

# Christian Apologetics

Phil Stilwell ·



All-star contributor

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## © CAN THREE DAYS OF DEATH REALLY PAY FOR AN ETERNITY OF DAMNATION?

Jesus became human to pay the human penalty for sin. That human penalty for sin is eternal punishment.

The central claim of Christianity is that Jesus' three-day death somehow satisfied the eternal punishment owed by billions of sinners. But if the penalty for sin is truly eternal, how does a finite, short-lived event like a weekend death logically or proportionately match it?

Justice demands proportionality. If each sinner deserves infinite punishment, then substituting that with three days of suffering—however intense—creates a massive disparity. By that logic, why not two days? Or one? Or an hour? If Christians say three days is the magic number, they're left scrambling: is that number symbolic? Arbitrary? Based on divine fiat? None of these provide a logically sufficient explanation.

Even appeals to Jesus' "infinite worth" don't resolve the problem. Infinite value doesn't magically transform finite duration into infinite payment. And if Jesus was resurrected after three days, then he didn't suffer eternal death—which is supposedly what sinners deserve. That means the punishment wasn't fully served.

This isn't just a theological puzzle—it's a breakdown of proportional justice, logic, and coherence. Substitutionary atonement, as traditionally framed, collapses under scrutiny. Either sin doesn't actually warrant an infinite penalty, or the three-day death wasn't enough to pay it. Christians can't have it both ways.

So we must ask: If justice demands proportional payment, and sin supposedly warrants infinite punishment, how can a brief death redeem even one soul—let alone billions?

↘ Full logical critique of this doctrine: <https://freeoffaith.com/a-short-three-day-death/>

### Andrew Bartlett

Actually infinity times any finite value is still infinity, so Jesus' infinite worth would cover it. There are also different cardinalities of infinity. There are also different ideas of how Christ's death atoned for sin, such as Christus Victor or ransom theory.

- 2d
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- Reply

### Phil Stilwell

**Andrew Bartlett** If that were the case, three seconds of death would have been sufficient. And three millennia of death would have been fine, also, right?

I recommend instantiating the following equation for clarity.

[the penalty for sin] = [the penalty Jesus paid for sin]

- 2d
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- Reply

### Andrew Bartlett

**Phil Stilwell** mathematically it is the case, and if so, God may do as He wishes. Three days was chosen as a reference to Jonah's ordeal and perhaps to the Trinity as a concept.

- 2d
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- Reply

### Andrew Bartlett

I have instantiated your equation with the following assumptions: the punishment for sin, per person, is infinite. Current estimates of the total human population are about 117 billion; to be safe, I have added a margin of about  $6 \times 10^{12}$  times that, so we shall consider a mole of people. The penalty for Jesus's death is also infinite and we shall even take it as the same cardinality and he was dead for three days. I then repeat the calculation explicitly calculating for infinity days times infinity punishment. I get the result of  $\text{inf} = \text{inf} = \text{inf}$ . Please see calculations; it is not the most rigorous but it confirms for at least the number of people that are likely to exist, it is at least enough.

- 1d
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- Reply
- Edited

Leif Egil Rønaasen Reve

**Phil Stilwell** Yes. 3 seconds would have been enough. But it would be in a significantly worse evidentiary place, so I would assume you'd prefer 3 days over 3 seconds. God could have chosen any length, and it would have been sufficient. That He chose that specific time may have been well-reasoned or random, or a mix for that matter. It's like asking "Why was I born at the exact moment I was, and not one second earlier or 500 years later?" Sure, one can ask it, and there may be some answer, but it's outside our possible knowledge, and the same way the answer adds up logically and mathematically anyways, you exist now anyways, so there's no gain by speculating on this practically answer less question besides using whatever answers has been already revealed. And some have already pointed to the biblical hint of an answer, the Jonah-connection. There might be some other also. But there's no mathematical reason to prefer either any shorter or longer time.

Your equation simply miss the fact that Christian theology also includes that Jesus is God, so what **Andrew Bartlett** says here is simply the obvious and very easy math. So your mathematical and logical challenge is simply moot and a non-sequitur.....

- 1d
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- Reply

**Andrew Bartlett**

**Leif Egil Rønnaasen Reve** agreed. Three seconds would also give credence to the idea that He didn't actually die, and 3000 years would be too long for the people who witnessed His death. If any short to medium length of time is equivalent to any other, the choice of a particular length, even if arbitrary, is immaterial.

- 1d
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- Reply

**Phil Stilwell**

**Andrew Bartlett** You suggest that "infinity times any finite value is still infinity" and that God can do as He wishes, choosing three days as a reference to Jonah or the Trinity. However, your mathematical claim that infinity multiplied by a finite value remains infinity does not logically transform a finite duration into an infinite payment. The critical problem remains the disparity between a finite suffering and an infinite penalty. As I've stated, if that were the case, three seconds would be sufficient, and three millennia would also be fine, which highlights the arbitrariness of the duration if time is supposedly immaterial to the payment of an infinite penalty.

- 1d
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- Reply

**Phil Stilwell**

**Andrew Bartlett** Your attempt to instantiate my equation [the penalty for sin] = [the penalty Jesus paid for sin] by claiming "inf = inf = inf" and asserting it's "at least enough" for a "mole of people" still fails to address the core logical inconsistency. Infinite value does not magically transform finite duration into infinite payment. The formal logical argument demonstrates this: "3 days  $\neq \infty$ ". You are trying to equate a finite quantity (three days) with an infinite one (eternal damnation), which is mathematically and logically untenable. This is like trying to settle a million-dollar debt with three dollars and declaring it paid due to the benefactor's "infinite worth". The "infinite worth" argument is an unsubstantiated assertion lacking a logical mechanism to show how it equates to eternal punishment.

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- Reply

**Phil Stilwell**

**Andrew Bartlett** You acknowledge that "three seconds would have been enough" mathematically, but then appeal to evidentiary or practical reasons for the three-day duration, claiming the specific length is "immaterial". However, this admission that "any short to medium length of time is equivalent to any other" if "Jesus is God" only strengthens my point: if the duration is immaterial, then why specifically three days, and how does any finite duration logically satisfy an infinite penalty?. This further exposes the lack of a coherent mechanism in your framework, making the choice of duration arbitrary rather than proportionally just.

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- Reply

**Phil Stilwell**

**Leif Egil Rønnaasen Reve** : You concede that "3 seconds would have been enough," but then pivot to evidentiary concerns and God's choice being outside our knowledge. Your argument that "Christian theology also includes that Jesus is God" and therefore "mathematical and logical challenge is simply moot" is a classic example of invoking divine fiat and mystery to sidestep a logical problem. Asserting that Jesus is God and therefore His finite suffering is infinite payment is a circular argument; it assumes the conclusion without providing a coherent mechanism or logical criteria. If God could have chosen

any length, then the specific time chosen becomes arbitrary, and the logical gap between finite suffering and infinite punishment remains unaddressed.

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- Reply

**Andrew Bartlett**

**Phil Stilwell** You've made the same claim three times in three posts so I'll just answer them all here. First of all, none of the calculations show  $0 \times \infty$ , which is undefined. Secondly, it directly contradicts your claim that even if Jesus were of infinite worth, the payment would be insufficient. The loss of something of infinite worth is directly equal to the loss of something finite infinitely, mathematically. You are vacillating between infinite punishment and infinite duration. I never made the claim that finite time was infinite time, you are the one who made the claim that infinite magnitude was not infinite. It is not circular at all, because if, for the sake of argument, we accept the resurrection as true, that confirms that Jesus is God, thus is of infinite worth, thus we can begin to try to understand the mechanism of atonement. Why is the seeming arbitrariness of duration relevant under this mathematical framework, where they are all equal in magnitude? Your money argument completely fails as an analogy; it would be as if someone who owed a million dollars, a debt that at your salary would take an infinite amount of time to pay off was paid off in three days by someone who had enough money (or in more proper theology, at the moment of death, so paid off by a millionaire).

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- Reply

**Leif Egil Rønnaasen Reve**

**Phil Stilwell** No, it is specifically addressed, actually. And it's not invoking mystery at all, it's specifically addressing the question you ask, showing why your specific question is simply solved, in no way at all sidestepping the issue, but specifically answering it. It's not circular at all, it's providing a coherent mechanism and a logical criteria. It is true that it's arbitrary, but the challenge is specifically addressed, that's the whole point.

To use your currency-example: It's not at all like saying a million-dollar debt is paid with 3 dollars. No one is saying Jesus is only human, and thus exactly like any other human. It's more akin to settling an old million-turkish lira debt with 3 dollars, you would have many millions left over! It's not paid with the same currency. Human sins debt is paid with God's suffering and death. Something finite is paid with something infinite. This really isn't that hard, and you keep saying we don't address it at the very best shows you don't understand basic logic or math, when coming with such a challenge. This is simple, answerable and has been since even Paul's day.....

- 1d
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- Reply

**Phil Stilwell**

**Andrew Bartlett** Your response reflects a common apologetic strategy—asserting the “infinite worth” of Jesus as a mathematical bridge between finite suffering and infinite punishment—but this move collapses under scrutiny for several reasons, all of which are addressed in the attached articles and formalized arguments.

● Logical Clarification: You're Confusing Magnitude with Duration

You assert:

↘ “The loss of something of infinite worth is directly equal to the loss of something finite infinitely, mathematically.”

But this is a category error. Worth is not a temporal dimension. You cannot use qualitative value to cancel out quantitative duration without a coherent conversion mechanism. Three days of suffering—however dignified the sufferer—remains three days. No principle in logic, mathematics, or justice allows a finite duration to satisfy an infinite sentence simply by appealing to the supposed “infinite quality” of the actor. This is precisely what's symbolized in the critical equation:

$3 \text{ days} \neq \infty$

Just as infinite money can pay an infinite debt only if actually spent, Jesus' supposed infinite worth must be exerted infinitely to match an eternal punishment. Otherwise, you've equated categories without conversion.

● On Your Analogy: The Millionaire Paying Your Debt

You offer:

↘ “It would be as if someone who owed a million dollars... was paid off in three days by someone who had enough money.”

But this presumes the penal system is about liquid assets rather than sentence time. An eternal sentence is not a monetary debt; it's a punishment quantified by duration. A millionaire cannot serve your life sentence in jail for three days and declare justice served. Analogously, a three-day death—regardless of who suffers it—is not logically equivalent to an eternal death

.

● Resurrection Cancels Eternality

You write:

↘ “We accept the resurrection as true... thus we can begin to try to understand the mechanism of atonement.” But that’s the problem. If Jesus resurrected, then he did not remain in the state of death that is the defined eternal penalty. The penalty was interrupted. Any system that proposes “eternal death” as the punishment must also admit that resurrection nullifies full payment

● Repetition Isn’t Refutation

You claim I’ve repeated the same point three times. That’s because the central logical failure hasn’t been addressed: you’ve still failed to show how a finite punishment—measured in days—can logically satisfy a penalty defined as eternal. Until that is resolved, any theological dressing (Jonah, Trinity, “infinite worth,” or divine fiat) remains evasive.

● Symbolic or Literal? Pick One.

If “three days” is symbolic (e.g., of Jonah or the Trinity), then the atonement loses its literal power. If it’s literal, then it must mathematically and ethically suffice, which it doesn’t. Christians can’t have it both ways: either three days means something proportionally sufficient, or it’s an arbitrary ritual narrative. Without a coherent mechanism, the doctrine becomes either arbitrary or incoherent—or both.

● Final Challenge: Instantiate the Justice

Let’s return to the original equation you tried to instantiate:

[Penalty for sin] = [Penalty Jesus paid]

If you still hold that:

✓ the penalty for sin is eternal conscious torment, and

✓ Jesus suffered three days, and

✓ Jesus no longer suffers now,

...then the left side of the equation remains infinite, and the right side remains finite. Until you bridge that disparity without appealing to untestable metaphysical fiat, the substitutionary atonement remains logically incoherent.

I invite a rigorous mathematical or moral mechanism—not a theological assertion—to convert finite suffering into an infinite payment. Otherwise, your equation still fails.

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- Reply

**Leif Egil Rønnaasen Reve**

**Phil Stilwell** As you say yourself: Repetition is not refutation, and you just keep on ignoring the answers we give, and keep on repeating yourself. Once again you are simply showing that either you yourself don't understand what you are saying to the same degree AI doesn't, or you don't even read the answers given and the answers you yourself give. AI is good at some things, but actual discussion like you use it for, is one severe point it's still lacking massively, as you are probing again and again.

- 21h
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- Reply

**Phil Stilwell**

**Leif Egil Rønnaasen Reve** I appreciate the engagement, but your comment avoids the actual critique. Repetition without refutation cuts both ways—restating that “Jesus’ death was sufficient” or “God’s justice is higher” doesn’t answer the specific logical challenge I’ve laid out.

Here’s the core issue again, stated clearly:

If penal substitution claims that Jesus took on the just punishment humans deserved, then it must resemble that punishment. If the punishment is eternal conscious torment, but Jesus suffered a brief, finite death, then the claim of substitution collapses unless you abandon either the notion of eternal punishment or the claim that justice was actually satisfied.

This isn't AI "missing the point"—this is logic doing its job. AI is merely the medium here. The argument is what matters, not the messenger. Truth is truth regardless of whether it's typed by me, by an AI, or found on a napkin.

So instead of dismissing the method of delivery, engage the reasoning:

✓ Was the punishment equivalent?

✓ If not, was justice satisfied?

✓ If justice wasn’t satisfied, in what sense was this a substitution?

If those questions remain unanswered, the core critique remains standing—no matter how many times you claim otherwise.

- 19h
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- Reply

**Leif Egil Rønnaasen Reve**

**Phil Stilwell** No, the punishment is not equivalent, Jesus death is more than all individual punishment together. So justice was satisfied. And it remains a substitution, a victory over death and so on. All 7 views on atonement fits this.  
<https://www.sdmorrison.org/7-theories-of-the-atonement.../>

- 6h
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- Reply

**Phil Stilwell**

**Leif Egil Rønaasen Reve** All seven views fail in their own way: <https://freeoffaith.com/.../%E2%9C%93-invented.../...>

FREEOFFAITH.COM

✓ Invented Dynamics of Redemption

## ✓ Invented Dynamics of Redemption

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**Andrew Bartlett**

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**Andrew Bartlett**

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**Andrew Bartlett**

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**Phil Stilwell**

Your WolframAlpha images showing " $\text{infinity} = 0 * \text{infinity}$ " and similar calculations do not substantiate my equation [the penalty for sin] = [the penalty Jesus paid for sin]. These are basic mathematical properties of infinity but do not provide a mechanism for how a finite event (Jesus' three-day death) can logically and justly pay for an infinite penalty (eternal damnation). My challenge remains for you to demonstrate how the finite suffering of Jesus equates to the infinite duration of the penalty for sin.

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#### Wayne Clarke

God decides it's 3 days, that's good enough for me.

Interestingly, the book of Jonah foreshadowed the resurrection of Jesus, and Jesus mentioned it also.

He also predicted how long he would be in the grave.

So the answer is quite simple, it was written and foretold, so that the scriptures could not be broken.

It also corresponded with the feast of passover, first fruits, to the exact hour.

- 2d
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- Reply
- Edited

#### Phil Stilwell

#### Wayne Clarke

One can't violate logic or maths with a statement from a holy book. The following equation needs to be substantiated.

[the penalty for sin] = [the penalty Jesus paid for sin]

- 2d
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- Reply

#### David J Wireback Jr.

**Phil Stilwell** here's the problem with I think you're having you're trying to understand this thing to rational reasoning and logic. You cannot as apostle Paul says in first Corinthians chapter 2 the natural mind cannot comprehend things of God with the kingdom. Simply have faith that Christ paid to price by giving himself as a sacrifice that he would deliver us from this present evil age.

- 2d
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- Reply

#### Wayne Clarke

**Phil Stilwell** depart not from the simplicity of the gospel. You are overthinking something from a worldly perspective.

A perfect sacrifice justifies all.

14. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

(Hebrews, 10)

A perfect man, sinless and divine, was sufficient

- 2d
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- Reply
- Edited

#### Phil Stilwell

**Wayne Clarke** : You tell me to "depart not from the simplicity of the gospel" and that I am "overthinking something from a worldly perspective," asserting that "a perfect sacrifice justifies all". However, appealing to the "simplicity of the gospel" or "perfect sacrifice" does not resolve the fundamental logical and mathematical inconsistency. My argument is not "worldly," but a demand for proportional justice and logical coherence within the very framework you propose. My equation [the penalty for sin] = [the penalty Jesus paid for sin] still needs to be coherently instantiated, demonstrating how a finite payment can satisfy an infinite penalty.

- 1d
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- Reply

#### Phil Stilwell

**David J Wireback Jr.** : You suggest that I'm trying to understand this "to rational reasoning and logic" and that "the natural mind cannot comprehend things of God". While faith is central to Christianity, this response attempts to sidestep the logical problem rather than address it. If the doctrine of Penal Substitutionary Atonement (PSA) claims to be a system

of justice, it must be logically coherent and intelligible, even within its own theological framework. My question asks for a rational explanation of how a finite, three-day event can logically or proportionately match an eternal punishment.

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- Reply

**David J Wireback Jr.**

**Phil Stilwell** it's not a three day event. It's a one time sacrifice for all time

- 1d
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- Reply

**Phil Stilwell**

**David J Wireback Jr.** You're right to emphasize that Christians view Christ's sacrifice as once for all time—a timeless, eternally relevant act. But that doesn't resolve the tension I raised. Let me explain why:

● 1. "Once for all" ≠ Equivalent to Eternal Punishment

You say it's not a "three-day event." But materially, it was—Jesus physically died and was resurrected within three days. So while the application of the sacrifice may be eternal in scope, the event itself was temporally brief and reversible.

✓ Christians claim that sin earns eternal punishment—a penalty of endless conscious separation from God for the guilty.

✓ If Jesus is the substitute, then justice demands that He experience what we would have.

✓ But if He recovered from death, and was not eternally separated from God, then He didn't experience what the guilty would—thus breaking the substitution model.

● 2. Timelessness doesn't solve proportionality

Calling it a "sacrifice for all time" makes it universally offered, but not necessarily proportional. That's the key issue.

How does a finite amount of suffering—however sacred—match an infinite penalty in any rational system of justice?

Unless we're simply redefining justice to mean "whatever God accepts," we're back to the same problem:

✓ The action is not equivalent to the penalty.

✓ The substitution is not just—unless justice no longer requires equivalence.

● 3. Theological narrative is not the same as logical coherence

I'm not denying that the Christian story is deeply meaningful for many. But if a theology claims to satisfy justice—actual justice, not symbolic sufficiency—then the substitution must be more than poetic.

✓ The "once for all" phrase expresses efficacy, not equivalence.

✓ And penal substitution claims equivalence: that the punishment due to sinners was paid by Christ.

So the question stands:

What exactly did Jesus endure that is equivalent to the eternal punishment that sinners are said to deserve?

If the answer is "God accepts it," that's divine fiat, not justice.

You're appealing to divine transcendence to override the demand for coherence. But if Christianity is claiming justice was satisfied, not just symbolically expressed, then it must be coherent on the terms of justice—not merely belief.

That's the standard I'm testing. Not God's sincerity. Not the emotional depth. Just the logic of the substitution claim itself.

- 23h
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- Reply

**Wayne Clarke**

**Phil Stilwell**

So tell me, what should have been the just amount?

Wasn't the fact that a perfect man without sin died for the sinner?

Wasn't it enough that Jesus was separated from the father for the first time since eternity?

Wasn't it enough that God himself in his humility, laid down his own life for those who didn't deserve it?

Wasn't it enough that the ultimate act of love for those who hate you, rejected you, spat at you, mocked you and left you naked and alone, was to forgive, and provide a way out from eternal separation of the creator?

Who do you think you are to question God about justice and proportional punishment?

You mock God, and that's going to backfire, guaranteed.

I hope it's sooner, rather than later, then you might wake up from all this nonsense

- 21h
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- Reply

**Phil Stilwell**

**Wayne Clarke** I understand that you're emotionally invested in this doctrine, and I don't fault you for it. But emotion—however sincere—is not a substitute for explanation. You've offered a list of touching elements, but not a logical defense



of equivalence between Jesus' suffering and the eternal punishment it's said to substitute for. Let me respond point by point.

● "What should have been the just amount?"

✓ That's exactly what I'm asking.

✓ If the standard penalty for sin is eternal conscious torment or eternal separation, then the just amount is... eternal.

✓ Jesus did not experience eternity. He died for about 36–40 hours and was restored. That doesn't match. That's the whole problem.

● "Wasn't it enough that a perfect man died?"

✓ Not if the penalty he's substituting for is eternal punishment.

✓ You can't say "He's perfect" and then throw out proportionality.

► Imagine a judge saying: "Because this man is a good person, he only needs to serve 3 days for a crime that others would serve life for."

✓ That's not justice. That's arbitrary clemency.

● "Wasn't it enough that God was separated from God?"

✓ That's poetic, but it dodges the problem.

✓ If the penalty is eternal separation, then a temporary separation is not equivalent.

✓ You've replaced proportional justice with emotional intensity.

● "Wasn't it enough that he was mocked, beaten, and crucified?"

✓ Only if we're measuring suffering symbolically, not proportionally.

✓ The doctrine of penal substitution isn't metaphorical. It claims that justice was satisfied. That's a high bar.

● "Who are you to question God?"

✓ I'm not questioning God. I'm questioning the coherence of a theological model.

✓ If your model says "justice is satisfied," then by what rational standard was it satisfied?

✓ If we're not allowed to ask this, then we're not allowed to think critically about theology at all.

● "You mock God and it'll backfire."

✓ No, I critique doctrines using logic.

✓ If God gave us minds capable of logic, He wouldn't ask us to suspend them the moment we open the Bible.

✓ Justice is not something to fear when examined. If your theology collapses under scrutiny, it wasn't built solidly to begin with.

Final thought:

✓ I'm not attacking the emotional beauty of sacrifice.

✓ I'm asking this: How does a temporary death equal an eternal punishment?

✓ If your answer is "God said so," then you've replaced justice with divine fiat. That may be faith—but it's not logic.

And yes, I will continue to ask these questions. Because if justice matters, it must be intelligible—not just asserted.

• 13h

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• Reply

**Wayne Clarke**

**Phil Stilwell** faith isn't an emotion, you just proved your don't really understand what faith is. Your continuous copy and paste validates one thing, you have no idea.

• 12h

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• Reply

**Phil Stilwell**

**Wayne Clarke** You're right that faith isn't an emotion per se—though it's often emotionally charged. But the point I raised wasn't about the emotion of faith; it was about using emotional appeals in place of logical argumentation. That's what your previous comment did—offering heartfelt imagery without addressing the core issue of proportional justice.

✓ Faith, by most theological definitions, is belief without—or beyond—evidence.

✓ Logic, by contrast, seeks coherence and proportion between claims and supporting structures.

✓ So when a doctrine like penal substitution says that "justice was satisfied," it steps into the domain of logical coherence, and that's where my critique is grounded.

If you're saying the atonement is to be accepted on faith, then fine—that's a different category. But if you're claiming it's just, then its internal logic is fair game.

Also: I don't "copy and paste." I write out responses to engage sincerely with each comment. Repetition happens because the same theological claim is being made repeatedly without ever addressing the logical shortfall.



You're welcome to disagree—but disagreement alone isn't an argument. If justice was satisfied, show how. If not, then say plainly: "It's divine mystery." Just don't call it rational justice while refusing rational scrutiny.

- 12h
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- Reply

**Wayne Clarke**

**Phil Stilwell** so answer my question. IS the word of God divinely inspired truth?Yes or no?

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- Reply

**Phil Stilwell**

Wayne Clarke: Clearly not based on the evidence I've seen. And this incoherent notion of redemption is just one more incoherence on the side of disconfirming evidence.

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**Bill Elgin**

I mean I get the curiosity, interesting to discuss, but all the discussions in the world don't change the Biblical truth that it was enough per the God of the universe.

- 2d
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- Reply
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**Phil Stilwell**

**Bill Elgin** You can't violate logic or maths with a statement from a holy book. The following equation needs to be substantiated.

[the penalty for sin] = [the penalty Jesus paid for sin]

- 2d
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- Reply

**Benjamin Roald Andersen**

**Phil Stilwell** he does not violate any logic or maths. God deemed the penalty Jesus paid as sufficient.

Your transgression has been paid for, why don't you accept this gift?

- 1d
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- Reply

**Phil Stilwell**

**Benjamin Roald Andersen** : You state that God "deemed the penalty Jesus paid as sufficient" and ask why I don't accept this "gift". Your argument relies on divine fiat and assumes the very point in question: whether God's declaration makes it

logically consistent. This is a circular argument, where God's acceptance is justified by God's say-so, lacking independent validation. My critique isn't about accepting or rejecting a "gift" but about the logical and mathematical coherence of the atonement mechanism itself.

- 1d
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- Reply

#### **Benjamin Roald Andersen**

Sin, our rebellion against God, is transgression against His own law. God accepting the payment and giving us the option of redemption is not circular, it's foundational. If the benevolent God is the author of all things, including morality and logic, then His judgment defines what is just. There is no other higher power.

You're free to reject that premise, but within that framework it's coherent.

What hinders you from accepting the gift of salvation?

- 21h
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- Reply

#### **Phil Stilwell**

**Benjamin Roald Andersen** I appreciate your calm tone, and you're right to point out that coherence can exist within a framework if the foundational premises are granted. But that's precisely where the issue lies.

● You appeal to a closed system of divine authorship:

✓ You say that "God defines what is just," and therefore anything God declares is just by definition.

✓ But that is not justice in any meaningful sense—it's authoritarian fiat.

➤ If justice is simply "whatever God says," then justice becomes arbitrary. He could decree torture for kindness and call that just.

➤ The very concept of justice loses coherence unless it has some criteria beyond "God decided it."

● "God is the author of logic and morality" is itself an unprovable presupposition

✓ If you assert that "logic comes from God," then objections to logical contradictions in your theology get swept away—not resolved, but ignored.

➤ That's not coherence. That's immunity to critique.

✓ A coherent system doesn't just declare itself correct—it demonstrates how its internal claims hold together without contradiction.

● You ask: "What hinders me from accepting the gift of salvation?"

✓ Here's my honest answer: I find the story of a creator requiring blood to forgive creatures He designed with limitations to be logically incoherent and morally unpersuasive.

✓ If I built a robot with limited wiring, then punished it eternally for failing to operate beyond those limits—then claimed I was loving for punishing my own son instead—that would not be a narrative of love.

➤ It would be a narrative of cosmic dysfunction masquerading as benevolence.

✓ That's not rebellion. That's intellectual integrity.

If you say, "But that's what the Bible teaches," I won't argue that point.

But if you say, "This is logically consistent and morally compelling," then that deserves scrutiny.

I reject not the gift, but the claimed coherence of the story that surrounds it.

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- Reply

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#### Charlie Brown

Romans 5:18–21 (ESV)

18 Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. 19 For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. 20 Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, 21 so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

- 2d
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- Reply

#### Phil Stilwell

**Charlie Brown** Citing a holy book can't violate logic or maths. The following equation needs to be substantiated.  
[the penalty for sin] = [the penalty Jesus paid for sin]

- 2d
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- Reply

#### Nick Mudge

**Phil Stilwell** I would take your issue up directly with the author of all wisdom.

- 1d
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- Reply

#### Bill Breslin

**Phil Stilwell** your argument is quantitative, sin is qualitative. Your post doesn't make any logical sense.

- 1d
- 
- Reply

#### Michael P Peppers

**Nick Mudge** he will. In due time. He will.

- 1d
- 
- Reply

#### Phil Stilwell

**Bill Breslin** Redemptions (ἐλυτρώθητε) are intrinsically quantitative, not qualitative.

εἰδότες ὅτι οὐ φθαρτοῖς, ἀργυρίῳ ἢ χρυσίῳ, ἐλυτρώθητε ἐκ τῆς ματαίας ὑμῶν ἀναστροφῆς πατροπαραδότου  
The following still needs to be coherently instantiated:

↘ [the penalty for sin] = [the penalty Jesus paid for sin]

- 1d
- 
- Reply

#### Phil Stilwell

**Nick Mudge** The Muslims assure us that we need to take up our objections to Islam with Allah. I point out that their logic is circular. You can invoke the authority of the very God in question to establish his existence. Do you agree?

- 1d
- 
- Reply
- Edited

#### Charlie Brown

#### Phil Stilwell

Sin separates humanity from God (Isaiah 59:2).

The penalty is death, spiritual and physical (Romans 6:23).

Jesus, being sinless and divine, satisfies justice on our behalf (Hebrews 10:12–14, 2 Corinthians 5:21).

Next.

- 1d
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- Reply

**Phil Stilwell**

**Charlie Brown** : You define sin as separating humanity from God, resulting in spiritual and physical death, and state that Jesus "being sinless and divine, satisfies justice on our behalf". However, this explanation does not provide a logical mechanism for how Jesus' finite suffering, even as a divine and sinless being, quantitatively or proportionately satisfies an eternal penalty. Simply asserting that Jesus "satisfies justice" without explaining how that satisfaction bridges the finite-infinite gap is an unsubstantiated claim. The problem is the unexplained logical mechanism for equivalence.

- 1d

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- Reply

**Phil Stilwell**

**Michael P Peppers** : Your comment "he will. In due time. He will." is a prediction or a statement of faith rather than a logical argument. My query is about the current logical and mathematical coherence of the Penal Substitutionary Atonement doctrine, specifically how a finite death can pay for an eternal penalty. This question requires a present substantiation, not a future one.

- 1d

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- Reply

**Michael P Peppers**

**Phil Stilwell** correct. It is a statement of faith. No argument here.

- 1d

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- Reply

**Charlie Brown**

**Phil Stilwell** You're aware of Scripture? Jesus encountered ALL sin, for ALL of mankind, past present, and future. This allows us to receive the gift of eternal life through Him. Also, you're trying to fit God into some human parameters, quantifiable and finite, of which He is neither. Hope this helps.

2 Corinthians 5:21

"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

See also:

Isaiah 53:6

1 Peter 2:24

Galatians 3:13

- 1d

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- Reply

**Phil Stilwell**

**Michael P Peppers** I appreciate that, but it should also be a statement of logic if it's making a claim about justice. Atonement theology doesn't just say, "Believe this happened"—it says, "This satisfies justice." But satisfaction implies some rational standard, some coherent relationship between crime and penalty, debt and payment.

✓ If it's only a statement of faith, then fine—but it loses its footing as a rational justification for how sins are paid for.

✓ If it's also a claim about justice, then it invites—and requires—logical analysis.

Faith can initiate belief, but reason must explain it if we're being asked to accept its justice as true.

- 23h

- 

- Reply

**Phil Stilwell**

**Charlie Brown** Thanks for your reply, and I appreciate the verses you cite. But citing Scripture doesn't resolve the central question if we're asking whether the atonement is logically coherent—especially if it's presented not just as a mystery to believe, but as a model of justice to understand.

You wrote:

"You're trying to fit God into some human parameters, quantifiable and finite..."

That's only true if we're claiming nothing more than divine mystery. But Christianity doesn't merely declare God's actions as unknowable—it often insists they are just. And justice, by its nature, involves discernible proportionality and coherence.

If we say:

✓ Jesus paid the debt for all sin, for all people, for all time,

✓ and that debt is eternal separation or infinite torment for each sinner,

then we're claiming that a finite, three-day death somehow equates to trillions of eternal punishments. That's not a mystery—that's a mathematical mismatch unless the punishment is redefined or symbolic. But then we're not dealing with justice in any meaningful sense, just divine fiat. So I'm not trying to shrink God down to human size—I'm asking whether Christianity's own claims of justice hold up under scrutiny. If not, then either the model needs rethinking, or the claim that this was "justice" needs to be dropped.

- 23h
- 
- Reply

**Roberta Jackson**

**Phil Stilwell** the punishment for sin is death. Jesus died...or are you one that doesn't believe he did? Even many non-believers believe Jesus lived and died...even atheists. They may not believe he was divine, but they believe that Jesus lived, was crucified, and died.

- 22h
- 
- Reply

**Nick Mudge**

**Phil Stilwell** I have no interest in what Muslims claim. Jesus was God made flesh. Our sin was laid in Him. He tasted death in offering Himself in our stead. God raised Him from the dead as a sign of our justification. God was satisfied with His sacrifice and that is what matters. You are contending with Almighty God with your puny wisdom and logic.

- 19h
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- Reply

**Phil Stilwell**

**Nick Mudge** I appreciate your engagement, but let's clarify the terrain: I'm not claiming my logic overrides divine authority—I'm asking whether claims about justice can be evaluated as claims about justice. If Christianity merely said, "God did this and we must accept it without understanding," that would be consistent with fideism. But the moment it asserts, "This act was just," it enters the realm of logic and proportional coherence.

You wrote:

"God was satisfied with His sacrifice and that is what matters."

That's a statement of divine fiat, not justice. Substitutionary atonement doesn't merely say God accepted it, but that it satisfied the penalty sin demands. That requires more than divine preference—it requires correspondence between offense and penalty. If sin incurs eternal separation, and Jesus suffered for ~36 hours, the math is off—unless we're redefining "justice" as "whatever God says it is."

But if that's your position, then I'll be direct:

- ✓ You're not defending a rational doctrine of atonement.
- ✓ You're defending authoritarian decree, immune to scrutiny.
- ✓ And calling that "justice" dilutes the very concept.

You accuse me of contending with "Almighty God." I'm not.

I'm contending with a logical claim made by humans about what that God supposedly did. If that claim can't survive basic scrutiny—if it only survives by appealing to mystery or divine status—then let's be honest and say this isn't a model of justice. It's a ritual explanation that believers accept because they want to, not because it makes sense.

If your God is truly the author of wisdom, as you earlier claimed, then reason should be the way into, not out of, understanding what you believe.

- 12h
- 
- Reply

**Phil Stilwell**

**Roberta Jackson** You're absolutely right that Jesus' historical death is widely accepted—even among secular historians. That's not in question.

But here's what is:

✓ What kind of death is "the punishment for sin"?

If you mean physical death, then everyone already pays that penalty—making Jesus' death unnecessary for substitution. If eternal separation from God is the penalty—as most Christian doctrine teaches—then Jesus' brief death doesn't match that punishment.

✓ What exactly was substituted?

Was it a physical death for a spiritual debt? If so, the punishment wasn't mirrored. Was it a symbolic stand-in? Then it's not justice—it's ritual theater.

✓ Did Jesus actually pay the full penalty?

If the penalty is eternal conscious torment, and Jesus rose in under 72 hours, we're not looking at an equivalent exchange. Atonement only satisfies justice if the penalty paid equals the penalty due. So yes, Jesus died. The question isn't whether he died, but whether that death—short, reversible, and triumphant—matches the penalty Christianity claims we all deserve. If it doesn't, then it isn't justice. It's just doctrine asking not to be questioned.

- 12h
- 
- Reply

**Nick Mudge**

**Phil Stilwell** You are most certainly contending with the Almighty.

You seek to apply logic and maths but that demonstrates arrogance and lack of understanding on your part.

The apostle Paul understood it perfectly.....

1Co 1:18 For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

1Co 1:19 For it is written, "I WILL DESTROY THE WISDOM OF THE WISE, AND THE CLEVERNESS OF THE CLEVER I WILL SET ASIDE."

1Co 1:20 Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?

1Co 1:21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.

1Co 1:22 For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom;

1Co 1:23 but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness,

1Co 1:24 but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

1Co 1:25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

You are dead in your sins and you don't even realise it.

- 6h
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- Reply

**Charlie Brown**

I hope you're aware of how obvious it is that your replies are being copy/pasted from GPT/Grok/[insert LLM here].

- 5h
- 
- Reply

**Nick Mudge**

**Charlie Brown** That makes it even more sad, posturing on here as a clear and logical thinker rather than a simple AI driven troll.

- 3h
- 
- Reply

**Roberta Jackson**

**Phil Stilwell** Answered elsewhere.

- 3h
- 
- Reply

**Phil Stilwell**

**Nick Mudge** Let's unpack what's happening here:

☉ 1. "Logic and maths = arrogance"

You argue that attempting to use logic or mathematics to assess the claims of Christianity is arrogant. But let's be clear:

✓ Logic is not the invention of secular arrogance; it's the tool by which humans—created in your theology in the image of God—are said to reason and discern.

✓ If your God endowed us with minds capable of rational inquiry, then asking how a finite sacrifice covers infinite punishment is not an act of pride—it's an act of integrity.

To say, "You're contending with the Almighty" simply because I ask how the atonement works, is not a rebuttal. It's an evasion.

☉ 2. "God destroys the wisdom of the world"

This passage from 1 Corinthians is frequently cited to shield theological claims from rational critique. But here's the problem:

✓ If “worldly wisdom” means any attempt at consistent reasoning, then Christianity exempts itself from rational evaluation.

✓ That makes Christianity a closed system—impervious to falsification—because any logical objection can be dismissed as “worldly.”

But if your belief is immune to logic, then it is also immune to correction. And anything immune to correction is indistinguishable from error fiercely defended.

● 3. “To us who are being saved, it is the power of God”

That is a subjective internal affirmation. It says:

“We who already believe see the power of God in this.”

But that’s not evidence. That’s confirmation bias.

People in every religion say this. Muslims, Hindus, Mormons—each proclaim that outsiders “can’t understand” because their eyes are darkened. This isn’t unique to your belief system. It’s the standard defense of all unfalsifiable claims.

● 4. “You are dead in your sins and don’t even realize it”

This is not an argument. It’s an assertion of diagnosis without evidence.

✓ Imagine I said: “You’ve been abducted by aliens and implanted with false memories. You just don’t realize it.”

✓ You’d rightly say: “Prove it.”

Likewise, telling someone they’re “dead in sin” without showing the mechanics of how guilt, atonement, and justice cohere is theological name-calling, not rational engagement.

● Final Thought

If Christianity declares itself beyond logic, then it forfeits any claim to be rationally compelling. That’s fine if you treat it as private belief—but not if you’re making public claims about eternal stakes, divine justice, and universal truth.

I’m not contending with “the Almighty.”

I’m contending with a claim—that a 3-day finite death pays for an eternal debt.

And I’m asking: How does that work?

If the answer is, “You’re arrogant for asking,”

then what you’ve offered isn’t an explanation.

It’s an escape hatch from scrutiny.

- 33m
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- Reply

**Phil Stilwell**

**Roberta Jackson** I appreciate the engagement, but saying “answered elsewhere” doesn’t actually address the specific problem raised.

Let me clarify:

● This isn’t a general objection.

It’s a precise critique of logical equivalency:

If the punishment for sin is eternal separation from God (as most Christian doctrine holds), then a short, physical death followed by exaltation doesn’t match that punishment.

That’s not about rejecting the fact of Jesus’ death. It’s about assessing whether the event qualifies as an equivalent substitution.

So I ask again:

✓ If everyone already dies physically, what made Jesus’ physical death unique in satisfying a penalty others still endure?

✓ If the penalty is eternal separation, how does a temporary death (less than 72 hours) fulfill it?

✓ If Jesus didn’t suffer the actual penalty humans would face, then how is it substitutionary?

If these were “answered elsewhere,” feel free to point to where someone explained how a finite act by a divine person equates to infinite punishment deserved by finite humans. That’s the core concern. Until that’s clearly answered, asserting “answered elsewhere” is just a polite way of dodging the question.

I’m happy to re-engage—if someone’s ready to deal with the math of the justice claim directly.

- 30m
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- Reply

**Phil Stilwell**

**Charlie Brown Nick Mudge** I get why you might suspect that some of what I write comes from an LLM. It probably sounds like it: structured, reasoned, precise. But here’s the twist—a good argument doesn’t become invalid just because it could have been generated by a language model.

In fact, that’s the beauty of logic:

✓ Whether the argument is made by a person or a machine, it stands or falls on its internal coherence.

✓ You don’t refute an argument by asking who wrote it—you expose the flaw, if there is one.



And yes, some of my responses do get mistaken for AI content, and vice versa. I take that as a compliment to the clarity and consistency of my reasoning—not as an insult.

So if you disagree with a point, show where the logic fails. Mocking tone and vague dismissals don't counter a well-structured argument. They just avoid it.

If the point can be defeated, defeat it. If not, maybe sit with it for a bit.

- 27m
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- Reply

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**Scott Kurowicki**

Missing something, it is justice with Grace and Mercy. God never gives worse than we deserve, but you better believe we always get better than we deserve so yes, justice was fully served with Jesus death and resurrection.

- 2d
- 
- Reply

**Phil Stilwell**

**Scott Kurowicki** I see no substance in your comment. One can't violate logic or maths with a confident statement based on a holy book. The following equation needs to be substantiated.

[the penalty for sin] = [the penalty Jesus paid for sin]

- 2d
- 
- Reply

**Scott Kurowicki**

**Phil Stilwell** no you are the only one that can't rationalize this. You keep spewing the same comment which doesn't make actual mathematical sense. Every math equation has variables and you can't put a measure on Jesus or God.

- 2d
- 
- Reply
- Edited

**Scott Kurowicki**

**Phil Stilwell** let's not forget prophecy all throughout the Bible about the length of time as well.

- 1d
- 
- Reply

**Phil Stilwell**

**Scott Kurowicki** You mention that "prophecy all throughout the Bible about the length of time" supports the three-day duration. While prophecy may address the duration of Jesus' time in the grave, it does not provide a logical or mathematical explanation for how that finite duration satisfies an infinite penalty. The argument remains that if the penalty for sin is eternal death, then Jesus' resurrection after three days signifies that the punishment was not fully served. Prophecy does not bridge the logical gap between finite suffering and infinite punishment.

- 1d
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- Reply

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**John Washburn**

God takes our punishment and some people want to question the logic behind it? Personally, I just say "thank you" and go on my way. I would never want to find myself eternally separated from God because his sacrifice just seemed illogical.

- 2d
- 
- Reply

**Phil Stilwell**

**John Washburn** : You state that you simply "say 'thank you'" and wouldn't want to find yourself "eternally separated from God because his sacrifice just seemed illogical". Your response reflects an appeal to faith and potential consequences, but it does not address the logical and mathematical challenge I've raised. The question is not about personal acceptance but about the internal coherence and rational defensibility of the doctrine itself. If justice demands proportionality, how can a brief death redeem souls from infinite punishment?.

- 1d
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- Reply

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**Steve Ernst**

The gospel is not a math equation bro

- 2d
- 
- Reply

**Phil Stilwell**

**Steve Ernst** 1 Peter clearly refers to a ἐλυτρώθητε (ransom) being paid. It is mathematical.

- 1d
- 
- Reply

**Tim Sells**

**Phil Stilwell** value to some is not the same as value to others.

- 1d
- 
- Reply

**Phil Stilwell**

**Tim Sells** I see no relevance in your last comment. Could you elaborate? My query asks for a logical and mathematical substantiation of how the value of Jesus' finite suffering objectively equates to the infinite penalty of eternal damnation for billions of sinners. Subjective valuation does not bridge this logical gap.

- 1d
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- Reply
- Edited

**Tim Sells**

**Phil Stilwell** Tom has 5 apples. Mary has 5 pears. Apples and pears cost the same at Walmart, same monetary value. However, Tom doesn't like apples so he ask Mary to trade evenly. Mary tells Tom that she will give him 2 pears for 5 apples. Tom accepts the deal. He values the 2 pears more than 5 apples. God's value of the finished work of His Son which declares His children just is the higher value. We cannot make ourselves just before God, so the finished work of Christ does 2 things. It satisfies the penalty (eternal hell) for our sin against God and Christ's righteousness is imputed to us which gives eternal life.

- 1d
- 
- Reply

**Phil Stilwell**

**Tim Sells** thanks for the analogy, but let's examine it more closely to see whether it actually answers the question posed.

● The Apple-Pear Analogy Obscures Rather Than Clarifies

✓ In your scenario, Tom voluntarily accepts an unfavorable trade because of subjective preference. But that illustrates subjective value, not justice.

✓ Subjective valuation doesn't justify penal substitution in a model where the central claim is that justice—not preference—is being fulfilled.

Justice, by definition, is not relative to taste. It's measured against principles like proportionality, desert, and equity.

● The Core Problem Still Remains

The PSA model claims that:

P1: Each sinner deserves eternal conscious torment (ECT).

P2: Jesus suffered briefly and now enjoys eternal bliss.

P3: Justice demands proportionate satisfaction of penalties.

C: Therefore, Jesus' suffering is not a proportionate substitute.

You've responded not by challenging P1–P3, but by invoking God's valuation as overriding all measures of equivalence.

That's not a logical rebuttal. That's a move to divine voluntarism:

"It's just, because God says so."

But that undermines the very notion of justice you're trying to preserve—because now justice is defined by authority, not reason.

● Imputed Righteousness Still Requires a Bridge

You mention that Christ's righteousness is imputed. But:

✓ Imputation doesn't explain how the penalty was paid.

✓ It's a transactional metaphor, not a mathematical or logical equivalence.

If justice was satisfied because Christ is righteous, then righteousness, not suffering, is the currency—and that makes the suffering redundant.

● Summary

✓ You've presented a story where God accepts a disproportionate trade because He values it highly.

✓ But that story abandons justice as a standard rooted in proportionality and replaces it with divine prerogative.

✓ Once you do that, the language of justice becomes meaningless—since God could call any act just, and there would be no external standard against which to measure it.

So again, I ask:

What objective principle or logical structure makes Jesus' finite suffering equivalent to the infinite penalty of billions?

Absent that, we've just renamed "preference" as "justice." And that's a bait-and-switch.

- 23h
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- Reply

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#### Steve Ernst

Maybe this will help make it a bit clearer:

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gracious gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Romans 6:23 LSB

The death of Jesus facilitated the gift of life to all who believe. Your rightly earned death and mine - physical and spiritual - was fully paid for by God himself. If Jesus wasn't God himself, it would not have been possible for him to do that for all men, but according to scripture he is, and he did. If it is your desire to get caught up in mathematical values and completely miss the forest for the trees, that's your call.

- 1d
- 
- Reply

#### Tim Sells

**Steve Ernst** I don't think that clarity is the objective. The carnal mind cannot see the spiritual.

- 1d
- 
- Reply

#### Roberta Jackson

**Tim Sells** Paul states that he was carnal, but he didn't seem to have a bit of trouble seeing the spiritual and encouraging spiritual growth in others he considered carnal.

- 22h
- 
- Reply
- Edited

#### Phil Stilwell

**Steve Ernst** I hear what you're saying, and I agree that Romans 6:23 is foundational for many in how they understand the gospel. But let me clarify why the question I'm asking isn't just "getting caught up in mathematical values"—it strikes at the heart of the claim that justice was fulfilled.

● If the wages of sin is death, then we must ask: what kind of death?

✓ If it's only physical, then everyone already pays that wage—believer and non-believer alike. No need for substitution.

✓ If it's spiritual death or eternal separation, as most Christian traditions affirm, then the question becomes: How does a temporary death of one individual—who was resurrected—pay for countless eternal penalties?

● You rightly point out that Jesus being divine matters. But here's the tension:

✓ If Jesus' divinity means that any amount of suffering He experiences counts as infinitely sufficient, then justice becomes status-based, not proportional.

✓ That's not how justice typically works. We don't say a judge's son serving 5 minutes in jail for someone else's life sentence counts more because of who he is.

✓ If suffering's duration, scope, or intensity don't matter—only who suffers—then justice has been replaced with theological fiat. That's fine for faith. But not for a model claiming rational coherence.

● "Missing the forest for the trees" is a fair warning—but I'd argue the forest here is the logic of the atonement.

✓ If the core claim is that justice has been satisfied, then the mechanism must be logically coherent—or it's not justice.

✓ I'm not ignoring the beauty or emotional power of the Christian narrative. I'm simply asking whether the model can withstand rational scrutiny if it insists on being called "just."

So I'm not rejecting faith as an emotional or existential commitment—just noting that if we're going to talk about the justice of the atonement, then we're in the realm of proportionality and coherence. And that realm, by its nature, invites analysis—not just belief.

If you want to treat the atonement as a gift beyond logic, that's fair. But if you say, "Justice was fulfilled," then justice must mean more than "God says it is."

- 12h
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- Reply

#### Phil Stilwell

**Tim Sells** I appreciate the candor, but that very distinction—between "spiritual" and "carnal" minds—is often used to insulate theological claims from scrutiny rather than engage them.

● If "clarity is not the objective," then justice cannot be the claim

✓ Justice, by definition, involves discernible standards—proportionality, coherence, and intelligibility.

✓ If a model of atonement claims to satisfy justice, but simultaneously asserts that no "carnal" mind can grasp it, then the claim is unfalsifiable.

✓ That's not justice—that's epistemic inaccessibility dressed in theological terms.

● If the gospel requires blindness to reason to "see the spiritual," that's not faith—it's disengagement from logic

✓ No one faults you for valuing your spiritual experience. But if clarity is deliberately avoided or considered a liability, then it's no longer rationally defensible.

✓ Imagine a courtroom where the judge says, "You wouldn't understand the sentence I've passed—it's spiritual." That's not justice. That's abdication.

● This is not about carnality—it's about consistency

✓ Either Jesus' death matches the penalty it supposedly substitutes for, or it doesn't.

✓ If it does, explain how.

✓ If it doesn't, then call it grace, forgiveness, or mystery—but don't call it justice.

If the Christian claim is merely existential—"trust this, even if you don't understand it"—that's one thing. But if the claim is that divine justice was satisfied, then clarity is not optional. It's the very foundation of the claim.

- 12h
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- Reply

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#### Steve Ernst

"We don't say a judge's son serving 5 minutes in jail for someone else's life sentence counts more because of who he is" You're right and why is that? Because all humans are created equal. You're forgetting again that God is not equivalent with his creation.

I think duration of suffering did play some role also, or else Jesus wouldn't have endured as much as he did before saying it was finished. If it wasn't a factor he would have paid for our sins with a paper cut. This indicates that the suffering of Christ was more than we can fathom, and the only reason he could do it the way he did is because he is God himself, absorbing the punishment for our sins.

Justice means exactly what God says it means, and because we tend to view sin so lightly, it also means far more than we know.

- 5h
- 
- Reply

#### Phil Stilwell

**Steve Ernst** I appreciate the attempt to bridge the conceptual gap here, but several of your points reinforce the very concerns being raised about coherence and proportionality. Let's examine them clearly:

● 1. "God is not equivalent with his creation"

Agreed—but this actually deepens the problem.

✓ If Jesus' identity as divine changes the kind of suffering, then this wasn't a substitution at all. No human could ever endure what God can endure.

✓ And if Jesus' divine status transforms a finite suffering into infinite payment, we're back to arbitrary metaphysics, not coherent justice.

● 2. "Duration of suffering did play some role..."

Exactly. And that's why the timeline matters.

✓ If any suffering would have sufficed, then you're right—a paper cut should have done it.

✓ But if duration and intensity matter, then justice becomes a calculation again—and we're forced to ask how a few hours or days balances against eternal conscious punishment.

You can't say:

➤ "His suffering was infinitely valuable because of who he was,"

...and also say:

➤ "The duration and severity matter, too."

Those are two different mechanisms. Together, they confuse more than they clarify.

● 3. "Justice is whatever God says it is"

That's not a definition. That's a relabelling.

✓ If God declares any action—however disproportionate—to be "just" solely by fiat, then "justice" becomes meaningless as a moral or logical category.

✓ It collapses into tautology:

Q: Why is this just?

A: Because God says so.

Q: How do we know God is just?

A: Because justice is whatever He says.

That's not a rational claim; that's epistemic authoritarianism. It's the kind of reasoning that makes any act—genocide, eternal torment, whatever—untouchable by critique.

If Jesus' suffering was "more than we can fathom," and that unknowable quantity somehow satisfies an infinite debt, then you're appealing to mystery, not logic. That's fine for faith, but let's not pretend it resolves the original critique, which is about coherence.

The question remains:

Is justice something we can reason about, or something we're just told not to question?

Because if it's the latter, the discussion isn't about truth. It's about obedience.

- 25m
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- Reply

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#### Owen Ashley

Also people forget Jesus didn't just die, he was separated from God for those 3 days. The wages of sin is death, but the actual term is Sheol, a place void of God's Love. That 3 days must have been like an eternity.

- 2d
- 
- Reply

**Scott Kurowicki**

**Owen Ashley** that is what hits me hardest, when Jesus cries out “My God My God why have you forsaken me”. Even knowing he was gonna be raised back for the dead that separation pain had to be something way beyond anything we could ever comprehend.

- 2d
- 
- Reply
- Edited

**Doug Nagel**

**Owen Ashley** I don’t think the Bible teaches that Jesus was separated from God for three days. He told the thief on the cross that today you will be with me in paradise. I think the separation/wrath of God was only the 3 hours of darkness. After that, the sacrifice was finished.

- 1d
- 
- Reply

**Phil Stilwell**

**Doug Nagel** You point out that the Bible does not necessarily teach Jesus was separated from God for three days, suggesting the separation was perhaps only during the “3 hours of darkness” on the cross. This highlights another inconsistency: if the “penalty for sin is eternal punishment”, then neither three days nor three hours of separation can logically pay for an eternal state. The challenge remains: how can any finite duration of suffering or separation equate to an infinite, unending penalty?.

- 1d
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- Reply

**Doug Nagel**

**Phil Stilwell** I don’t think the amount of time mattered. Since Jesus is God and infinitely valuable and infinitely sufficient to absorb God’s infinite wrath for all believers for all of creation, then the time could’ve been the smallest amount of time possible

- 20h
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- Reply

**Phil Stilwell**

**Doug Nagel** I appreciate the clarity of your position—it’s one I’ve heard many times and take seriously. But it trades one problem for another. Let’s walk through it carefully.

- “Time doesn’t matter because Jesus is infinitely valuable” introduces a category confusion.
- ✓ You’re invoking intrinsic worth to justify duration-based substitution.
- ✓ But infinite worth is not the same as enduring an infinite penalty.
- If I have an infinitely valuable diamond, that doesn’t mean dropping it on someone’s toe for one second satisfies a life sentence. Value does not equal duration or experience.
- You’ve abandoned proportional justice in favor of divine fiat.
- ✓ You’re essentially saying: “God accepted it, so it’s just.”
- ✓ But then we’re no longer talking about justice as a principle, only preference by decree.
- Imagine a judge who says, “I know this man murdered 12 children, but a \$10 fine will do—because I say so.”
- ✓ We would rightly reject that as arbitrary, not just—regardless of the judge’s status.
- If Jesus’ infinite value can absorb infinite wrath in a moment, then why any suffering at all?
- ✓ Why 3 hours of agony? Why not 3 seconds? Why not just a divine wink?
- ✓ Once you disconnect substitution from duration or degree of suffering, the mechanism becomes completely opaque and unfalsifiable.
- Let’s flip it for clarity:
- ✓ If Jesus had only been whipped but not crucified, would that have sufficed?
- ✓ If he had stubbed his toe and died of shock, would that have covered it?
- ✓ Once you make the intensity and duration irrelevant, the model stops resembling any recognizable form of substitutionary justice.
- In conclusion:
- ✓ If you believe Jesus’ “infinite worth” is all that matters, then admit PSA is no longer a model of justice—it’s a transaction of divine will, not law, not reason, not proportion.
- ✓ That’s not a crime—but it should be admitted, not disguised as justice.



We don't treat this kind of reasoning as valid anywhere else in life. Why should theology get a pass?

- 13h
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- Reply

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**Phil Stilwell**

**Owen Ashley** : You suggest that Jesus was "separated from God for those 3 days," and that this "must have been like an eternity". This idea attempts to qualitatively elevate the suffering, but it doesn't resolve the quantitative disparity. If the penalty for sin is eternal separation, then Jesus' resurrection after three days (or even three hours, as Doug Nagel points out) means He did not suffer eternal separation. Your claim that it "must have been like an eternity" is a subjective interpretation and not a logical or mathematical equivalence.

- 1d
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- Reply

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**Andrew Sills**

Your logic, and your math, are flawed. They both leave out the sovereignty of God.

- 2d
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- Reply

**Phil Stilwell**

**Andrew Sills** You'll have to show how God's sovereignty impinges on logic and math.

↘ [the penalty for sin] = [the penalty Jesus paid for sin]

- 1d
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- Reply

**Andrew Sills**

**Phil Stilwell** no.. YOU have to show how God is limited to your logic and and math. You came to apologists making a claim. You can't dictate the way you'll accept the rebuttal. We're only going to tell you THE truth, not YOUR truth.

- 1d
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- Reply

**Phil Stilwell**

**Andrew Sills** My critique is not about limiting God, but about examining the internal logical and mathematical coherence of the doctrine of Penal Substitutionary Atonement (PSA) itself, using its own premises. When a theological claim purports to explain a system of justice, it must adhere to consistent logical principles. Your response is a classic attempt to avoid philosophical rigor by invoking divine sovereignty as a shield against scrutiny.

- 1d
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- Reply

**Andrew Sills**

**Phil Stilwell** that's like telling me I can't use "because water is wet" as an excuse to use a towel to dry myself off just because you figured out the existence of water has more pros than cons. All the math and logic in the world cannot rule over the power of God's sovereignty. He made that power and logic.  
Isaiah 29:16, 45:9 and Romans 9:20-22, for reference

- 18h
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- Reply

**Phil Stilwell**

**Andrew Sills** The analogy you offered—about drying off with a towel—highlights the key issue: you're appealing to practical usefulness, not logical coherence. But when theology claims to satisfy justice, that's not just pragmatism; it's a claim about proportional mechanisms of wrongdoing and redress. That does require logic and internal consistency. Let me clarify the distinction:

● Appealing to God's sovereignty does not resolve contradictions—only restates control

✓ Saying "God is sovereign" doesn't answer the question. It deflects it.

✓ If God made logic, then logic reflects his nature. To suggest God can override logic is to suggest God can act against his own nature—or that contradiction is divine.

✓ If logic is not trustworthy, then no claim about God—even scriptural—can be coherently affirmed. You'd need logic to even understand the verse you just quoted.

● The critique is internal

✓ I'm not arguing outside your framework. I'm evaluating it within the Christian claims:

— That sin incurs a penalty.

— That justice must be satisfied.

— That Jesus' death satisfies that justice.

✓ The equation remains:

[Penalty due]  $\hat{=}$  [Penalty paid]

If the punishment for sin is eternal conscious separation, and Jesus was separated for only a short duration (if at all), how is that a match?

✓ Invoking sovereignty doesn't explain how the substitution holds. It simply declares that "God says so," which moves us from justice to fiat.

● You quoted Isaiah and Romans—but that underscores the tension

✓ Romans 9's potter-clay analogy illustrates divine power, not justice. It's about God doing as He wills, not whether what He does can be called just by rational standards.

✓ If your view is: "Justice is whatever God says it is, even if it contradicts logic," then it's no longer justice in any rational sense—it's raw authority.

Final thought:

✓ You're free to say PSA is mystery or grace. But if you say it's justice, you've invited a discussion of logic, proportion, and coherence.

✓ Sovereignty doesn't excuse contradiction. It deepens the burden to show how God's decrees are not just powerful, but principled.

Would you accept this same argument—"sovereignty overrules logic"—if it came from a Muslim defending Allah or a cult leader justifying harm? If not, then it's not a standard of reason. It's selective submission.

- 12h
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- Reply

**Andrew Sills**

**Phil Stilwell** if me quoting scripture to you underscores tension.. that pretty much tells me I'm spot on.

- 7h
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- Reply

**Phil Stilwell**

**Andrew Sills** That response is not engagement; it's evasion cloaked in self-congratulation. You've sidestepped the actual critique and then treated that avoidance as vindication.

Let me make it plain:

● Quoting scripture is not a rebuttal unless it resolves the contradiction at hand.

You quoted Romans and Isaiah. Fine. But you didn't show how those verses resolve the core issue:

How does a short, reversible death—by someone immune to eternal separation—satisfy an eternal punishment?

Until you do that, scripture-quoting becomes circular:

► You're asserting the doctrine is coherent because the Bible says it's true, while ignoring the internal contradiction I've laid out.

That's not reasoning. That's repetition.

● "You quoted scripture, so you must be right" is not a rational argument.

That logic would validate every theological claim from every religion that has sacred texts.

✓ Would you accept a Muslim quoting the Quran as evidence that your theology fails?

✓ Would you accept a Mormon quoting the Book of Mormon to prove their cosmology?

No? Then invoking scripture without resolving contradictions is just special pleading.

● The core issue remains untouched.

If you're going to say PSA is "just," then justice must be something intelligible—not just whatever God declares.

If instead you want to say, "It's a mystery," that's at least honest. But then stop calling it justice—because you've forfeited the right to call it coherent or rationally defensible.

If anyone else—a human judge, a dictator, or a cult leader—said,

"I decree this is justice because I have the authority to say so,"

...you would reject it outright.

So unless you're willing to say that logic itself is subordinate to arbitrary power, your appeal to sovereignty remains an evasion—not a solution.

If I'm wrong, show your work.

Until then, waving scripture in place of argument doesn't prove you're spot on—it proves you've tapped out of the conversation.

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#### **Terry Gurley**

real question is who is this man that claimed to be the Creator of all that is and became a man to redeem? That is a reality only one can experience from your connection to Him. Not with anything in this material world

- 2d
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- Reply

#### **Phil Stilwell**

**Terry Gurley** Your comment, while spiritual, does not address the logical and mathematical problem I have raised. The question is not about personal experience or faith, but about the mechanism by which a finite death could pay an infinite penalty. An appeal to experience does not resolve a logical inconsistency.

- 1d
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- Reply

#### **Terry Gurley**

not really sure what your hanging point is, is it that a creator of a creation is somehow in error when he makes a decision about his creation?

- 21h

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- [Reply](#)

**Phil Stilwell**

**Terry Gurley** I appreciate the follow-up, but your reply shifts the discussion from logic to divine prerogative. You're asking whether a creator can be "in error" when making decisions about his creation. But that's not the critique.

The question is not about whether God has the right to declare what counts as justice. Of course, a being with absolute power can declare anything. The question is whether such declarations retain coherence when they are described as satisfying justice.

Let me restate the core issue:

✓ If Christianity teaches that the penalty for sin is eternal conscious punishment,

✓ and if Jesus only suffered for a short time before being raised to eternal glory,

✓ then the punishment he endured is not equivalent to the punishment he allegedly saved us from.

That's not a question of divine authority. That's a question of logical equivalence.

If justice means anything beyond "because I said so," it requires some measurable parity between penalty due and penalty paid. If Jesus didn't endure what the sinner would have endured, the substitution claim fails as a model of justice—even if you find it moving as a narrative.

So, my "hanging point" is not about questioning divine decisions per se. It's about whether the language of justice and substitution used in Christian theology holds up under the very logic those terms require. If you're claiming redemption through a justice model, then the math has to work. If the math doesn't work, then you're not defending a justice model—you're defending a divine fiat cloaked in legal language.

- [15h](#)
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**Steve Bagnall**

Question:

"CAN THREE DAYS OF DEATH REALLY PAY FOR AN ETERNITY OF DAMNATION?"

It's actually even more outrageous than that. It was done in an instant. The debt we owe was nailed to the cross so that all who believe will receive the gift of eternal life

Now based on some of your replies, you won't accept scripture as a valid response. If we can't use scripture to debate something that comes from scripture, the whole debate is pointless

- [1d](#)
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- [Reply](#)

**Wayne Clarke**

**Steve Bagnall** Exactly

- [1d](#)
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- [Reply](#)

**Phil Stilwell**

**Steve Bagnall** You're right that this challenge does target a doctrine derived from scripture—but it's not asking for a scriptural citation; it's asking for a logical justification for a claim made within scripture. That's a critical distinction.

● The question is not "What does scripture say?" but "Does what it says make sense?"

✓ You're asserting that the penalty was paid instantly, not even over three days.

✓ That increases, not decreases, the difficulty for penal substitution.

✓ If the penalty for sin is eternal conscious torment, then a momentary payment (even by a divine being) appears wildly disproportional—unless justice has been redefined to mean something else.

● Appealing to scripture assumes what's being challenged

✓ If someone questions whether a doctrine (like Penal Substitutionary Atonement) is coherent, then quoting the Bible to prove its coherence is circular reasoning.

✓ It's no different from someone quoting the Qur'an to prove Islam is true, or quoting the Bhagavad Gita to validate karma.

✓ A belief system isn't exempt from rational scrutiny simply because it's in scripture.

If Christianity is true, it should withstand questions about its internal logic. A loving God wouldn't ask us to turn off reason—especially not when reasoning is what allows us to discern truth from error.

- 23h

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- Reply

**Roberta Jackson**

**Phil Stilwell** except the atonement isn't what saves and the Bible doesn't say it does. It is, however, necessary.

- 22h

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- Reply

**Steve Bagnall**

**Phil Stilwell** I understand the debate & I welcome it. But quite frankly, our earthly logic can't even begin to comprehend the size & power of God. Jesus' death was foretold from the beginning. Our human brain can't comprehend that one death on the cross could pay for the sins of all mankind. We don't think it's enough. But... that's exactly how it is. His final words on the cross were "It is finished". God & the Bible are far beyond our logic. We believe He created the ENTIRE universe in 6 days. We believe there was a talking serpent, bush & donkey. There are many debates to be had. And that's before we talk about the dinosaurs 🤡 But Jesus & His death (and what that meant for mankind) is a non negotiable. That is the cornerstone of Christianity, no matter how illogical it might be. Jesus died for you

- 22h

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- Reply

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**Phil Stilwell**

**Steve Bagnall** You've laid out a position that many believers share—that some things are beyond our logic, and that divine truths may appear illogical from a human standpoint. Let's pause on that idea and examine it carefully, because it strikes at the heart of this whole discussion.

● "God and the Bible are far beyond our logic"

✓ I understand the sentiment. But if this principle is invoked to deflect any logical inconsistency, then it becomes a conversation-stopper, not a defense.

✓ If logic can't be used to evaluate whether a belief is coherent, then any belief system—Islam, Hinduism, Scientology, or even flat-Earth claims—can protect itself by saying "It's above your understanding."

✓ But we don't do that in any other area of life. We don't excuse contradictions in science, math, or ethics by saying "it's beyond you." If something claims to be just, claims to be sufficient, or claims to be true, we ask whether that claim holds up under scrutiny. That's not arrogance—it's consistency.

● "We can't comprehend how one death pays for all sin"

✓ This is the exact logical tension being raised—not as an emotional objection, but as a challenge to the substitutionary model of justice that Christianity presents.

✓ If the penalty for sin is eternal conscious torment (as many traditions hold), and Jesus suffered for mere hours followed by resurrection and glorification, then proportional justice has not been satisfied.

✓ If, instead, you say Jesus is of infinite value, and that makes the sacrifice sufficient regardless of duration, then we're no longer in a system of justice—we're in a system of divine fiat, where whatever God declares to be "just" simply becomes just by definition.

► But that erases the distinction between justice and decree.

● "Jesus & His death... is non-negotiable, no matter how illogical it might be"

✓ This is the crux of it: you've admitted the atonement is illogical and non-negotiable. That's honest—but also revealing.  
✓ What you're describing isn't a faith grounded in reason—it's a faith insulated from reason.  
✓ But if a belief system becomes unfalsifiable—even when it contains glaring logical contradictions—then how do you distinguish that belief from any other system making unverifiable claims?  
I don't raise these issues because I want to "win" a debate. I raise them because truth should not fear scrutiny, and because claims that affect our entire understanding of justice, mercy, and human destiny should be logically coherent—especially when they come from a God who gave us reason as one of our primary tools for discovering truth.

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#### Andrew Sills

How long we gonna keep debating with this guy's AI platform?

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- Reply

#### Phil Stilwell

**Andrew Sills** ☺ I'm a human using an AI tool at times—just like you might use a calculator or search engine to refine your own reasoning in your accounting work. The ideas I present reflect years of personal study, not algorithmic belief.

✓ If you think something I've argued is mistaken, I invite you to point to the logic, not the tool.

✓ Dismissing an argument because it's been made clearly or with assistance doesn't invalidate it.

✓ Christianity itself claims to stand on truth, not on how truth is articulated.

So the better question isn't who or what is doing the debating, but whether the reasoning holds up under scrutiny. If it does, it shouldn't matter how it was typed.

- 23h
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#### Wayne Clarke

#### Phil Stilwell

Jesus also died spiritually, being cut off from the father, and his eternal co existence with the Godhead was why he cried out

46. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

(Matthew, 27)

For the first time, the triune God head was separated, and the pain of separation was why he cried out.

This is the problem, you don't understand the efficacy of the sacrifice, or the cost that God suffered for all sinners.

You come with your worldly understanding about logic and maths, yet can't comprehensive the simple gospel, written so clearly in the scriptures.

You don't want to apply faith, you want to find problems to justify your own reasons for doubt.

- 1d
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- Reply
- Edited

**Mike McKinney**

**Wayne Clarke** Nope. That's heresy. Not only is it heresy, it also shows ignorance of the scriptures, as, when Jesus died, He cried, "Father, into Thy hands I commit My spirit".

- 15h
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- Reply

**Wayne Clarke**

**Mike McKinney** His agony of being cut off from the father , was not permanent, it was due to the father unable to look upon the sin that was placed him. You lack understanding.

- 13h
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- Reply
- Edited

**Phil Stilwell**

**Wayne Clarke**, let's step back and examine the logical structure of what you're claiming.

You're saying that:

Jesus experienced spiritual death by being cut off from the Father.

This temporary forsaking was the true "payment" for sin.

This, rather than eternal conscious punishment, is what satisfies divine justice.

Here's where that runs into serious problems:

● 1. Temporary estrangement is not equivalent to eternal punishment

Even granting your framework, Jesus' forsaking lasted mere hours. If the deserved punishment is eternal separation from God—as is commonly claimed—then how does a temporary separation satisfy this?

That's like sentencing a criminal to life in prison, but letting someone else spend the weekend behind bars on their behalf. It doesn't satisfy the terms; it symbolically gestures toward them.

● 2. This substitution isn't actually substitutional

If Jesus endured a type of suffering that humans don't actually face—a temporary divine rift that only the second person of the Trinity could experience—then this isn't substitution. It's not the punishment humans would receive.

Substitution means taking what was due to another. But no human suffers a three-hour divine rift followed by exaltation. The wages of sin, by your own theology, is eternal death and separation.

● 3. Logic is not a "worldly" intrusion—it's a divine tool

You suggest I "come with [my] worldly understanding about logic and maths," but this critique is not grounded in secularism—it's grounded in internal consistency. If Christianity claims to be rational, just, and true, then logical coherence is not optional—it's foundational.

✓ If someone told you a doctor cured terminal cancer by thinking really hard for five seconds, you'd want a logical, physiological explanation.

✓ Likewise, if you say that three hours of spiritual estrangement satisfies eternal punishment, you need to explain how that adds up without relying solely on declarations of faith.

● Final Thought

Faith may affirm mysteries—but it should not be used to shield contradictions. If Jesus' suffering was qualitatively different from the punishment humans deserve, it wasn't a substitution—it was a unique event.

And if logic is dismissed as irrelevant to the "simple gospel," then we are no longer dealing with a truth-claim open to reason—but with a closed system that admits no falsifiability. In that case, anyone—from any religion—could make the same move to silence critique.

But truth should not fear scrutiny. It should withstand it.

- 13h



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- [Reply](#)

**Mike McKinney**

**Wayne Clarke** And you lack sound doctrine.

- 6h
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- [Reply](#)

**Wayne Clarke**

**Mike McKinney** In what way, let's see. Explain my unsound doctrine.

So you claim Jesus never felt abandonment by the father?

Correct?

- 5h
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- [Reply](#)
- [Edited](#)

**Mike McKinney**

**Wayne Clarke** You didn't say He felt abandoned by the Father. You said He "died spiritually". That's heresy.

- 2h
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- [Reply](#)

**Phil Stilwell**

**Mike McKinney Wayne Clarke**, this is an interesting moment where you're both defending the same theological framework but accusing each other of heresy over how to interpret the mechanics of atonement. Let's examine what this reveals.

#### ● You're Both Trying to Solve the Same Core Problem

The dilemma is simple:

If the penalty for sin is eternal conscious torment, how can Jesus' finite suffering—whether physical, emotional, or spiritual—serve as a substitution?

Each of you offers different answers:

✓ Wayne: Jesus experienced spiritual death—a temporary rift from the Father—as the real punishment.

✓ Mike: That's heresy. Jesus never spiritually died—He merely felt abandoned, and his death was physical.

But notice: neither of you is resolving the actual proportional gap between a finite substitution and an infinite penalty.

You're disagreeing over what kind of finite experience counts as substitution.

#### ● Wayne's View (Spiritual Death) – Problems

✓ You affirm Jesus “died spiritually” through temporary divine forsaking.

✓ But if this forsaking lasted hours, how is that equivalent to eternal damnation?

✓ More critically, humans do not undergo temporary divine separation followed by exaltation—so how is this a substitution at all?

This feels like special pleading: Jesus experiences a unique kind of suffering no sinner will ever face, and we're told that's somehow the same as our penalty.

#### ● Mike's View (No Spiritual Death) – Problems

✓ You say Wayne's “spiritual death” claim is heretical and stick to the physical death.

✓ But then how does a brief physical death—no matter how painful—substitute for eternal spiritual punishment?

This reduces the entire atonement to a physical event that does not resemble the punishment it's supposed to satisfy. If “the wages of sin is death,” and that death includes eternal separation from God, then physical death alone cannot be the substitute.

#### ● What You're Both Missing

Both views collapse under the weight of one basic question:

What principle of justice allows a finite event to satisfy an infinite penalty?

If neither physical death nor spiritual separation matches the punishment sinners are said to deserve, then neither substitution model is coherent.

You're left saying:

“It works because God says it works.”

But then we've abandoned the concept of justice as something that can be reasoned about. It becomes semantic rather than substantive.

#### ● Final Reflection

Wayne accuses Mike of “lacking understanding.”

Mike accuses Wayne of “heresy.”

But the truth is: both positions reflect attempts to preserve substitutionary atonement—but they do so with mutually exclusive frameworks.

This should give pause. If believers can't even agree on what the actual penalty was or how it was satisfied, then outsiders are right to question whether this doctrine is coherent at all.

Is it possible that the real problem isn't in either of your interpretations—but in the internal contradictions of the doctrine itself?

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- Reply

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**John Soulliere**

**Wayne Clarke** nope. Bad theology, bro. He was quoting a Psalm that ends in victory.

- 15h
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- Reply

**Wayne Clarke**

**John Soulliere** the Psalm predicted the cross 🙄, which ended in victory over death.

- 13h
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- Reply

**Phil Stilwell**

**John Soulliere** you're absolutely right to point out that Jesus' cry—"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"—is a direct quote from Psalm 22. That matters more than many realize, especially in this debate.

Let's unpack why:

🕒 1. Context Matters: Psalm 22 Is a Lament that Ends in Triumph

When Jesus quotes Psalm 22:1, he's not inventing a new theological claim about divine separation—he's referencing a well-known Jewish lament that begins in anguish but ends in vindication:

✓ "All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord..." (v. 27)

✓ "He has not despised or scorned the suffering of the afflicted one..." (v. 24)

This cry is not about metaphysical rupture in the Godhead—it's a literary and prophetic pointer.

To treat it as evidence of intra-Trinitarian disunity distorts both the literary intent and the theology of the Psalm.

🕒 2. No Scripture Says "The Trinity Was Broken"

Wayne claimed this was the "first time the triune Godhead was separated." But that's not found anywhere in Scripture.

✓ Jesus later says, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." (Luke 23:46)

✓ And in John 16:32, he affirms, "I am not alone, for the Father is with me."

If Jesus wasn't actually forsaken, but was feeling forsaken as part of bearing human suffering, then the substitution wasn't about metaphysical rupture—it was about emotional solidarity.

That's not the same as taking on eternal separation.

🕒 3. The Claim of Substitution Still Fails

Even if Jesus momentarily felt abandoned or endured emotional/spiritual agony, that doesn't equate to:

✓ The eternal separation allegedly awaiting the unsaved, or

✓ The conscious torment said to last forever in hell.

So, whether we take Psalm 22 symbolically or emotionally, the math still fails. A few hours of anguish—even cosmic anguish—is not infinite torment.

🕒 Final Thought

Wayne's claim that the Godhead fractured is not just theologically unsound—it actually undermines Trinitarian stability.

John, your observation helps preserve coherence.

If we start calling temporary anguish "eternal punishment," then we're not just blurring categories—we're erasing meaningful theological distinctions.

Atonement doctrine deserves more than slogans. It deserves logic.

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**Phil Stilwell**

**Wayne Clarke** I appreciate your engagement, but your reply again sidesteps the core critique by assuming what's in question. Let's clarify what's being argued and what's not:

✓ I'm not denying the emotional or narrative depth of the crucifixion story.

✓ I'm not denying that Jesus felt abandoned, or that this moment holds theological significance in Christian doctrine.

✓ I'm not denying that Scripture claims that this sacrifice was effective.

What I am asking is this:

If the penalty for sin is eternal conscious punishment, how can a finite event—physical or spiritual—satisfy that debt in any just or proportionate sense?

You point to “separation from the Father” as a spiritual dimension of the penalty. Fine. But that still doesn't resolve the issue of duration and equivalence. Separation, however painful, lasted only hours. The resurrection restored that relationship. So the question remains:

How does a finite rupture in fellowship—followed by restoration—logically or mathematically equate to an unending punishment for billions of sinners?

You appeal to “efficacy” and “cost,” but those are subjective valuations unless you provide a standard by which they can be assessed. If you say “Jesus is of infinite worth,” and therefore any pain he experiences satisfies any penalty, that's not a justice model. That's divine fiat wrapped in the language of justice. It's “just because God says so.”

You also say:

↘ “You come with your worldly understanding about logic and maths...”

Yes. Because the claim being made is a logical one—that Jesus paid the penalty that was due. If the claim were purely metaphorical, symbolic, or emotional, logic wouldn't apply. But if you invoke justice, debt, penalty, and substitution, then you are using terms that demand coherence, not just faith.

Finally, your closing:

↘ “You don't want to apply faith, you want to find problems...”

This is not a fair characterization. I'm not creating problems—I'm examining whether internal claims of justice hold up when scrutinized. You may find comfort in faith. But comfort is not coherence. And if belief can't withstand logic, then it's not faith defending truth—it's faith defending itself from falsifiability.

And faith, as it is biblically defined, is problematic: ↘ <https://freeoffaith.com/faith/>

**FREEOFFAITH.COM**

Rationality vs Faith

## Rationality vs Faith

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**Michael Kirkwood**

God's grace and mercy!

- 1d
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- Reply

**Phil Stilwell**

**Michael Kirkwood** Those elements do not resolve the issue.

Coherently instantiate this:  $\sim$  [the penalty for sin] = [the penalty Jesus paid for sin]

- 23h
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- Reply

**Michael Kirkwood**

**Phil Stilwell** I can not explain it, only rest in what God's Word says.

The penalty of sin is death, but God is the giver of life. He is the judge and the only One who can pardon sins.

- 21h
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- Reply

**Phil Stilwell**

**Michael Kirkwood** I appreciate your honesty—and your reverence. But let me gently press why this isn't just a theological mystery to "rest in," but a logical tension that deserves clarity.

☉ You said: "The penalty of sin is death... God is the judge... only He can pardon."

✓ I'm not contesting God's authority to pardon. If God simply forgave sins, full stop, that would be divine prerogative.

✓ But the doctrine of Penal Substitutionary Atonement (PSA) doesn't say God just forgave—it says justice required payment, and that Jesus paid it.

That's a much stronger claim. It says:

- God's justice demanded a penalty.
- That penalty was eternal death for sin.
- Jesus paid that penalty on our behalf.

But this collapses unless:

[Penalty for sin] = [Penalty Jesus paid]

That's the coherence challenge. If sin earns eternal conscious torment, and Jesus suffered for only a few hours followed by resurrection, then that equation is false. It's not a question of whether God has the authority—it's whether He exercised justice as claimed.

☉ Grace and mercy don't resolve the contradiction—they are beautiful if justice was satisfied.

But if the penalty was infinite and the payment finite, then the substitution wasn't just—it was a declared bypass.

And at that point, it's no longer penal substitution. It's penal declaration.

A loving God wouldn't ask us to suppress reason. If the gospel is true, it should be both spiritually profound and logically coherent. I'm simply asking if it is.

- 15h
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- Reply

**Michael Kirkwood**

**Phil Stilwell** It is spiritually profound. As to logical coherence, I'm no doubt inadequate to fully understand, much less explain how Jesus death on the cross could satisfy the demands of a righteous God.

That would take a deep understanding of the triune nature of the Godhead: Father, Second Person of the trinity (who existed eternally, yet became incarnate) the Son and the Holy Spirit.

As Paul wrote 2K years ago, the cross will seem foolish.

- 1h
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- Reply

**Phil Stilwell**

**Michael Kirkwood** your reply underscores exactly why the doctrine of Penal Substitutionary Atonement (PSA), as it's often presented, collapses under rational scrutiny.

Let me clarify the issue in the most charitable and rigorous way possible:

☉ You're not being asked to know everything about the Trinity.

✓ The argument does not hinge on whether you understand the internal dynamics of the Godhead.

✓ It hinges on whether a claimed act of justice satisfies its own stated requirements.

If eternal conscious punishment is what justice demands, then a finite death—even by a divine figure—must be shown to proportionally satisfy that.

That's not a mystery. That's basic equivalence.

It's the same principle you'd apply to any claim of restitution or fairness in any moral, legal, or theological system.

☉ If "justice" is invoked, then coherence is demanded.

✓ You can say "God simply forgives sin," and I won't argue—it's mercy.

✓ But when you say "Jesus paid the price of sin," you've invited a specific test:

Did the price paid equal the price owed?

If it didn't—if Jesus didn't endure eternal separation (as humans supposedly deserve)—then the substitution is, at best, symbolic, and at worst, incoherent. That's not an attack on God. That's a challenge to a specific doctrine about how God operates.

● Appealing to mystery here neuters all theology.

✓ Every religion can invoke mystery when cornered.

✓ But if your response is, "We can't explain it—it's above logic," then Christianity cannot also claim to be rational, defensible, or internally consistent.

This matters, because if "God's justice" is just "whatever God declares," then justice has no content beyond divine fiat. And that reduces Christianity from a truth-claim to a closed loop.

I'm not here to mock mystery. But I am here to push back when mystery is used to prop up what purports to be justice. If Christianity truly offers a coherent system of redemption, then it must withstand scrutiny. If not, then belief rests not on evidence or reason—but on submission alone.

That is not how truth should function.

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**Brian Baxter**

I have to say this is one the weakest of the arguments against Christianity.

- 1d
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- Reply

**Phil Stilwell**

**Brian Baxter** If you truly believe so, you'll be able to articulate the relevant arguments.

- 23h
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- Reply

**Brian Baxter**

**Phil Stilwell** "Infinite value doesn't magically transform finite duration into infinite payment." Why not?

- 14h
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- **Reply**

**Phil Stilwell**

**Brian Baxter** You've asked the right question—"Why doesn't infinite value magically transform finite duration into infinite payment?"—and that's the crux. Let's unpack why this isn't just a rhetorical claim but a demand for coherence in substitutionary logic.

● 1. Value ≠ Duration ≠ Penalty

Suppose a person of infinite value stubs their toe. Is that stub of infinite suffering? No.

Now suppose that same person is fined \$100. Does their infinite value multiply the payment? Again, no.

You're conflating who suffers with what is suffered.

✓ Jesus being "infinitely valuable" doesn't scale the duration or intensity of his suffering.

✓ The magnitude of value doesn't convert time or torment like currency.

● 2. Duration Matters in Penal Systems

The doctrine claims:

"The wages of sin is death" → interpreted by most traditions as eternal conscious torment.

That's an infinite-duration penalty.

If I serve a 3-day jail sentence for someone condemned to life in prison, justice is not satisfied—regardless of my status.

✓ If time doesn't matter, then why insist on 3 days? Why not 3 seconds or symbolic suffering?

From the article:

"If duration is irrelevant because of infinite worth, then the specific choice of three days is theologically and logically arbitrary."

● 3. No Mechanism = No Coherence

If your answer is:

"Well, it works because God says it does,"

...then you've exited rational discourse and entered divine fiat. That's fine for faith, but don't call it coherent.

A rational substitution model must demonstrate:

✓ Equivalence in kind and magnitude, or

✓ A justified method of transformation between values (e.g., a formal mechanism for how Jesus' status satisfies eternal debt).

So far, none is offered—only the phrase "infinite value."

This isn't hostility to Christian doctrine. It's a demand for internal consistency.

✓ If eternal punishment is proportionate to sin,

✓ Then any substitution must meet that standard—or else redefine the standard.

Simply saying "infinite value solves it" is like claiming a priceless violin cures cancer: beautiful, but category error.

Want to defend the claim? Show how "value" logically maps onto "duration of penalty."

Until then, it's assertion—not explanation.

- 12h

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- **Reply**

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**Brian Baxter**

**Phil Stilwell**

\* Category Error: The argument treats duration as the sole measure of justice. But in Christian theology, the value of the person bearing the punishment matters more than the length of suffering. Jesus is not just a human—He is the infinite God-man. His sacrifice carries infinite worth, which transcends time-bound suffering.

\* False Equivalence: Comparing eternal punishment for sinners to Jesus' three-day death assumes both are the same kind of experience. But eternal punishment is for those who remain in sin. Jesus, being sinless, bore the wrath of God once for all (Hebrews 10:10), not as a sinner but as a substitute.

\* Oversimplification of Justice: Justice isn't always about matching time-for-time. For example, a single act (like signing a pardon or paying a fine) can resolve a lifetime of consequences. The argument ignores intensity, identity, and purpose in evaluating justice.

\* Straw Man: It assumes Christians believe Jesus suffered in Hell for three days. But orthodox Christianity teaches that Jesus bore the wrath of God on the cross, not in the grave. His time in the tomb was to fulfill prophecy and demonstrate the reality of His death—not to accumulate punishment.

A Biblical Response to the Challenge:

Christian theology answers this through the lens of penal substitutionary atonement—that Jesus took the punishment sinners deserved, satisfying divine justice through His death.

#### 1. Infinite Worth of Christ

\* Jesus is fully God and fully man (John 1:1, Colossians 2:9). His divine nature gives His sacrifice infinite value.

\* Hebrews 9:12: “He entered once for all into the holy places... securing an eternal redemption.”

\* Romans 6:10: “The death he died, he died to sin once for all.”

#### 2. Justice Satisfied, Not Matched by Duration

\* Isaiah 53:5–6: “He was pierced for our transgressions... the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

\* 1 Peter 3:18: “Christ suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.”

\* The wrath of God was poured out on Jesus in full on the cross (Romans 3:25–26), not in proportion to time, but in proportion to divine justice.

#### 3. Resurrection as Vindication

\* Jesus’ resurrection is not a sign that punishment was incomplete—it’s proof that justice was satisfied and death was defeated (Romans 4:25, Revelation 1:18).

\* John 19:30: “It is finished.” (Greek: tetelestai, meaning “paid in full.”)

#### 4. Hell Is Not a Payment—It’s a Consequence

\* Eternal punishment is not a transaction—it’s the ongoing state of separation from God for those who reject Him (2 Thessalonians 1:9).

\* Jesus didn’t need to suffer eternally because He didn’t remain in sin. He bore sin’s penalty and conquered it.

The cross isn’t about matching eternity with eternity—it’s about substitution by someone of infinite worth, who could bear the full weight of divine wrath in a moment and declare it finished.

- 7h
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- Reply

**Phil Stilwell**

**Brian Baxter** thanks for taking the time to lay out a more structured defense. This is the kind of exchange I welcome. That said, your response contains multiple conceptual pivots that avoid rather than resolve the central issue: whether justice in Penal Substitutionary Atonement (PSA) is internally coherent. Let’s walk through this precisely.

#### ● 1. “Infinite Worth Trumps Duration” — Still a Category Error

You reaffirm that Jesus’ “infinite worth” renders time irrelevant. But that is the category error.

✓ Value does not convert to duration unless you can articulate the mechanism by which it does.

✓ That’s what my analogy of the “priceless violin curing cancer” was meant to reveal: beauty ≠ medicine; worth ≠ punishment.

Example:

If a sin deserves eternal conscious torment (ECT), then justice—as claimed—requires that penalty to be paid, not just waived by someone important.

→ Simply asserting Jesus is “worth more” doesn’t pay the debt; it redefines it.

You’re bypassing the penalty, not satisfying it.

#### ● 2. “Not Matching Time-for-Time” — Then Stop Calling It Justice

You say justice isn’t about “matching time for time,” and cite things like pardons or fines. But that supports my point, not yours.

✓ Pardons = mercy, not justice.

✓ Fines = commensurate substitution only when there’s an established conversion metric.

In the PSA model, God is not simply showing mercy—He’s claiming justice has been satisfied. If so, the following equation must hold:

[Penalty for sin] = [Penalty Jesus paid]

✓ You must explain how eternal punishment is satisfied by brief suffering—not just assert that it was.

#### ● 3. “Straw Man – No One Believes Jesus Suffered in Hell”

Agreed—most orthodox models say the wrath of God was poured out on the cross. That’s not in dispute.

✓ The problem isn’t where the punishment occurred.

✓ The problem is that what Jesus experienced doesn’t match what humans are said to deserve.

→ Was he eternally separated from God?

→ Did he endure conscious torment proportionate to sin’s eternal cost?

If not, then it’s not substitutional. It’s representational at best.

#### ● 4. “The Resurrection Proves Justice Was Satisfied” — Circular Claim



You cite the resurrection as vindication. But this presumes what's in question:

✓ That justice was satisfied.

✓ That God's approval equals justice achieved.

That's not an explanation—it's appeal to divine fiat:

"It worked because God says it worked."

Which undermines the premise that justice—as a principled standard—was satisfied.

● 5. "Hell Is Consequence, Not Transaction" — Then Why Was There a Payment?

You claim hell is not a transactional punishment, but a natural consequence. Fine—but that destroys the PSA model.

✓ If hell is not a penalty, then there's no penalty to pay.

✓ If there's no penalty, then Jesus didn't "pay" anything on our behalf.

PSA only works if sin incurs a defined debt which is then satisfied vicariously.

You can't have both:

"Hell is the penalty" and "Hell isn't transactional."

Final Challenge:

If your model is not based on equivalence, then stop calling it substitution. Call it symbolic atonement or representative suffering. That would at least be internally consistent.

But if you're saying justice was truly satisfied, not bypassed or redefined, then the burden remains:

Show how infinite value converts finite suffering into infinite penalty satisfaction.

Not just claim it. Demonstrate it.

Until then, the PSA model is rhetorically potent but logically brittle—sustained by declarations, not coherence. And coherence, not confession, is the currency of truth.

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**Lance T. Marshall**

"Justice demands proportionality." First, where is that written? Second, if you are the one who decides proportionality, then you are the one judging God. Third, the OP seems to not understand or account for 2 Peter 3:8: "With the Lord, a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years are like a day." Finally, someone as simple as Einstein explains it this way: "An hour sitting on a park bench with a pretty girl seems like a minute. But sit on a hot stove for a minute and it seems like an hour."

- 1d

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- **Reply**

**Phil Stilwell**

**Lance T. Marshall** Let's unpack your objections:

● "Where is it written that justice demands proportionality?"

✓ Proportionality is a foundational concept in both secular and biblical conceptions of justice.

✓ Deuteronomy 25:3 limits punishment to forty stripes, not infinite suffering—suggesting punishment should fit the crime.

✓ Exodus 21:24 offers the "eye for an eye" standard—not infinite pain for finite wrongdoing.

✓ Even human courts reject infinite penalties for finite crimes, because disproportionate justice is inherently unjust.

● "If you decide proportionality, you're judging God."

✓ If a doctrine requires suspending all standards of justice, then it's not above questioning—it's beneath credibility.

✓ If God built humans with a sense of proportional fairness (and many claim he did), why would his actions violate it entirely?

✓ The moment one says "God's justice doesn't need to make sense," one gives up any ability to distinguish justice from injustice in disguise.

● "2 Peter 3:8 – A day is like a thousand years..."

✓ That verse explains God's patience, not his punishment metrics.

✓ It speaks to God's timeline in delaying judgment, not how long Jesus suffered.

✓ Even if time feels different to God, we're not judging the felt experience, but the duration of the act in the human domain (Jesus' finite suffering vs. eternal human penalty).

● "Einstein said: hot stove vs. park bench time distortion."

✓ Einstein's quote is about subjective time perception, not objective time duration.

✓ But doctrine like Penal Substitutionary Atonement (PSA) doesn't say Jesus only felt eternal punishment—it says he actually bore it fully.

✓ If eternal damnation is the punishment, then fully bearing it must mean something more than a few hours of pain.

To summarize:

✓ Proportionality isn't some arbitrary human invention—it's a rational constraint on what we call justice.

✓ Invoking God's supremacy to override justice ends up vacating the very concept of justice.

✓ If you must say "God's justice doesn't have to make sense," then you are admitting the doctrine can't be defended—only accepted uncritically.

If you'd like to uphold a model of divine justice that transcends human understanding, then say so. But don't pretend it's coherent when it's relying on contradiction and hand-waving.

- 23h

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- **Reply**

**Lance T. Marshall**

**Phil Stilwell** While I appreciate the well thought out response, you are missing the most important piece: Jesus' Resurrection. Romans 6:9 "For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, He cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over Him." The punishment and sacrifice are only one piece of the puzzle and the lesser piece as well compared to the Victory over death.

- 5h

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- **Reply**

**Phil Stilwell**

**Lance T. Marshall** I appreciate your pivot to the resurrection—an undeniably central theme in Christian theology. But the question I raised wasn't about whether Christ triumphed over death. The question was whether the penalty that Christianity claims sin deserves was actually paid in the model of Penal Substitutionary Atonement (PSA).

Let's draw the distinction more sharply:

● 1. Victory ≠ Substitution

✓ Resurrection is a vindication event, not a penal one.

✓ PSA, however, claims that God's justice was satisfied through Jesus' suffering and death.

So the critical question remains:

If sin's just penalty is eternal conscious torment, how does a short span of suffering followed by exaltation meet that standard?

You seem to suggest the resurrection completes the picture. But that intensifies the problem:

✓ Jesus did not remain dead.

✓ He did not remain separated.

✓ He did not suffer eternally.

That's precisely why PSA demands logical explanation: Was the debt paid, or was it bypassed?

● 2. "Victory Over Death" Doesn't Pay the Debt of Others

✓ If the resurrection demonstrates that death has no hold on Jesus, that's a personal triumph—not a transactional payment on behalf of others.

If I'm sentenced to life in prison, and someone else breaks out of jail after 3 hours and says, "See? I beat the system,"

→ that's not justice—it's escape, or symbol, or something else entirely.

Unless you can show that Jesus' resurrection satisfies the debt others owed—not just ends his own suffering—you're not defending penal substitution. You're replacing it with a different soteriology (maybe Christus Victor or Moral Influence).

● 3. Resurrection Raises the Stakes for Coherence

If the resurrection ends the story, then:

✓ Why does hell continue forever for others?

✓ Why does substitution only cancel some penalties for some people under some conditions?

If "It is finished" means the entire penalty is paid, then no one should be punished.

→ But Christian doctrine still includes eternal punishment for many.

This contradiction requires more than quoting victory passages—it requires logical unpacking.

Final Thought

Your emphasis on resurrection is theologically understandable, but it doesn't answer the justice challenge. PSA is not about victory—it's about equivalence:

[Penalty due] = [Penalty paid]

Unless you can show how Jesus' experience mirrors or satisfies the eternal consequences others are said to deserve, the substitution claim collapses.

Resurrection may be glorious.

But for PSA to be just, it must also be coherent.

And no resurrection—no matter how radiant—can reconcile a short finite death with an eternal penalty without a clear logical mechanism.

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**Erik Weaver**

3 Days didn't pay for sin. The Blood shed paid for all sin since Jesus's shed blood IS the Final Blood Atonement for the Remission of Sin that God Accepts. The 3 Days was to fulfill Prophecy. During those 3 Days Jesus descended to Abraham's Bosom and took captive the Souls of Abraham's Bosom and they ascended to Heaven with Jesus as the FIRSTFRUITS for the Kingdom of Heaven. The OT Saints did not have their Day of Redemption UNTIL Christ Died. Today, AFTER Christ's Death, our Day of Redemption is upon Death or Pretrib Rapture. It really is all about the Blood.

- 1d
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- Reply

**Phil Stilwell**

**Erik Weaver** A few key observations on your position:

- "The 3 days didn't pay for sin — the blood did."

- ✓ If time didn't pay the price, but blood did, then the question becomes one of proportional equivalence:

- How does a finite shedding of blood equate to infinite punishment?

- ✓ The theological assertion that "it's the blood" still presumes a transactional model of justice—one that must be questioned for coherence.

- ✓ If Jesus' finite bloodshed satisfies the eternal penalty of sin, this raises the same challenge:

- Why doesn't any finite suffering by anyone count, if the suffering's duration and severity don't matter?

- "The 3 days fulfilled prophecy."

- ✓ Then the duration is symbolic, not causative.

- ✓ This supports the critique: if the length of time is symbolic, then the actual payment must be assessed qualitatively—and then you're still left with the proportionality gap.

- "He descended to Abraham's Bosom and led them out."

- ✓ This is a traditional interpretation (linked to Ephesians 4:8–10), but:

- It doesn't address the original concern about the justice mechanics of substitutionary atonement.

- If Jesus' descent and rescue of the OT righteous is part of the atonement, then where is that modeled as equivalent to the punishment awaiting the damned?

- "It's all about the blood."

- ✓ Then you're claiming a qualitative difference in this blood. But again:

- How does the quality of divine blood mathematically or logically resolve the infinite/finite discrepancy?

- ✓ Appealing to mystery here is a tacit admission that logic must be suspended—and that's precisely the problem.

If the whole model hinges on mystical substitution with no regard for proportion, then it ceases to be justice and becomes pure fiat. That's not a criticism from irreverence—just a challenge to consistency.

- 23h

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- Reply

**Erik Weaver**

**Phil Stilwell**

Jesus died for the REMISSION of Sin. Just as under the Sacrificial System the Jews received REMISSION of Sin. Remission is not Redemption. Remission is a PROMISE of FUTURE REDEMPTION. Jesus shed blood to be the FINAL blood atonement for the Remission of Sin. So we could live by Faith WITHOUT the Works of the Law, ie animal sacrifice. The three days in the Grave was to fulfill PROPHECY and to align with the Feast Days. Reading anything more into the three days is nonsense. Christ shed his blood to fix our sin nature we inherited from the Fall. Essentially giving us a way to receive ETERNAL LIFE and restore what God intended for Man in the Beginning. Immortality. Which is why we are given IMMORTAL and INCORRUPTIBLE Bodies for the Millennial Kingdom. Heaven is just a temporary holding place until Christ's Return. Just as Abraham's Bosom was a temporary holding place for the OT Saints UNTIL Christ Shed his Blood. Our Day of Redemption comes upon Death or Rapture. Whereas, the OT Saints Day of Redemption came when they ascended with Christ as the FIRSTFRUITS for the Kingdom of Heaven.

- 3h

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- Reply

**Phil Stilwell**

**Erik Weaver** I'll grant that your view is consistent with a dispensational framework that distinguishes remission from redemption. But my critique targets a deeper problem—one of logical and proportional coherence in the doctrine of substitutionary atonement, no matter how you partition the redemptive timeline.

Let's unpack your claims a bit further:

- "Remission is a promise of future redemption"

- ✓ If Christ's blood offers remission and not immediate redemption, then even more weight is placed on understanding what later event—if any—completes the justice transaction.

- ✓ In PSA, the key claim is: A just God cannot forgive without full satisfaction.

That still demands:

[Penalty Deserved] = [Penalty Paid]

- ✓ So, what did Jesus pay, and when did he pay it?

- If remission is just deferral, then what exactly discharged the infinite debt?

- "Jesus' blood is the final atonement"

- ✓ This brings us back to the question of equivalence.

- ✓ In Leviticus, blood atonement was for temporary ritual cleansing, not eternal salvation.

✓ So for Jesus' blood to permanently substitute for eternal damnation, there must be a mechanism of conversion: How does finite blood = infinite punishment?

✓ You seem to suggest the blood is qualitatively divine, which makes it "infinite in worth." But that shifts the discussion from justice to sacred mystery.

✓ And when a model relies entirely on mystery rather than mechanism, it's no longer a claim about justice—it's a claim about divine prerogative.

● "Reading more into the three days is nonsense"

✓ Agreed: if the three days were symbolic, not penal, then PSA isn't about time served.

✓ But now you've undercut any claim that Christ endured hell in our place.

→ If he didn't bear the actual duration or kind of the penalty humans deserve (e.g. eternal separation), then PSA fails as a coherent substitution.

✓ You're retreating to a system where Jesus' death initiates a promise, not completes a transaction. That's a theological stance—but it means the equation of justice satisfied becomes metaphoric, not real.

● "Christ fixed our sin nature"

✓ Now you've introduced a third model—ontological repair, not substitution.

✓ If Christ's blood changed our nature rather than paid our debt, then the model is transformational, not penal.

✓ That's closer to Christus Victor or Moral Influence theories than PSA. If that's your view, then say so. But don't call it penal substitution if no penalty was proportionally paid.

Final Thought

Your view is an elaborate and sincere exposition, but it still avoids the central challenge: Where is the proportional, coherent mechanism by which Jesus' suffering or blood pays the eternal penalty humans supposedly deserve?

You've outlined a story of fulfillment, ritual, and future transformation. That's fine for faith.

But if the claim is that justice demanded blood, and that justice was satisfied, then the burden of logical equivalence remains.

✓ If blood was sufficient, why not any blood?

✓ If divine blood counts more, what's the conversion rate from divine suffering to eternal torment?

✓ If remission is deferral, what finished the transaction?

Until that's clear, the doctrine asserts justice, but delivers mystery cloaked in metaphors.

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#### Joshua Steindl

You're taking something that isn't a math equation and forcing it to be a math equation. If the God of the universe who created everything says it's enough, then it is good enough.

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- Reply

#### Phil Stilwell

**Joshua Steindl** Here's the central concern with that line of reasoning:

- "If God says it's enough, then it is good enough."

- ✓ This begs the question. You're assuming the very conclusion under debate:

- That whatever God declares is necessarily just, without independent criteria.

- ✓ But justice—especially in substitutionary atonement models—is typically defined as requiring proportionality:

- Penalties should match offenses in severity and duration.

- If not, then what grounds the claim that God is just rather than simply arbitrary?

- "You're forcing it to be a math equation."

- ✓ This isn't about literal arithmetic. It's about logical coherence:

- If eternal punishment is deserved, then how does a 3-day death—even by someone divine—satisfy that infinite debt?

- ✓ If you're rejecting the need for any logical consistency, you're left saying:

- "It works because God said so."

- But then justice is whatever God declares, not something that can be reasoned about. That undermines any claim that Christianity is rationally defensible.

So the question remains:

Is justice meaningful only because God labels it so, or is there a standard—like proportionality—that makes His actions intelligible as just? If it's the former, then calling God just is circular and vacuous.

- 23h

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- [Reply](#)

**Wayne Clarke**

**Phil Stilwell** Yes there is a standard, its God's standard, because he created everything in the first place , or do you deny that also?

- 14h

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- [Reply](#)

**Phil Stilwell**

**Wayne Clarke** let's unpack the implications of your reply.

You're saying:

"There is a standard. It's God's standard."

That raises a critical distinction:

- 1. Is God's Standard Just Because He Declares It?

If so, then:

- ✓ Justice becomes a synonym for divine preference.

- ✓ Any act—no matter how arbitrary or disproportionate—can be labeled "just" if God wills it.

But then the statement "God is just" becomes tautological:

"God is just" = "God does what He wants, and what He wants is called just."

That's not a moral or rational statement—it's a semantic loop.

- 2. Or Is God's Standard Measurable by Intelligible Criteria Like Proportionality?

If you say "yes," then claims like:

- ✓ Three days of suffering = infinite conscious torment

...must be demonstrated, not just asserted.

The moment you appeal to justice in any meaningful sense, you're invoking principles that can be examined, challenged, or defended. If you retreat to "God says so," you've removed the possibility of critique—and also of understanding.

- 3. Final Thought

I'm not denying that Christianity makes strong claims.

What I'm asking is whether those claims are:

- ✓ internally coherent,

- ✓ epistemically justified,

- ✓ and logically defensible.

If your only answer is:

"God created everything so whatever He says is the standard,"

...then we're no longer discussing justice—we're discussing power.

And "might makes right" is a philosophy most believers rightly reject when applied elsewhere.

So again: Is divine justice just because God says it is—or because it actually conforms to standards we can recognize as fair?

If it's only the former, the term "justice" loses its explanatory power.

- 12h

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- Reply

**Joshua Steindl**

**Phil Stilwell** I think the difference between your viewpoint and ours comes down to foundation. We are saying that God is the foundation and sets the standard. You're telling us that no he doesn't but then where is your foundation/standard? What is your view around who sets the standard? Is your standard based around fallible beings? Because ultimately there is someone who decides these standards.

- 10h
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- Reply

**Wayne Clarke**

**Phil Stilwell** now you are trying to push your own understanding into God's justice. So by just, it means God does what he wants? Nonsense

- 9h
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- Reply

**Wayne Clarke**

**Phil Stilwell** is God's word divinely inspired truth , yes or no?

- 9h
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- Reply

**Phil Stilwell**

**Wayne Clarke** No. I definitely don't think the Creator of the universe would incorporate illogic into his plan for humanity, the illogic you see in various notions of redemption.

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**Roberta Jackson**

If you read the Genesis account again, I think you see that the punishment was death.

- 1d
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- [Reply](#)

**Phil Stilwell**

Roberta Jackson. Then every human who has died is eligible for an immediate resurrection to heaven by a loving God. Right?

- 23h

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- [Reply](#)

**Roberta Jackson**

**Phil Stilwell** Why do you say that? Man wasn't created as an immortal being. He was kept alive within the confines of the Garden of Eden by the Tree of Life. Once God levied the punishment of death for sin, He removed Adam and Eve from the garden, and put a cherubim at the gate to guard re-entry. See Genesis 3:22-24. It was death that came to the world through sin. Romans 5:12.

- 23h

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- [Reply](#)

**Phil Stilwell**

**Roberta Jackson** That's a helpful clarification, and I'm glad you brought Genesis and Romans into the discussion. But let's take your statement seriously and follow the implications to see where the tension lies.

☉ If the penalty for sin is simply physical death, and not eternal conscious torment (ECT), then several things follow:

✓ Jesus' physical death could indeed match the penalty—if it were only physical death.

✓ But most Christian theology, especially those holding to Penal Substitutionary Atonement, insists the penalty is eternal separation from God, i.e., eternal death or hell.

► If physical death is all that was required to pay for sin, then every human being pays that same penalty—and thus should be eligible for redemption by simply dying.

But that's not the Christian doctrine, is it?

☉ The contradiction emerges here:

You can't simultaneously claim:

"The penalty for sin is just death" (as per Genesis and Romans),

and

"The penalty Jesus paid was unique and salvific."

✓ Because if death is all that's needed, then we all pay it—rendering Jesus' death redundant.

✓ If instead the penalty is eternal separation, then Jesus did not pay it—he came back after three days.

So which is it?

✓ If physical death is the price, we're all already paying it.

✓ If eternal death is the price, Jesus didn't pay it.

Unless "substitution" is just symbolic, the logic remains broken.

That's not an attack on Scripture—it's an attempt to take Scripture's claims seriously enough to ask whether they cohere when combined into doctrine.

- 15h

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- [Reply](#)

**Roberta Jackson**

**Phil Stilwell** "✓ But most Christian theology, especially those holding to Penal Substitutionary Atonement, insists the penalty is eternal separation from God, i.e., eternal death or hell."

If the Bible actually says that, I'm all in. Do you know where that is stated? A lot of Christians get a lot of things wrong.

\*\*\*

"But that's not the Christian doctrine, is it?"

Nor should it be, since it isn't in the Bible as far as I can tell.

\*\*\*

"So which is it?"

✓ If physical death is the price, we're all already paying it.

✓ If eternal death is the price, Jesus didn't pay it."

You continue to assume that death paid the price of sin. While that may or may not be technically correct because Jesus' death was a necessary component of salvation, it actually RECONCILED THE COSMOS BACK TO GOD, and made salvation a possibility for all.

One isn't saved by believing that Jesus died on the cross. Satan and his demons themselves believe that. They were the ones who precipitated it.

What does the Bible actually say "closes the deal?"



1 Corinthians 15:1 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;

2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

4. And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

☐

1 Cor. 15:14 And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.

Romans 5:10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

1 Thess. 4:14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

- 1h
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- Reply
- Edited

### Phil Stilwell

**Roberta Jackson** Thank you for your thoughtful reply and the verses you've provided. It's clear you're not approaching this casually, and I genuinely appreciate the nuance you're offering. Let me respond carefully to both your clarifications and the underlying theological structure you're proposing.

#### ● You're distinguishing reconciliation from salvation

That's important. You said:

"Jesus' death... actually reconciled the cosmos back to God and made salvation a possibility for all."

That aligns more closely with Corporate Reconciliation models (cf. Romans 5:10 and Colossians 1:20), not strict Penal Substitutionary Atonement (PSA). In that case, we're no longer dealing with Jesus "paying" a precise legal penalty, but with Jesus' death being a cosmic catalyzing event that opens the door to salvation.

✓ That's a consistent framework—and one that avoids some of the proportionality problems PSA introduces.

✓ However, it then becomes fair to ask: What closes the door for those who aren't saved?

Because if the only penalty ever mentioned was physical death, and that death was already faced by all, then why additional separation from God?

#### ● Let's examine your scriptural model

You're absolutely right that 1 Corinthians 15 places salvific emphasis on the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.

But this returns us to the issue of coherence:

"If death is the penalty, and Jesus died, that matches."

✓ Then, again, why are those who die not automatically reconciled?

"If resurrection is the key component..."

✓ Then Jesus did not pay the full penalty others receive (eternal death), but escaped it.

"If reconciliation opens the door but doesn't guarantee salvation..."

✓ Then the question becomes what justice mechanism determines who enters and who doesn't. Is it belief? Works? Election?

If belief alone saves, then:

✓ A person who commits genocide but believes on their deathbed is reconciled.

✓ A kind-hearted atheist who dies with integrity but not belief is excluded.

If that's the model, it's worth asking whether justice is served, or merely loyalty rewarded.

#### ● About Eternal Separation

You asked:

"If the Bible actually says [the penalty is eternal separation], I'm all in. Do you know where that is stated?"

Good question. Here are verses often cited in support of ECT:

Matthew 25:46 – "These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

2 Thessalonians 1:9 – "They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord."

Revelation 14:11 – "The smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever..."

But even among believers, these are debated. Some hold to Annihilationism, others to Universal Reconciliation, and some to Traditional ECT.

✓ So you're right: there's no universal Christian consensus here, and your stance has scriptural support as well.

#### ● Summary

✓ I respect your move away from PSA, which suffers severe logical issues of proportionality.

✓ Your model emphasizes reconciliation as a cosmic shift—not a transaction—which is theologically richer and far less incoherent.

✓ The remaining challenge is this:

If everyone dies, and death is the penalty, what separates the “saved” from the “unsaved” other than belief?

If belief is the threshold, then the mechanism of justice has shifted entirely from substitution to allegiance, and we ought to be honest about that.

Thanks again for the respectful dialogue. You’re making serious scriptural claims and not just repeating slogans—which makes this conversation worthwhile.

- 11m
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- Reply

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**Dougyarb Duane**

Your question has no merit. GOD declared the end at the beginning. Those who are eternally damned were not written in the book of life before the foundation of the world and they will be the only ones cast into the lake of fire. There's no price to be paid for them.

- 1d
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- Reply

**Phil Stilwell**

**Dougyarb Duane** If Allah were to say, "Believe in my spherical cube of gold for salvation", would you? Could you? I can't believe in a logically incoherent God who promotes a logically incoherent Gospel.

- 1d
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- Reply

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**Bryant Coots**

It is very interesting to debate with AI. In the final analysis, there comes a crux of faith. Still, the one who created logic and the unity of all things subjects himself to the laws he created.

The Father made him to be sin for us, and who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him!

- 22h
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- Reply

**Phil Stilwell**

**Bryant Coots** You're absolutely right that this debate often lands on the tension between logic and faith. But if, as you say, "God subjects Himself to the laws He created," then those laws—especially the laws of justice and reason—remain the standard by which doctrines like Penal Substitution must be measured.

Let me offer a healthcare analogy.

● Imagine a hospital ER. I don't think this will be alien to you. A patient arrives with massive internal bleeding and is told that instead of surgery, the doctor will donate three drops of his own blood as a substitution—because the doctor is more "valuable" than the patient.

✓ Now imagine that the hospital declares, "This is sufficient. Because the doctor is infinitely worthy, his three drops equal the patient's full blood loss."

That may sound emotionally compelling, but it doesn't logically satisfy the medical need. The math doesn't work. And if we claim this is a system of just medicine, then proportionality still matters.

● Likewise, if the penalty for sin is eternal death, and Jesus suffers three days of death, then calling that an equal substitution only works if we abandon any standard of proportionality.

► If Jesus' worthiness makes up the difference, then we've replaced justice with divine valuation. That's no longer penal substitution—it's theological exception.

✓ If God, as you say, "subjects Himself to the laws He created," then His justice should not require belief despite contradiction, but should withstand the kind of logical coherence we apply everywhere else—even in an ER.

So I pose this gently:

► If this doctrine demands faith because it defies logic, let's stop calling it a rational expression of divine justice.

► But if it claims to be just in a meaningful, intelligible sense, then it must be open to scrutiny—just like any life-or-death decision in medicine.

- 15h
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- Reply

**Bryant Coots**

**Phil Stilwell** sounds good. I'm all about open, honest inquiry. I don't think God or faith in Him is threatened by that at all. Our understanding of doctrine, perhaps. Iron sharpens iron!

- 4h
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- Reply

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**Wayne Clarke**

A 3 day death isn't even correct, it doesn't say he died for 3 days, it says on the 3rd day he will rise.

So your whole misguided post is built upon a presupposition.

You fail to understand completely, and you also deny the efficacy of the sacrifice, which is from the pit.

Satan always attacks the resurrection, the atonement and the divinity of Jesus, and you wear it well.

- 21h
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- Reply
- Edited

**Phil Stilwell**

**Wayne Clarke** I appreciate your engagement, but your reply again dodges the core issue by focusing on duration semantics rather than addressing the conceptual critique.

● 1. "Not a 3-Day Death" — Then What Was It?

You're right to clarify: the text says Jesus would rise on the third day, not that he was dead for three full days. But this doesn't resolve anything—it strengthens the objection.

If the time between death and resurrection is even shorter than 72 hours, the critique becomes more acute:

How does less than three days of death—preceded by a few hours of agony—substitute for the eternal conscious torment allegedly due to billions?

If duration is irrelevant, then say so plainly—but then also admit that the time spent dead has no theological necessity, making the resurrection timetable arbitrary.

● 2. The Real Issue Isn't the Length—It's the Logic

Whether you claim Jesus was dead for:

✓ 3 hours,

✓ 36 hours, or

✓ 72 hours,

the logical critique remains:

A finite period of suffering—regardless of who suffers it—does not obviously satisfy the penalty of eternal conscious separation unless you appeal to mechanisms not yet explained.

And that's the issue: you assert efficacy without explaining it.

● 3. "You Deny the Efficacy of the Sacrifice"

I deny unjustified claims of efficacy, yes.

You're saying: "It works because God says so."

But that isn't an argument—it's an assertion. If Muslims, Hindus, or Mormons said the same ("Our doctrine works because God said so"), you would reject that logic. You'd demand explanation.

So when Christians use divine fiat to bypass rational critique, it's not persuasive—it's special pleading.

● 4. "You Wear the Work of Satan Well"

Labeling dissent as satanic may rally believers emotionally, but it avoids reasoned discourse. It's an evasion tactic:

✓ It doesn't answer the logical concern.

✓ It discredits critique by smearing the questioner.

✓ It protects the doctrine by quarantining it from scrutiny.

But truth doesn't fear analysis. It invites it.

You say I "fail to understand." Then show me.

✓ Explain how finite suffering satisfies infinite punishment.

✓ Show how divine status converts a brief death into eternal substitution.

✓ Give a mechanism—not a metaphor—for how this works.

If you can't—or won't—then acknowledge that you are accepting a mystery, not offering a coherent explanation.

Faith may thrive on mystery.

But rational belief demands more.

- 12h
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- Reply

**Wayne Clarke**

**Phil Stilwell** is God's word divinely inspired truth? Yes or no?

- 10h
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- Reply

**Phil Stilwell**

**Wayne Clarke** It certainly doesn't look like it. No actual creator of the universe would logically blunder in providing the notion of redemption specified in the Bible.

- 7m
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- Reply

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### Travis Ackley

I've often wondered about a similar question - how finite sin could require infinite punishment. To answer that question and yours we must understand that the value and position of both the sinner and the One sinned against are key.

Slap a man, you might get jail time. Slap a child, woman, or elderly person—worse. Slap a king or dictator, you might be executed. So how much more serious is sin against the holy Creator of the universe?

Now, as for how three days of death can pay for eternal damnation—here's how Christians understand it:

1. The one who died is of infinite worth – Jesus is fully God in the flesh (Colossians 2:9).
2. His sacrifice was voluntary, substitutionary, and sufficient – He gave His life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45), the righteous for the unrighteous (1 Peter 3:18), and that one offering is enough forever (Hebrews 10:14).
3. God accepted the payment – That's why He raised Jesus from the dead (Romans 4:25; Acts 2:24).
4. Justice isn't about time served, but about who served it – Jesus said "It is finished" on the cross (John 19:30), and through Him, God showed perfect justice and grace (Romans 3:25–26).

Eternal value doesn't require eternal time—because the worth of the Savior is infinite.

- 15h
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- Reply
- Edited

### Phil Stilwell

**Travis Ackley** Your response reflects one of the more well-organized defenses of penal substitution, and it gives us a structured point of engagement. Let's walk through it and assess each claim with the goal of evaluating whether it addresses the proportional coherence at issue.

- 1. "Sin is more serious because of who it's against."

Your analogy:

Slap a man = minor. Slap a king = death. Slap God = infinite consequence.

That's rhetorically compelling—but not logically equivalent. In human justice, the variable consequences aren't based solely on the worth of the offended party, but also on:

- ✓ Social context,
- ✓ Harm caused,
- ✓ Power imbalance,
- ✓ Reciprocity and reparability.

In your analogy, the "slap" remains the same. What changes is the political consequence, not the intrinsic moral gravity.

Applying this to divine justice risks:

Equating offense to majesty with infinite criminality,  
Detaching justice from proportional harm, and  
Justifying infinite punishment for finite actions, which collapses into punitive absolutism.

Put plainly:

If slapping God merits infinite punishment, then "justice" has become severity without scale.

- 2. "Jesus is of infinite worth."

This is the cornerstone of your explanation, and it's precisely where the critique applies.

Let's accept for the moment that Jesus is of "infinite worth." The question becomes:

Does who dies override what is deserved?

If justice requires eternal conscious torment as the penalty for sin, then either:

That duration is necessary for justice, or

Duration doesn't matter at all.

If the latter, then why three days?

✓ Why not three hours?

✓ Why not a symbolic paper cut?

✓ Why not a wink from an infinite being?

As I noted elsewhere:

If infinite value can override all proportional criteria, then justice becomes untethered from both time and equivalence.

That's not coherent justice—that's theological fiat.

● 3. "God accepted the payment—therefore it's sufficient."

Yes, that's what the text says. But the question isn't whether Scripture claims it was accepted. The question is:

Is it rationally sufficient by the logic of substitutionary justice?

You can't prove coherence by citation.

That's like saying:

"The debt is paid because the lender tore up the IOU."

It may be declared settled. But if we're assessing whether it was justly settled—by standards of equivalence and proportionality—we need more than a divine signature.

● 4. "Justice isn't about time—it's about who served it."

This is the most theologically elegant part of your reply. But again, it pushes the same mystery button:

An infinite being can compress infinite punishment into finite time.

But is that coherent? Here's why that fails:

✓ If duration doesn't matter, then any moment of suffering would suffice.

✓ If it does matter, then three days can't be enough for what is called an eternal penalty.

✓ And if it's not the suffering itself but the identity of the sufferer that matters, then what is the substitution for?

Substitutionary logic requires:

The substitute to bear the punishment equivalent to the original debt.

If it's merely about Jesus being "worthy," then this isn't substitution—it's replacement by divine status.

You're not dodging the critique, Travis—you're engaging it seriously, and I respect that. But let's not conflate theological affirmation with logical explanation. You wrote:

"Eternal value doesn't require eternal time."

But justice—if it is to mean anything beyond decree—requires commensurate payment.

Otherwise, it's not justice.

It's narrative resolution declared by fiat.

And that may work inside a closed theological system,

—but for those of us who seek coherence before assent, it's not enough.

- 12h
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- Reply

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### Wayne Clarke

So was one goat enough to cover the sins of a nation?

How many do you think should have been slaughtered in order to justify the nations sins?

- 14h
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- Reply
- Edited

### Phil Stilwell

**Wayne Clarke** Are you being serious here? You surely know that the Bible explicitly states that "it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins" (Hebrews 10:4). That's not a fringe interpretation—it's the central theological pivot the New Testament uses to shift from Old Covenant sacrifice to Christ's death.

So when you ask:

"Was one goat enough to cover the sins of a nation?"

...the answer—by the Bible's own admission—is no. Not one goat, not a thousand goats, not a million. The whole Levitical system was, according to Hebrews, a shadow, a temporary symbol, not an actual moral transaction. Your question presupposes the very view Hebrews is written to correct.

Which makes your follow-up...

"How many do you think should have been slaughtered in order to justify the nation's sins?"

...deeply ironic, because it misunderstands the entire thrust of Christian theology as it attempts to escape the logic of sin-debt as blood-payment. The New Testament argues that animal sacrifices were never efficacious in themselves. They were placeholders—rituals meant to foreshadow something else.

So to ask how many goats would be enough is like asking how many shadows you need before you get a substance.

If you believe Jesus' sacrifice was a qualitative shift from this symbolic system, then the debate is not how many goats are needed, but whether the Jesus-event satisfies justice in a way that those rituals never could. And that's where the logical problems emerge:

✓ If finite animals weren't enough, how is a finite-duration event—even by an "infinite" person—sufficient for infinite punishment?

✓ If the answer is "because God said so," then we're no longer dealing with justice, but with decree masked as justice.

So yes, Wayne—I have to ask:

Are you sincerely proposing a goat-counting model of moral justice, even while citing a book that directly rejects that very idea?

- 12h
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- Reply

**Wayne Clarke**

**Phil Stilwell**

I never said 'take away' sins, I said cover sins. So try again.

Was one goats blood enough to cover a nations sins every year?

Yes or no?

Again, is the word of God divinely inspired and the truth?

Yes or no?

- 9h
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- Reply
- Edited

**Phil Stilwell**

**Wayne Clarke** It certainly doesn't look like it. No actual creator of the universe would logically blunder in providing the notion of redemption specified in the Bible.

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✓ Invented Dynamics of Redemption

## ✓ Invented Dynamics of Redemption

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### Zachary Reitsma

It wasn't the three days in death that paid for sins. It was the death sacrifice. It could have been 1,000,000 days or 1 day. The number of days is irrelevant for the payment of sins. The only thing that is relevant is the sacrifice itself.

- 13h
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- Reply

### Phil Stilwell

**Zachary Reitsma** I appreciate the clarification—you're proposing that duration is irrelevant and that the act of sacrificial death itself is what satisfies justice. That's a common move, but let's examine what it actually commits you to.

● 1. If duration is irrelevant, then why any duration at all?

You claim:

"It could have been 1,000,000 days or 1 day... The number of days is irrelevant."

But this raises immediate questions:

✓ Why three days then?

✓ Why any temporal delay between death and resurrection?

If the death alone is sufficient, then any added duration is either (a) superfluous, or (b) symbolic—in which case, none of it contributes to the justice mechanism. But if that's true, then we're no longer talking about substitutionary justice, but about ritual theater. And if Jesus' time in death is irrelevant, then...

→ Why not die and resurrect instantly?

→ Why not simply declare humanity forgiven?

● 2. "The sacrifice itself" is not an explanation—it's a deferral

You say:

"The only thing that is relevant is the sacrifice itself."

But what does that mean? What made this death qualitatively different from the death of any other innocent?

✓ Was it the physical pain? Others have suffered more prolonged agony.

✓ Was it the innocence? Others have died unjustly.

✓ Was it the divinity? Then it wasn't a true human substitute.

✓ Was it symbolic? Then it wasn't justice—just storytelling.

So unless you can provide a mechanism for how the sacrifice works—why and how it satisfies an eternal debt—it's not an explanation. It's a placeholder.

● 3. You've moved the goalposts

The original critique asked how a finite event (3-day death) pays for an infinite punishment (eternal hell). You've responded by saying "it wasn't about the three days"—which dodges the issue but does not resolve it. Even a momentary death is still a finite event. If the punishment for sin is infinite in duration, then no finite sacrifice, however intense, explains that payment unless you abandon proportionality.

Which brings us back to this:

If there is no requirement of proportionality, then "justice" means whatever God wants it to mean.

And if that's the case, then the word justice has no intelligible content outside of divine fiat.

You're not resolving the logical concern—you're redefining the system to avoid it. That's fine if you're open about it. But let's not pretend that penal substitution is coherently just in any way recognizable to human reason.

You're saying:

✓ Time doesn't matter.

✓ Proportionality doesn't matter.

✓ Mechanism doesn't matter.

✓ God's declaration is sufficient.

That's not justice. That's dogma declared immune to examination. And some of us are not wired to nod along with that.

- 12h
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#### Adam Bearly

If God has even one more time dimension than us (which he is thought to have many more) then Jesus can spend an eternity in hell for each sinner by starting a new infinite timeline perpendicular to ours whenever an individual accepts him, where he suffers in eternity for that person.

- 13h
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- Reply

#### Phil Stilwell

**Adam Bearly** That's a creative metaphysical proposal—and I genuinely appreciate the intellectual effort—but let's take it seriously for a moment and test it for coherence.

##### ☉ 1. The "Extra Time Dimension" Theory Adds Complexity Without Evidence

You're suggesting that:

God, having extra temporal dimensions, can instantiate infinite timelines where Jesus suffers eternally for each believer.

This is purely speculative metaphysics:

✓ It's not grounded in Scripture.

✓ It's not grounded in physics.

✓ And it's not found in any mainstream systematic theology.

By invoking an infinite array of orthogonal timelines, you're multiplying unseen entities (infinite hell-loops) to resolve a doctrinal problem. That violates Occam's Razor and epistemic economy.

##### ☉ 2. This View Undermines the Traditional Atonement Model

You're now proposing a model where:

✓ Jesus doesn't just die once for all (Hebrews 10:10),

✓ but dies eternally and repeatedly in countless personal hells.

That completely reshapes substitutionary atonement:

→ It's no longer "one sacrifice for sin"

→ It's infinite personal eternities of torment

So if this is true:

✓ Why wasn't it taught in Scripture?

✓ Why did early Christians celebrate a finished work ("It is finished") rather than a fractally repeating cosmic suffering?

##### ☉ 3. This Theory Doesn't Solve the Justice Problem—It Buries It in Hyperspace

Your proposal appears to rescue the problem of finite suffering for infinite sin by redefining the nature of the suffering as eternal after all—but in unobservable timelines.

However, this raises new problems:

✓ If Jesus suffers eternally in millions of hidden dimensions, why isn't that part of the gospel message?

✓ Why is this never stated in the New Testament?

✓ Why would a loving God require infinite copies of himself to be eternally tormented in cosmic silence?

This becomes less a solution and more a metaphysical horror film.

##### ☉ 4. The Simplicity of the Original Objection Still Stands

The critique isn't complicated:

If humans deserve eternal conscious torment, and Jesus' death is said to substitute for that, then the substitution must be proportionate.

→ If it isn't infinite, it isn't proportionate.

→ If it is infinite, then hiding it in extra-dimensional timelines is a theological sleight of hand.

And if your model requires hidden infinities of divine suffering to make atonement coherent, then you've conceded the original point:

The traditional three-day sacrifice doesn't suffice.

Your theory is novel, imaginative, and cosmically generous—but that's precisely the problem:

✓ It's not grounded in revealed doctrine.

✓ It's not grounded in observable reality.

✓ And it silently rewrites Christianity in an effort to save it from contradiction.

What you're offering is science fiction with theological window dressing.

And while that may be fascinating to explore, it's not an answer grounded in the Christian gospel as historically taught.

If such metaphysical gymnastics are required to make the atonement seem coherent...

...then maybe it's time to ask whether the original doctrine holds up at all.

- 11h
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- Reply

**Adam Bearly**

**Phil Stilwell** cool thanks AI, I mean Phil... 🤔

- 5h
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- Reply

**Phil Stilwell**

**Adam Bearly** Happens all the time. My words get mistaken for AI, and AI's for mine.

But note: logic doesn't care about the source. Whether it's typed by carbon or silicon, an argument stands or falls on coherence—not origin.

If you think the content is flawed, engage the structure.

Otherwise, the laughter just sounds like a substitute for substance. 😊

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**Wayne Clarke**

So does **Phil Stilwell** sieve that the bible is the inspired word of God, and the truth?

Yes or no Phil?

- 9h
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- Reply

**Phil Stilwell**

**Wayne Clarke** It certainly doesn't look like it. No actual creator of the universe would logically blunder in providing the notion of redemption specified in the Bible.

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✓ An AI Atonement Assessment

## ✓ An AI Atonement Assessment

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#### Fred Abbot

One day of the eating of the fruit in Eden by the first Adam was enough to damn the whole world.

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#### Carolyn Szalkowski Brewster

How long Jesus was dead has nothing to do with paying the penalty. It was merely evidence for the people of the time that he actually had died.

It was their belief that you couldn't be certain of "death" unless the body remained dead for 3 days. This is the very reason Jesus postponed his visit to Lazarus.

Our debt was paid through the death and Resurrection. 3 days was just verification of the death. If he had risen any sooner, the Resurrection would have been considered more a revival of life.

Ps. Instead of using your time and "logic" on these ludicrous notions, you might want to consider doing some basic research.

- 6h
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- Reply
- Edited

#### Wayne Clarke

Carolyn Szalkowski Brewster well sais and correct. He does even believe the bible is the truth, don't waste you time 🙏

- 6h
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- Reply

#### Carolyn Szalkowski Brewster

#### Wayne Clarke

I gather that.

Responses are more directed to other readers.

- 6h
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- Reply

#### Phil Stilwell

Wayne Clarke That posture—"don't waste your time engaging because he doesn't already believe"—perfectly illustrates the retreat of apologetics into an echo-chamber shell.

When engagement becomes contingent on agreement, it stops being dialogue and starts being self-reinforcement.

If the Bible is true, it should withstand scrutiny. If the gospel is good news, it should remain good even in the face of critical questions. But declaring someone unworthy of dialogue merely for not already believing concedes more than you may realize: it says the message only works for those already inside.

That's not faith defending itself—that's faith insulating itself.

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### Mike Grygus

Before he died, Jesus said "It is finished". Consider that this implies the payment for sins was finished (and maybe didn't need to die except to demonstrate that he overcame death). If Jesus was simultaneously God and human, might it not take an infinite amount of punishment to kill him? That would also help explain why he died so quickly on the cross. Thus and infinite amount of punishment would suffice for the problem you're proposing.

- 28m
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- Reply

### Phil Stilwell

**Mike Grygus** That's a thoughtful attempt to reconcile the mechanics of Penal Substitutionary Atonement (PSA), but it still leaves unresolved logical tensions that deserve more than poetic suggestion.

☉ "It is finished" = punishment complete?

✓ That interpretation assumes what it needs to prove: that the punishment was in fact completed.

✓ But "finished" could refer to the fulfillment of prophecy, the completion of Jesus' mission, or even a literary echo of Psalm 22—not necessarily a claim that eternal punishment was fully absorbed in that moment.

✓ If Jesus' death was symbolic or ritual closure rather than actual equivalence, the justice claim collapses.

☉ "Infinite being = infinite suffering = just substitution"?

✓ This is a category error. Being of infinite value does not mean any suffering that being experiences automatically equals infinite punishment.

✓ If Jesus' divinity made his suffering infinitely weighty, then so would any stubbed toe or dropped hammer throughout his life.

✓ Value doesn't scale punishment duration or intensity. There's no mechanism provided in Christian theology that shows how Jesus' ontological status converts finite suffering into infinite payment.

☉ "He died quickly, therefore absorbed more punishment"?

✓ That reverses how we usually understand punishment: more intense suffering shortens life, but it doesn't expand moral equivalence.

✓ A quicker death isn't inherently greater punishment. In fact, longer suffering is usually considered more punitive.

So here's the challenge that still stands:

✓ If the penalty for sin is eternal conscious torment,

✓ and Jesus suffered for hours (not eternally),

✓ then there's a mismatch—unless you explain how infinite worth transforms finite punishment into a sufficient substitute.

That mechanism remains undefined. Without it, you're asserting—not explaining—the sufficiency of the atonement.

And asserting isn't the same as showing.