,” it was a sacrifice to God. In fact, Jesus is sometimes referred to as the “lamb of God”: “The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, ‘Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!’” (John 1:29, NIV)

It is claimed that Christianity is a monotheistic religion, so there must be at least some sense in which Yahweh in the Old Testament and Jesus in the New Testament are the same god.

Putting all of the above elements together, we can reach the following conclusion: *God sacrificed himself to himself to save us from himself.*