**“IT DOESN’T MATTER?”**

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**INTRO. A. RWANDA—**Story I tell all the time, but I want to put it, short version, here. In RWANDA, 1994, soldiers came into a church, guns, made everybody lie down, saw a picture of the Cross, said, “You have to spit on the picture, say, ‘Jesus, you are useless, I want nothing more to do with you.’ Or you will die today.” Pastor did it. Head elder, others. Then one young girl took her skirt, wiped all the spit off, ‘Jesus, I am the one who is useless.’ Told the soldier, “You can kill me now.” **Willing to die—for the Cross. Soldier couldn’t do it.**

 B. I did a **Conference** at my last church on the Character of God. $15,000, brought a bunch of famous speakers in. Sabbath afternoon, panel discussion, our main speaker, said, “**What really matters, for me, is Jesus’ teaching—and His resurrection. Not the Cross.”** What? Head elder called me on the way home, **“Jesus is going to have the scars on His hands for the rest of eternity**. **It doesn’t matter**?” We put crosses everywhere, people wear. We sing “Near the Cross,” “The Old Rugged Cross.” It doesn’t matter anymore?

 C. He’s part of a group. #1—**mad about this—**When black people have had to suffer, or women, whoever—always somebody that says, Jesus suffered, and so--so do you. **Jesus took up His Cross, so you have to** “Take up your Cross and follow Me.” I had a lady tell me, her first husband had held an axe to her throat, she told the pastor, pastor told her the husband was the head of the house, go home and take it. God’s will. Terrible.

 **D. #2--**They don’t like the **VIOLENCE of the Cross--**God hates sin, but we’re all sinners. He says, ‘If you eat of the Tree you shall surely die.” “Wages of sin is death. But God doesn’t want anybody to die. So He takes all His wrath and puts it on Jesus in our place.

\*\*I had a pastor from **GHANA** years ago. He was playing soccer at the field at La Sierra, tripped on a gopher hole, wrecked his knee. It got an infection, so they took part of it out, had to send it to Boston to fix the infection. In the meantime, couldn’t work, didn’t have the money for school, so immigration was going to send him back to Ghana. Went to see Dr. Geraty, president, **“I can’t go back to Ghana, my knee is in Boston!”** Got a doctor to pay his tuition, got his knee back, started a Ghanaian church, getting ordained! **But the University didn’t care who put in the money, him or the doctor.**

\*\*So they say God doesn’t care who dies. You die, Jesus die, as long as somebody dies, as long as God sees the blood. “Power in the Blood.” Is that the message we’re supposed to preach around the world?

 E. #3—**They can’t believe that it was God’s will to save the world by having the Romans kill Jesus.** In the movie **THE PASSION**—we went to see it 2 months early, at Saddleback Church, with Mel Gibson there himself, 3000 pastors. The whipping started—Hilda put her head down, just couldn’t stand it. I forced myself to watch it. How can you take a whip filled with pieces of metal, and just slash at a human being’s bare back? But if God is the one punishing Jesus, if God is saving through the world through this, then this whipping is part of God’s plan. Then the mother comes out and wipes up the blood. The Father is doing the whipping, but the mother is wiping up the blood? \*\***So they say, JESUS DIDN’T COME TO DIE. God would never use the DEMONS OR THE ROMANS OR THE JEWS to Kill Jesus. Jesus came to fight those people. He didn’t come down to use them to save the world. They say Jesus is just a MARTYR.** Just a tragic **MURDER**.

**II. IT’S STILL THE CROSS.** A. #1--BUT where we would absolutely disagree—when they say, “Jesus didn’t come to die.” **We will die for this: Jesus came to die. JOHN 10:11 “’I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.’” JOHN 10:17-18 “’I lay down My life, and I take it up again. No one takes it from me, I lay it own of my own accord.’” He came to die!** When He was born, they took Him to the Temple, Simon says to Mary, **LUKE 2:35 “’And a sword will pierce your soul also.’”** He said, **JOHN 2:19 “’Destroy this temple, and I will raise it up again in 3 days.’”** He came to die. **HEBREWS 9:26 “He has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin—(HOW)—by the sacrifice of Himself.” YES, Jesus came to live. But I’ll die for this: Jesus came to die.**

 B. #--**Did God “WILL” for His Son to be killed?** **#1—God didn’t do this to Jesus**. This is something they did together. They are One. **DEUTERONOMY 6:4 “’Our LORD is One God.’”** **JOHN 10:30 “’I and the Father are One.’”** They did this together.

1. **And t was not God’s will for the whipping and the thorns and the slapping and the slamming**. God is not a violent God. God did not use violence in order for Jesus to die for us. God is good, all the time. The violence was from Satan and the demons, from the Romans. Not from God.

 \*\***It was only God’s will for Jesus to come into a world of sin and death, take our sins.** They knew He would die from our sins. But the Cross was not the plan. The whipping was not the plan. God did not **PARTNER** with the Romans in order to save us from sin. **NEVER NEVER NEVER!!**

 \*\***Maybe it would just have been the sins, the guilt, of 100 billion people’s sins, just crush his heart. It cannot be God’s will for people to whip and nail Jesus to the Cross in order to save us from our sins.**

 **C. IS THE CROSS STILL CENTRAL?** Is it true that the Cross is just a murder, a Martyr, but it’s not part of how God saves us? Just the Resurrection? Just His teaching? I agree that Jesus’ teaching is fantastic. I agree that the Resurrection is **HUGE**. It’s our only hope. BUT **I WILL NEVER** say that the Cross doesn’t matter. **1 CORINTHIANS 2:2** “**For I resolved to know nothing among you except the LORD and the LORD crucified.” GALATIANS 6:14** “**May I never boast in anything, except in the CROSS of the LORD Jesus Christ.”** **ISAIAH 53:5 “By His wounds we are healed.”** It’s not just the teaching or the Resurrection. It’s the wounds.

**\*\*LAMBS. Thousands of years of lambs. The blood. The blood over the door. The goat on the Day of Atonement. It’s all the Cross. At the end of the world—what will be the focus? What’s our only hope? REVELATION 12:11 “’They overcame by the blood of the Lamb.’”** Who was the only one who could read the Scroll? **REVELATION 5:6 “The Lamb who had been slain.”** People wash their robes white—in the blood of the Lamb. Everybody’s going to go to the Wedding of the Lamb, sing the song of the Lamb, have the name of the Lamb on their foreheads. **Don’t tell me the Cross doesn’t matter any more. I WILL DIE FOR THE CROSS.**

 **D. My head elder at my last church called me that afternoon--“Dan, Jesus is going to have SCARS on His hands—forever. It doesn’t matter?” I** wondered **how Jesus felt in heaven,** hears someone say, I love Jesus’ teaching. And the Resurrection. But not the Cross. Jesus didn’t come to die. Wonder how He feels.

**\*\*PANORAMA:** And then it says in the book Great Controversy. I’ve given you all the Bible texts—now Spirit of Prophecy. When all the wicked have been raised, New Jerusalem has come down, Satan and everybody have surrounded the city. Everybody who has ever been alive is all there at one time. And she says there will be a great panorama. What will be on the Panorama. **The CROSS**. As if we were there. Says “every knee will bow.” Why will they all bow? Why will Satan finally have to bow? **IT’S THE CROSS!** Forever be the Cross.

**\*\*POLYCARP:** You remember the old bishop, they made a law, everybody had to say, **CAESAR is LORD.** Wouldn’t say it. They came to take him to burn him at the stake, knelt down, prayed for them all. Made them lunch. Captain said, “Just 3 words. You don’t have to mean them.” “No, Jesus died for me, I will never deny Him.” **I don’t want to die like that. But if somebody forces me to choose—I will die for the Cross.**

**III. LAST QUESTION—WHO NEEDS THE CROSS? A.** I won’t take time to go through what all the smart people have said about the Cross for the last 2000 years! Just know that it basically boils down to one main question: **Who needs the CROSS in order for it to save us?** Is it God? The University didn’t care who paid—but it wanted somebody to pay! Somebody ran up a bill, and somebody needs to pay. So we ran up a bill with God, and somebody needs to pay. In many religions, the gods get mad. You have to give them something—an offering, do a rain dance, light a candle, burn some incense, something. **THE MISSION**, killed a man, had to carry the heavy ball up the waterfall to the top. **Martin Luther thought he had to whip himself. Catholics do LENT, you have to give up something then God will be happy.** Is Christianity just like all the others, you sin, God gets mad, you have to give Him something really big, really hard, that involves suffering—then we can be OK with God again? Or maybe that’s not it?

 B. I want to ask you this question—**IF our sins make God angry, filled with Wrath, so He wants to punish us with death—**When does that happen? **It says, JOHN 10:30 “’I and the Father are One.’”** Been one for thousands of years. But if the traditional view is right, somewhere along the line God **SWITCHES SIDES.** **JUSTICE SIDE TAKES OVER**. anger He has been holding back for thousands of years comes out.

 C. It’s not in **HEAVEN**. They are clearly still One in heaven, saying goodbye.. All His life, Jesus says, “We are One. If you’ve seen Me, you’ve seen the Father. I must be about my Father’s Business. One.

 D. Is it during the **LAST SUPPER?** Says, **John 14:1-3: “’Let not your heart be troubled.** **You believe in God, believe also in Me.’“** Still one. In My **Father’s house** are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you. Still planning for everybody to be with Him and the Father.

 **E. GARDEN:** So was it in the Garden? Takes our sins on Him. A million sins, all the sins from before the Cross. All the sins after the Cross. Sins begin to separate Him from God. It says in DA that He clung to the ground to keep from separating from God any further. **BUT IS GOD SWITCHING SIDES?**

**\*\*\*Look at this: DA 753: “All His life Christ had been publishing the good news of the Father’s mercy and love. BUT NOW….”** What do you expect? Because now He has taken all the sins of everybody, now God has changed. Now God’s angry. Now God is punishing. No, that is **NOT** what it says—**DA753: “BUT NOW with the terrible weight of guilt He bears, He cannot see the Father’s reconciling face.”** Nothing has changed in the heart of God. Even though Jesus is now the worst sinner in the history of the world, committed a million murders, rapes, lies, breaking the Sabbath, and cursing God--God’s face—**STILL LOVE.**

 **F.** Was it when Judas betrayed Him? When Peter denied Him? Was it during the whipping? 39 times, with pieces of metal in the whip? **IF THE CROSS IS PUNISHMENT FROM GOD FOR SIN, THEN THE WHIPPING IS FROM GOD. The THORNS. The Crowd shouting, “CRUCIFY HIM.” The NAILS.** Anybody want to vote, that’s all from God? If it’s God punishing, then that is all from God, He’s just using the Romans and the Jews.

**IV. THE SEVEN LAST WORDS OF JESUS: A.** **#1—“FATHER, FORGIVE THEM!”** Does that sound like GOD has switched sides? Does Jesus expect God to forgive **BEFORE** the Cross, or **AFTER**? BEFORE the Blood, or AFTER? **BEFOFE!!** God does not need the Cross and blood in order to forgive. He’s still a Forgiver here. Hasn’t switched sides yet! The Cross/blood don’t make God a Forgiver. Because He’s a Forgiver! All He ever is.

**#2—"I SAY UNTO YOU TODAY, YOU WILL BE WITH ME IN PARADISE.” Is Jesus planning to be in Paradise? Yes.** Even though He is right now the worst sinner in the history of the world, not just a thief like these, but a **murderer and rapist and drug dealer and Hitler and bin Laden and everybody**—and he’s still planning to be in Paradise. With God the Father. Doesn’t sound like God has switched yet.

**#4—“MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?”** Doesn’t say,—“Why are you Killing ME?” If God punishes and kills sinners, and Jesus is the worst, then it has be, Why are you killing Me? It’s not. It’s separation. God hasn’t changed—Jesus just can’t find Him right now.

**#6—"IT IS FINISHED.”** What did He finish? What did He come to do? Came to tell the world about God. Heb. 1, the EXACT representation of His glory. We have seen the light of the glory of God in the face of Christ. The CROSS is telling us who God is. The Best. Nothing’s changed.

**#7—FATHER, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT.”** If God kllls sinners, and Jesus is the worst sinner in history—then why would you commit your spirit to God? But Jesus is not afraid, put His life in God’s Hands.

\*\***OCEAN MOVIE—**I saw one of the Oceans movies—these guys are doing this huge scam in Las Vegas to help a friend of theirs who got cheated. And this girl works for the police is his old girlfriend, and she says, “if I catch you, I will arrest you all.” But at the end of the movie she switches sides, goes back with him. End of the movie, they’ve won, everybody’s getting millions they’re having a party—and Brad Pitt walks in with her. Everyone froze—she says—**“You’re all under arrest.”** Then she laughs! They’re safe, they’re OK, she switched sides. \*\*Can we just say--God **NEVER SWITCHES SIDES. GOD IS NEVER PUNISHING. You never have to be afraid of God. The angels said we have good news. Today a Savior is born to you. He never changes. All God ever is. The same yesterday, today, and forever. The Answer is always yes. The Door is always open. Your name is always on the List. You never have to wonder about the heart of God. God is good—all the time.**