

The Cross Is Love Study Guide - Understanding 2.2

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. – John 3:16

How does asking your Son to leave the throne room of heaven, allowing him to become human and be born of a virgin, all so He could be brutally executed on cross. How is that love? God's definition of love must be totally different than ours. The way we think, no loving father would ever intentionally put his son – his only son – in harms way. At the very least most of us would call that bad parenting. How does the cross of Jesus Christ demonstrate the love of God?

According to John 3:16, God's motivation for coming to earth and dying on a cross is love. God so loved the world. How is it love to allow your son to be brutally executed?

To answer that question, it's important for us to recognize who is doing the loving. **God** so loved the world. God is love. God deals with life from an eternal perspective. He's not bound by time and space. While you and I cannot possibly know what tomorrow holds, God is absolutely, positively sure of what tomorrow holds.

Isaiah 46:8 "Remember this and stand firm, recall it to mind, you transgressors, **9** remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, **10** declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,'

And what has God told us about the future? He's spent thousands of years sending one prophet after another to tell us in no uncertain terms that he is going to destroy evil. It's not ok with Him that we've disobeyed and rebelled. His creation was never intended to experience the ravages of death and sickness and hate. He gave us free will so that we could freely love Him, and we selfishly loved ourselves more than loving Him.

God's intent to completely destroy evil necessitates that evil people are cast from his presence and that, eventually, this fallen creation is completely destroyed. God has stated his intention clearly. In fact, he plans not only to wipe out evil, but also to create a new heaven and a new earth: a new creation where evil is not present.

2 Peter 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

Isaiah 65:17 "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind.

2 Peter 3:13 But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

Revelation 21:1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.

Here is why the cross of Jesus is rooted in the love of God. God knows you and I will never enter his presence in our current evil condition. And he knows there is nothing you and I can do to reverse our sinful condition on our own.

Romans 3:10 as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; **11** no one understands; no one seeks for God. **12** All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one."

Yes, the Lord will eliminate evil, but, no, the Lord, in his love for us, doesn't want to eliminate us. That's why it says:

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

Back to John 3.16 – that whoever believes in the Son should not what? Should not perish? Perish – there it is – God doesn't want us to be eliminated when he eliminates evil. What does God want for us? He wants us to have eternal life with him – “should not perish but have eternal life.”

The cross of Jesus is about God saving us from himself – from the day he eliminates evil. The cross is the place where God himself, in the person of Jesus, is punished for evil. Jesus experiences the wrath of God against evil by dying as the sacrificial Lamb of God.

Isaiah 53:5 But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.

By faith in Jesus, all who believe will escape the wrath of God or as we read they will not perish but have eternal life.

Romans 5:9 Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.

As it turns out, God's love is vastly different from how you and I think about love. Our love is usually based on the loveliness of the one we love. It's emotional. We feel love when we encounter the one we consider lovely.

But God's love is not based on the loveliness of the one he loves. There's nothing lovely about our selfish evil rebellion against God. Instead, God loves because love is his character.

Romans 3:8 but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

God gives his only Son as a sacrifice for sin on behalf of people who hate him. But our evil rebellion against God is not enough to stop him from loving us. Here it is:

1 John 3:16 By this we know love, that he (Jesus) laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.

Jesus said it this way: **John 15:13** Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

God loves you. There's certainly a lot more to be said, but let's stop to consider this simple truth. God doesn't want any of us to perish when he destroys evil. His love for us is so great that He himself came to earth in the person of Jesus to experience himself being sacrificed as an offering for our sin on the cross of Calvary.

John 3:17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. **18** Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

You are loved. It doesn't matter if no one on this planet views you as lovely. God views you as absolutely precious to him: so much so that he's made a way for you to escape his judgment and to be with him forever. The way is by faith in Jesus Christ – the only way.

Romans 10:9 because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. **10** For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. **11** For the Scripture says, “Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.” **12** For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. **13** For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

Ephesians 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Live this day knowing that if you’ve surrendered your life to Jesus, you are saved from the wrath to come. The love of God guarantees that you will not perish. Instead you’re destined for eternal life in Christ.

Now that’s love.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

- 1) Explain how the cross communicates God’s love.
- 2) What is God’s motivation when he allows his son to be brutally executed through crucifixion?
- 3) What is God’s intention for evil? For this creation? For all evil doers?
- 4) Explain the word “perish” based on John 3:16 and 2 Peter 3:9.
- 5) What is God’s love for us based on?