

# “Why Wouldn’t God Let Me Commit Suicide?”

Hi Sue,

I just read your article [Do People Who Commit Suicide Go to Hell?](#). I believe everything you say to be true and biblical...and then I get stuck.

I have bi-polar depression, I thank God that I am now stable, but last year there were many times when I seriously considered suicide. I believe in God, His grace, and Christ’s death for all sinners, and I believe, like Romans 8 says that we can never be separated from Him – but my one question is, “Why am I still here? Wouldn’t it have been/be much easier to die and be with Him in His glory for eternity?” I mean I’m not sure that the suffering is worth it...

I believe God kept me from suicide...but I still wonder if it’s so easy to be with Him (in death) then where’s the catch?

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Bless your heart. I have friends who are bipolar and we have gone through some DEEP depression with our son over this.

What’s the catch, you ask?

Well, to make what’s probably a weak analogy, are you familiar with the NBA draft that has signed young basketball players just out of high school? Oh wait, I see you are in another country. Oh well—I bet you can appreciate it anyway. . . There is a promise of money and fame and glory for these young athletes, so why “waste” their time in college when they could be making big bucks playing basketball? Sounds good—only, they are too young to appreciate the maturing process that happens in college. So often, they crash and burn once they turn

professional because they're not ready. The trials of being a college student, it turns out, are deeply beneficial for maturity and character development; they prepare students for life as professional athletes.

Our life on earth isn't a holding tank or a detention center where we impatiently wait out our time until we're given a "green light" to die and go to heaven. (I know, it's easy to think of it this way, particularly for sensitive people who really hate living in a fallen world.) God's purpose in leaving us on earth once we are saved is to grow holiness and maturity and strength in us, a process that would be short-circuited by an early death. It would mean we enter heaven in a state of "arrested development," so to speak. Since the scriptures speak of being given power, authority and responsibilities in heaven, the only place and time we have to develop our stewardship is here on earth.

I understand your feelings of not being sure if the suffering is worth it, but that's because of not having an adequate view of God and of heaven and of your future, not to mention not understanding the value of suffering. (If I may be so bold as to recommend my own article on that subject. . . it's the best thing I've ever written: ["The Value of Suffering."](#))

Yes, it would be a lot easier to be in heaven than to continue to live in a fallen world and a fallen body on earth, but God isn't into "easy," God is passionately committed to fashioning us into the image of His Son. I'm afraid there are no shortcuts, but you can be assured that every difficult day you endure, every trial and every heartache, is being used to achieve that "weight of glory" in you (2 Cor. 4:17). God never wastes suffering, not a scrap of it. He redeems all of it for His glory and our blessing. Every single tear you have shed is so precious to your heavenly Father that He has them stored in a heavenly bottle. He hasn't turned away or forgotten you.

\_\_\_\_\_, I pray you will know His comfort and peace like a warm

blanket enveloping your soul.

Sue Bohlin

Probe Ministries

*(Follow-up e-mail from Sue)*

I have continued to think about your question and my answer, and the Lord put it on my heart to send you a P.S.

I have a young friend (early 20's) who attempted suicide several years ago but survived. She couldn't understand why God didn't just take her to heaven, either. Why wouldn't He honor her (seemingly) reasonable request to be with Him in glory?

Well, not too long after her suicide attempt she met a wonderful man, got married, and just had a precious little baby. On both her wedding day and then especially when she first held her newborn infant in her arms, she was overwhelmed with thanksgiving that God DIDN'T take her home to be with Him when she wanted it. She realized that God still had blessings to lavish on her that couldn't come in heaven. As a cystic fibrosis patient, she understands that she also has certain trials and pain ahead of her, but the joy far outshines the darkness.

This brings up one of answers to the question, What is the purpose of life? –For God to bring glory to Himself by lavishing His love and grace on us. All of creation, including the unseen realities in the heavenlies, is given the opportunity to see evidence of God's character and heart as He pours out His blessings on the people He made in His image. And that's one of the reasons why so many people who have been tempted to kill themselves are prevented from doing so—because God still has blessings in store and we need to be HERE on earth to receive them.

Warmly,

Sue

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## **“My Prof Says Jesus Never Intended to Form a New Church”**

I am a Christian and I attend a public college. One of my professors told our class that Jesus was a Jew who never intended (desired) to form a new Church (apart from the Jewish synagogue). Is this true? What does it mean for Gentiles like me? I have always been taught that because Jesus came and died and was resurrected all people who accept Him can enter into the kingdom? I believe God exists and I believe Jesus Christ truly was the Son of God, but I want to be able to justify my beliefs.

I'm glad you're thinking about these things and not just letting them slip by or, even worse, simply accepting your professor's claims as truth just because he is a professor. I'm curious to know what subject the professor teaches.

It's obviously true that Jesus was Jewish. God formed the Jewish race through Abraham to be the people through whom He would send the Messiah, and Jesus was in the line of David, the great Jewish king.

Did Jesus intend to form a new church? Yes, but not as something totally new. It was to be, rather, the fulfillment of all that had gone before, sort of like a bulb coming to full flower. That it was linked with the past is seen in Matt.

5: 17,18 where Jesus said the Law had to be fulfilled, and in other passages in the Gospels which refer to the event of the coming of Christ as fulfilling some aspect of Old Testament teaching (8:17; 12:17ff; Mark 14:49; Luke 21:22ff), and in Heb. 1 where we read of the revelation of God to man, previously through the prophets, but now through the Son: one God revealing more of His plans by a different means. That it was new was indicated clearly by Jesus when He spoke of the Jews trying to put "old wine in new wineskins" (Matt. 9:17). In Mark 1: 27 we read where the Jews realized He brought "new teaching with authority." What was new was the fulfillment of the Law in Jesus and the revelation of salvation through faith in Him. The Law had been like a tutor teaching people about God and about our own sin and need for forgiveness. It was intended to prepare people for Christ (Gal. 3:24).

We Gentiles were always in God's mind for salvation through Christ (Matt. 12:18; cf. Isaiah 42:1). When Philip and Andrew brought a couple of Greeks to see Jesus, He said, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified." Now the word was reaching the Gentiles, too. In Romans 9:30 through chap. 10, Paul talks about the Gospel reaching Gentiles as well as Jews.

My guess is that your professor would respond to this by arguing that the New Testament was written a long time after Christ, and that its message was constructed by people who wanted to make a new religion with Jesus as its founder. The case I have presented can only be argued from Scripture, for God's plan is made known through revelation; it cannot be reasoned to philosophically (although once known it can be understood, perhaps, a little more thoroughly and clearly by reasoning). So if the professor denies the validity of the New Testament as the revealed Word of God, another argument must be made for that.

Here are links for a few articles on our Web site that will provide some help with that issue:

- [Are the Biblical Documents Reliable?](#)
- [Authority of the Bible](#)
- [The Christian Canon](#)

Thanks again for writing. I hope this helps.

Rick Wade

Probe Ministries

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## **“What is the New Covenant?”**

### **What is the New Covenant?**

The primary Old Testament passage pertaining to the New Covenant is Jeremiah 31:31-34. In this wonderful passage God promises to make a New Covenant with His people (v. 31), a covenant unlike the Mosaic covenant (v. 32). Under this New Covenant, God promises to write His laws on the hearts of His people (v. 33), to have intimate communion with them (vv. 33-34), and to forgive their sins (v. 34).

This New Covenant was inaugurated in the sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross. On the night of His betrayal and arrest, Jesus celebrated the Passover with His disciples. During the course of this meal He told them, “This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood” (Luke 22:20).

In the New Testament, the book of Hebrews has a great deal to say about this New Covenant. In an article on “Covenant,” Trent Butler describes some of the special features of the New Covenant as related in the book of Hebrews :

“The emphasis is on Jesus, the perfect High Priest, providing a new, better, superior covenant (Heb. 7:22; 8:6). Jesus

represented the fulfillment of Jeremiah's new covenant promise (Heb. 8:8, 10; 10:16). Jesus was the perfect covenant Mediator (Heb. 9:15), providing an eternal inheritance in a way the old covenant could not (compare 12:24). Jesus' death on the cross satisfied the requirement that all covenants be established by blood (Heb. 9:18, 20) just as was the first covenant (Ex. 24:8). Christ's blood established an everlasting covenant (Heb. 13:20)" (*Holman Bible Dictionary*, gen. ed. Trent C. Butler (Tennessee: Holman Bible Publishers, 1991), 312).

Michael Gleghorn

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## **"Why Is There a Hell?"**

**I was in a discussion about heaven and hell. My agnostic friend looks at free will and states that if God truly loves all humans unconditionally, then that kind of negates any concept of hell.**

**I know from a Biblical and Christian standard you can lay down the facts but is there an earthly standard/concept that can explain why there is in fact hell and heaven? Or can you not separate the two—Christianity—heaven and hell—and does the freewill factor have anything to do with it?**

I think your friend's understanding of God is skewed. I was really helped by the way C.S. Lewis explained heaven and hell. A prominent disciple of his, Peter Kreeft, wrote this on his website ([www.peterkreeft.com/topics/hell.htm](http://www.peterkreeft.com/topics/hell.htm)):

*Heaven and hell may be the very same objective place – namely God's love, experienced oppositely by opposite souls, just as the same opera or rock concert can be heavenly for you and*

*hellish for the reluctant guest at your side. The fires of hell may be made of the very love of God, experienced as torture by those who hate him: the very light of God's truth, hated and fled from in vain by those who love darkness. Imagine a man in hell—no, a ghost—endlessly chasing his own shadow, as the light of God shines endlessly behind him. If he would only turn and face the light, he would be saved. But he refuses to—forever.*

Dr. Kreeft (one of my favorite authors) also says this in the same essay:

*Hell follows from two other doctrines: heaven and free will. If there is a heaven, there can be a not-heaven. And if there is free will, we can act on it and abuse it. Those who deny hell must also deny either heaven (as does Western secularism) or free will (as does Eastern pantheism).*

You might want to check out this essay to help you think through the issue of hell.

Blessings,

Sue Bohlin  
Probe Ministries

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## **“Did the Girl Raised from the Dead Get a Second Chance for Salvation?”**

How do you explain the situation represented in Matthew

## **9:18-25, of the little girl being raised after dying?**

*While He was saying these things to them, a synagogue official came and bowed down before Him, and said, "My daughter has just died; but come and lay Your hand on her, and she will live." Jesus got up and {began} to follow him, and so did His disciples. And a woman who had been suffering from a hemorrhage for twelve years, came up behind Him and touched the fringe of His cloak; for she was saying to herself, "If I only touch His garment, I will get well." But Jesus turning and seeing her said, "Daughter, take courage; your faith has made you well." At once the woman was made well. When Jesus came into the official's house, and saw the flute-players and the crowd in noisy disorder, He said, "Leave; for the girl has not died, but is asleep." And they began laughing at Him. But when the crowd had been sent out, He entered and took her by the hand, and the girl got up.*

**My question is this: If if she was unsaved, did this girl get a second chance at salvation? If yes, how does this fit in with knowing that "it is appointed for man once to die and after this the judgment"? Secondly, if she was saved, was she allowed to share about the glory of heaven? If not saved, how could she be brought back from Hell?**

You ask some interesting and important questions, but I'm honestly not sure that either I, or anyone else, can give you any definitive answers. I will say that the doctrine of a second chance is almost always understood in the sense of a "second chance" for salvation AFTER death (sometimes even after judgment), but PRIOR to the eternal state (which is, by definition, both permanent and eternal). Thus, strictly speaking, the case of the little girl in Matthew 9 may not have any direct relevance to this doctrine. This is at least highly probable for three very good reasons:

1. Scripture nowhere clearly affirms the doctrine of a

second chance for salvation after death.

2. The little girl's death was only temporary. The Father knew all along that His Son would shortly raise her.
3. The little girl did not go before God for final judgment at this time.

The doctrine of the "intermediate state" (i.e. between death and resurrection) is debated among theologians. Most evangelicals believe that after death the immaterial part of a person goes either to a temporary place of punishment called Hades, or a temporary place of peace in the presence of the Lord called Paradise (see Luke 16:19-31; 23:43). After the resurrection and final judgment the entire person will then go to their eternal destiny (either the Lake of Fire or the new heavens and the new earth – See Revelation 20:11-21:8). Since this little girl did not enter her eternal destiny, she could not have shared about Heaven or Hell as we commonly think of them. But could she have shared about either Hades or Paradise?

The difficulty with answering such questions is twofold: 1. The Bible simply doesn't tell us whether or not the girl was saved, nor what her conscious experience (if any) was like between physical death and resuscitation. Thus, anyone trying to answer such questions will be speculating with no clear Scriptural support for this special event. 2. The case is clearly an exceptional one and thus, by definition, does not fit within the general doctrine of what happens to a person after death. Most people who die are not subsequently brought back to a natural mode of physical human existence in this world. The case is an exception, and therefore will not necessarily fit all the rules. Needless to say, the Father knew (even before the little girl died) that His Son would raise her from the dead. Therefore, the usual things which happen to a person after death need not necessarily apply in this case. The Lord had no intention that she remain dead at that time! And finally, after restoring the little girl to

life, we simply aren't told whether she was allowed to share her experiences between death and resuscitation, whether or not she had any conscious experiences at all to share, or if she did, whether or not she even remembered them.

My own opinion is that, as Christians, we have an ethical obligation to honestly tell people when we've run up against the limits of our knowledge. Thus, in explaining this passage to someone, I would say much of what I've said above, but I would honestly tell them that the Bible doesn't always satisfy our curiosity about such matters. Sometimes the questions we bring to the Bible simply aren't answered there. In such cases, we must humbly confess our ignorance and rest in the knowledge of God's omniscience. God knows the whole, whereas we know only a part.

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn  
Probe Ministries

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## **“Did the OT Jews Expect a Divine Messiah?”**

Did the Jews, prior to Jesus, expect the Messiah to be divine, i.e. God Himself? Everything I can find seems to indicate that they expected him to be divinely appointed, divinely empowered, with divine authority, with kingly authority and priestly authority but I don't see that necessarily the same as God Himself. Two passages could result in that expectation perhaps: Psalm 110:1 and Isa 7:14.

I was wondering this because of the people's response to

**Jesus, especially as He started to make clear His divine association with God the Father.**

You ask a great question. It does not appear that the Jewish people anticipated a truly divine Messiah. Messiah means "anointed one" – and the Jewish people did see such people as being closely connected with God in some way (e.g. as a representative of God, empowered by His Spirit, etc.).

Over time, the Jewish concept of Messiah evolved to include a royal, prophetic, and priestly function. In the intertestamental period, particularly in the Psalms of Solomon, Messiah is regarded as a warrior-prince who would throw off the yoke of Rome and establish a Jewish kingdom. This is probably why Jesus is sometimes reluctant to identify himself as the Messiah in the Gospels.

However, when one reads the OT Messianic texts (like Ps. 110; etc.) in light of NT teachings, it becomes clear that it is quite possible to understand the OT conception of Messiah as being both human and divine. It may not have been clear to the OT Jewish people, but it does become clear in light of NT revelation. Indeed, I think Jesus makes this very point about Ps. 110 in Matt. 22:41-46.

Hope this helps a bit.

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn

Probe Ministries

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# “Is There Salvation After Death?”

I have a question that I hope you can help me with. I have a friend that believes that salvation can happen after physical death. He says that he believes that Christ is the way to the Father but that can happen after death. Is there any scripture that says that salvation, through believing in Jesus Christ, must happen before physical death?

Thanks for your question. Hebrews 9:27 states that it is appointed to man to die once and then the judgment. This indicates that after death, there is the judgment, and there is no mention of a second chance. In Jesus' parables of the kingdom, judgment follows after death. One example is Luke 16, Lazarus and the rich man. Immediately after they died, Lazarus was taken to Abraham's bosom and the rich man to hell. Even in hell the rich man saw that he was wrong and sorry for his sin but could not change his outcome. I am sure if he had a second chance, he would not have been there. Parables like these indicate there is no second chance. Finally, we are saved by faith. Faith is defined in Hebrews 11:1 as “the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” Saving faith is exercised while on earth. When we are face to face with the Lord, we will no longer be exercising any kind of faith; we will see as 1 Corinthians states, “face to face.” So all scripture indicates judgment after death. The burden is on those who say there is a second chance after death. Where are the verses to uphold that view?

Thanks for your question. I hope this helps.

Patrick Zukeran  
Probe Ministries

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# “How Is It Just for God to Put Our Sins on Jesus?”

How is it just for God to put someone's sins on Jesus, making them sinless? I have heard the analogy of a judge fining someone, and then paying the fine on their behalf; but sin is surely really, really bad, and no court would allow a judge to die instead of a criminal who had been given the death sentence.

After talking through the gospel with friends, this seems to be a big sticking point. How can a murderer seemingly get away with what he's done and go to heaven, while Johnny Average gets punished—solely on the basis of whether he accepts Jesus? It is loving on God's part to give everyone the chance of salvation, and it is just for him to punish unrepentant sinners, but how is it *just* for God to forgive a repentant sinner, who though repentant still sins?

I think you might be confusing “just” with “fair.”

Justice is about making sure that someone pays the penalty for a wrongdoing. Fairness is about treating people appropriately and right.

It is *just* for God to insist that someone pay the penalty for sin. It wasn't *fair* for Jesus to pay that penalty Himself, because that's about grace, not justice. Someone has said that justice is getting what we deserve, mercy is not getting what we deserve, and grace is getting what we don't deserve. I find those distinctions very helpful.

It is just for God to forgive a repentant sinner who continues to sin (that would be all of us!) because all of our sins,

those committed before salvation and all those committed after salvation, were all paid for at the cross. Maybe I can help with the “sticking point” with a very simple word picture: we are all standing at the bottom of the waterfall of God’s love and grace. Those who refuse to turn to God in trustful dependence, receiving His forgiveness and salvation, have their cups upside down and therefore can’t receive what God is pouring out on them. Those who have trusted Christ have turned their cups right side up, and can receive what God is offering.

One of the most amazing truths about the gospel is that our sins are transferred to Jesus, who paid for them at the cross, and His righteousness is transferred to us. It is the most absurdly unfair transaction in the history of all creation, but it’s true. Love does things like that.

Hope this helps.

Sue Bohlin

Probe Ministries

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## **“Why Did Jesus Have to Go to Hell After He Died?”**

At a family picnic, my niece asked a very good question that had us all puzzled.

When reciting the Apostolic Creed, we say “...and suffered under Pontius Pilate...was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. On the third day He rose again and ascended into heaven.” My niece asked, “Why did Jesus have to go through hell too...what was the point of that? Didn’t Jesus

defy the devil right here on earth ... why did he have to go through hell upon death?"

I am embarrassed to have to write and ask you (and yes, I am even more embarrassed to go to my pastor and look him in the eye and ask him directly...because I feel I "should" know this answer. I guess I was sleeping somewhere along the line...I've been searching in my Bible and Bible commentary, but cannot find a "real" answer.) Thanks for your help!

Great question! There is still a lot of discussion about what that phrase meant to those who inserted it into the Creed, and what it means today.

First, we need to make a distinction between the Apostles' Creed and scripture. Scripture is inspired; the creed, while based on scripture, is not. Secondly, you may be surprised to learn (as was I) that the Apostles' Creed does not date back to the time of the apostles, but was a "work in progress," developing gradually from about A.D. 200 to 750. Before 650, the phrase "descended into hell" only appeared in one version of the creed, in 390, written by a man who understood it to mean simply that Christ was buried—He "descended into the grave." (Wayne Grudem, *Bible Doctrine*, p. 174)

In defending this part of the creed, these scriptures have been offered:

*Acts 2:31 (KJV) He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that **his soul was not left in hell**, neither his flesh did see corruption.*

The problem is that the Greek word translated in the KJV "hell" is actually "Hades," which means "the place of the dead." The word that definitively refers to hell, "gehenna," isn't used here.

*1 Pet 3:18-19 For Christ also died for sins once for all, the*

*just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; in which also He went and **made proclamation to the spirits now in prison...***

The context indicates that the “spirits in prison” may have been disobedient demons from Noah’s time, to whom Jesus went and made proclamation—what, we’re not told. The Greek word for preached means “proclaimed,” not evangelized. This may well indicate that He visited the demons in their holding cells after His death, but that’s not the same thing as experiencing hell after His death.

When we look at what the scripture says about where Jesus went after his death, what we see is:

1. He told the thief on the cross, “Today you will be with me in paradise.” After His death, Jesus knew He would be in heaven and see the repentant and newly converted thief there.
2. Some of His last words on the cross were, “It is finished.” He had already suffered hell—separation from his Father—while hanging on the cross. His work was over and so was the torment of being under the Father’s wrath and alienation.
3. Just before dying, He said, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit,” indicating that He expected the Father to receive Him when he died.

There is clearly a mystery here, in view of the 1 Peter passage, and I don’t think any of us will figure it out this side of heaven.

So, what I would say to your niece is, “Jesus didn’t have to go to hell, and He didn’t suffer anymore in hell (or any other place) after He died, but it seems that He visited it to make a point to the demons there.”

Hope this helps!

Sue Bohlin

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## **“Why Did God Create the World Knowing Jesus Would Die?”**

I would like to know why God would create the world, when He knew in advance that man would sin and Jesus would have to die. I know that God created the world for a relationship with us, and for His glory. It just seems awfully selfish for Him to create a world in which His own Son would have to suffer and die. Was it God the Son on the cross, or God the Father, too, through the Trinity? I have struggled with this question for so long.

You are correct in your observation that God knew, even prior to creating the world, that man would sin. The Father also planned to send His Son as an atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world. As far as I know, the Bible does not explicitly tell us why God chose to create the world as He did. However, since the Bible does tell us that God is perfectly good and wise, I think we are safe in assuming that God had good and wise reasons for doing things this way. We can only speculate on what those reasons might have been. But ultimately, we have to rest in the morally perfect character of God, trusting in His goodness and wisdom.

However, I believe I would take exception with your statement, “It just seems awfully selfish for Him to create a world in which His own Son would have to suffer and die.” Let me make a few observations and comments about this. First, God the Son was also involved in creation (John 1:1-3; etc.). Second, God

the Son was a willing participant in the plan of redemption. The Father and Son do not will different things. They are in perfect agreement with one another. Third, I would argue that this is about the most UNselfish thing the Father could possibly do. The Father loves the Son. What could possibly be selfish about His freely giving His own Son as a redemptive sacrifice for the sins of the world? And the Bible is clear about His motive and reason for doing this. It was love (John 3:16).

Finally, it was God the Son incarnate as the Man Jesus who died on the cross. The Father did NOT die on the cross. Many people in our churches today are quite confused on this issue. One often hears prayers in which the person thanks the Father for dying on the cross. This is incorrect. The Son became incarnate and died for our sins, according to the will of His heavenly Father (which He certainly was in agreement with).

The Lord bless you,

Michael Gleghorn  
Probe Ministries