**Was Jesus’ Death Only Vicarious In Appearance?**

Galatians 3:13 plainly says Jesus was “made a curse for us.” But Maurice Barnett said about the verse “In fact, Jesus was not cursed but it **appeared** to others that He was” (The Substitution Theory). In response I suggest that if we are allowed to add “appeared” to any verse that contradicts our human theory, we can make the Bible say anything we want it to.

**Similar Statements**

Consider some analogous quotes on this same topic:

* “In the psalm (22:1), the … phrase does not intend to express the idea that God has literally and actually forsaken anyone. The forsaking is in **appearance**, not in reality.” - Doy Moyer (Was Jesus Literally Forsaken?, The Auburn Beacon, 2010)
* “God had not forsaken Jesus; it just **appeared** that way.” - Maurice Barnett (Did Jesus Die Spiritually?)
* “II Corinthians 5:21 … is a case of … what is not actually true, but what **appears** to be true …(cf. Matt. 27:39-46)” – Gary Eubanks (11-7-2020 email)

**Parallels We Agree Are False**

These “appearance only” quotes on the Substitutionary Death Of Christ are just like the following quote on another topic - “Christ did not actually partake of humanity - He only ‘**seemed to**.’” (docetism - “an early Christian doctrine that the sufferings of Christ were apparent …” - dictionary.com). The Barnett and Moyer quotes also sound a lot like “Biology is the study of complicated things that give the **appearance** of having been designed for a purpose.” (Richard Dawkins, “Pope Of Evolution,” The Blind Watchmaker, p.1). The Muslims say Jesus only appeared to die. See the similarity to the Barnett quotes above? Wouldn’t it be absurd to take the Muslim position on Jesus’ death simply because we don’t want to agree with the Calvinists that Jesus did actually die? Baptist Fred Vacaro argued something similar against me in a 1992 oral debate – “Acts 22:16 teaches it appears our sins are washed away in baptism.” How about this one you’ve probably heard before? – “New Testament demon possession wasn’t real. Certain maladies only appeared to be demon possession before modern medicine could explain them.” Do you see the parallels to our brethren’s statements?

**True – Jesus’ Vicarious Death Can’t Be Proven If “Appear” Is Added To The Proof Texts**

The detractors are right - One can never prove a position if “appear” is added to the verses that state the position – whatever that position is. Someone might also argue on this issue:

* Isaiah 53:6c our iniquities **appear** to have been laid on Jesus
* John 11:48-52 it only **appeared** Jesus died in our place

**How Did They Know It Was Only In Appearance?**

Ask yourself this question. How did Barnett and company know Jesus appeared to be cursed or appeared to be forsaken? The Bible doesn’t use any word synonymous with “appear” in those texts, does it? Is it because our texts actually say Jesus was cursed and forsaken, but that contradicts their position, and so they conclude Jesus must have been cursed or forsaken only in appearance? In other words, the only verses Barnett has to prove Jesus appeared to be cursed or forsaken are verses that say Jesus actually was! And did they add the idea of “appeared to” because the verses (as read) don’t fit their preconceived theory? Who knows why they felt the need to add to the Biblical texts. I guess the Bible isn’t supposed to tell us what is actually so; instead it just tells us what appears to be so?

**Conclusion**

In short we should accept that Jesus was cursed because Galatians 3:13 says He was, and we should accept that Jesus was forsaken by the Father on the cross because Matthew 27:46 says He was. It is that simple. What do we have to gain by struggling so hard to get around those plainly inspired facts?