

Purpose and Understanding

We don't always have to perceive the *purpose* to *understand* and obey the command, but it usually helps.

Children often ask "Why?" when told to do something. If the question is a real request for information rather than a mere delaying tactic, and if they're actually old enough to comprehend the answer, by all means explain the reason. Otherwise, "Because I said so!" is probably the best reply.

For us adults, ***purpose*** and ***understanding*** are more closely linked. When we grasp the *purpose* for something, we *understand* it on a deeper and more complete level. For a quick and simple example, consider that when/if we know the *purpose* of God's requirements for us (*positively* "do this" or *negatively* "don't do that"), we *understand* Him more fully. Thus, "*for our good, that we may share His holiness*" from Heb.12:10 not only answers our "Why?" questions, but aids our willingness to accept His "*discipline*" and our ability to obey, cf. Heb.12:4-11. However, "Because He said so!" is sufficient even if we don't "get" His *purpose*.

But let's get back to our primary point for this article. **When we know the *purpose*, our *understanding* is improved.** So if we actually desire to *understand*, "Why?" is a great question. For instance, follow this thread and see if it helps...

- **"Why was Jesus *born*?"** The *purpose* for His entrance into the world was to enable Him to **die**, cf. John 12:27. Deity is eternal and therefore cannot die. "*Since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver those who through the fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives,*" Heb.2:14-15. Our *understanding* of the necessity of His birth (and His humanity) is greatly enhanced by comprehending its *purpose*.
- **"Why did Jesus have to *die*?"** If we perceive the *purpose* of His death by what it accomplished, then we *understand* why He had to die. So note the answer God supplies: "*For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order* (note "purpose" words!) **that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit,**" 1Pet.3:18. The righteousness of God required *death* for *sin*, cf. Gen.2:17; Rom.3:23. With no sins of His own, Jesus' death could propitiate (pay the required price of redemption) for our sins, cf. 2Cor.5:21 and Rom.3:21-26.
- **"Why was Jesus *resurrected*?"** To *understand* the "why?" look to the *purposed accomplishments* of Jesus' *resurrection*: a) It proved Him to be exactly who He claimed to be- the *Son of God*, Rom.1:4; b) It proved that ALL that He said was true, John 2:19-22; and, c) To allow for and prove that ALL will be resurrected, 1Cor.15:16-22; Rom.6:5,8ff.
- **"Why did Jesus *ascend back to heaven*?"** *Understanding* is again linked to *purpose*. What did His ascension *accomplish*? It *returned Him to from whence He came*- the Father's *right hand*, where He could (and does!) *rule*

and *reign* over His *kingdom* until the *end of time*, Mark 14:62; 1Cor.15:25; Eph.1:20b-23. His ascension allowed Him to “*prepare a place*” for those that are/become His, John 14:1ff; and also allows Him to *mediate* (1Tim.2:5) and *intercede* before God for them, Rom.8:34; Heb.7:25.

- “**Why will Jesus come again?**” To *claim, gather, and take to God* those who belong to Him (1Thess.4:16-17a) that they may “*always be with the Lord*,” 1Thess.4:17b.

Now, let’s put all of this together in a simpler way: Jesus was *born to die, died to resurrect; resurrected to ascend; and ascended to return*; and all of this was so that through Him, **we could be returned** (our *spirits*) **to God** (Jas.4:5) **dwell with Him for eternity**, 1Tim.2:4; John 3:17.

When we grasp the ultimate **purpose** of and through these things, we begin to **understand God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and OURSELVES**- at least our *worth* and *value* to God, and therefore how to live according to *His* purposes rather than our own, and “Why?” we should do so.

Thanks for sticking with me through this feeble attempt to provide some clarity and comprehension. I hope I haven’t made things worse rather than better for you in these regards- but if I have, please forgive and I’ll try to do better next time, Lord willing! (Philip C. Strong; Viking Drive Church of Christ; 3791 Viking Drive, Bossier City, LA; online at vikingdrivechurchofchrist.com; email to mrpcstrong@hotmail.com)