

“If Jesus Was God, Why Did He Cry Out ‘My God, My God, Why Have You Forsaken Me’?”

If Jesus really claimed to be a god then why did he say on the cross, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?”

Response #1:

Thanks for your letter. I find D. A. Carson’s comments on this passage helpful. Like him, I think that Jesus is conscious of having in some sense been abandoned by His Father. This would doubtless be related to the fact that, on the cross, he was bearing the sins of the world, thus causing God the Father to turn away from His Son.

His cry, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me,” addresses God the Father as “My God.” This is really not odd on the lips of Jesus, for we elsewhere read of Him referring to the Father in this way (see John 20:17). In addition, as the God-Man, Jesus was not only truly God (God the Son), but He was also truly man. It does not strike me as odd, therefore, that the man Jesus should refer to the Father as “My God”—indeed, it would not necessarily even be odd for the Son to address the Father in this way. For although God is one, the Father is a distinct person from the Son.

At any rate, this is essentially how I would understand Jesus’ cry of dereliction.

Shalom in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn

Response #2:

My colleague Michael forwarded his reply to me. I have recently come across an intriguing, very different paradigm

for understanding why Jesus would say these words, that I find myself thinking about a lot.

It could be that Jesus *felt* that He was abandoned by His Father because at the point He became sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21), He fully descended into the darkness and blindness of fallen and judged humanity—and sin makes us blind and deaf to the reality of God. At that point, like astronauts on the dark side of the moon experiencing being completely cut off from Mission Control, perhaps He couldn't have sensed that His Father's love for Him never changed (because God does not change; that's one of His attributes). As Michael has remarked to me, Jesus, as our sin-bearer, experienced "God-forsakenness" on our behalf. In other words, He experienced in some sense the same sort of "God-forsakenness" that those in hell will experience. He experienced the horrible reality of the consequences (or wages) of sin (Rom. 6:23).

The Lord Jesus could have cried out, "why have You forsaken Me" because that is the *effect* of sin on humanity—it can *feel* like God has forsaken us—but it doesn't mean He has. He had promised, "I will never leave you or forsake you" (Deut. 31:6,8).

Secondly, there is a very compelling observation about what has been called "the cry of dereliction" that was a major light bulb moment for me when I heard it: "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" is the opening line to Psalm 22. The Psalms are songs, so He wasn't just quoting scripture, He was crying out the first line of a song very familiar to any Jews who were within earshot. And when we hear the first line of a familiar song, it's like hitting the "play" button, and the rest of the song continues to play in our heads.

I think that when Jesus called out the first line of Psalm 22, he was reminding those around Him of the rest of the song, which not only makes it clear He was the fulfillment of the prophecies of crucifixion, but it unfolds into a song of trust

and praise in Yahweh.

Anyone who knew Psalm 22 could have been struck by the fact that Jesus was a living picture, the very fulfillment, of the words of that song running through their heads:

*6 But I am a worm and not a man.
I am scorned and despised by all!
7 Everyone who sees me mocks me.
They sneer and shake their heads, saying,
8 "Is this the one who relies on the Lord?
Then let the Lord save him!
If the Lord loves him so much,
let the Lord rescue him!"*

*11 Do not stay so far from me,
for trouble is near,
and no one else can help me.
12 My enemies surround me like a herd of bulls;
fierce bulls of Bashan have hemmed me in!
13 Like lions they open their jaws against me,
roaring and tearing into their prey.
14 My life is poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint.
My heart is like wax,
melting within me.
15 My strength has dried up like sunbaked clay.
My tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth.
You have laid me in the dust and left me for dead.
16 My enemies surround me like a pack of dogs;
an evil gang closes in on me.
They have pierced my hands and feet.
17 I can count all my bones.
My enemies stare at me and gloat.
18 They divide my garments among themselves
and throw dice for my clothing.*

And yet there is a faith-filled insistence on praising the Father despite what the Son was feeling:

22 I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters.

I will praise you among your assembled people.

23 Praise the Lord, all you who fear him!

Honor him, all you descendants of Jacob!

Show him reverence, all you descendants of Israel!

Verse 24 is especially powerful, since it would indicate that Jesus knew His Father had not abandoned Him even if He couldn't see or sense His presence:

24 For he has not ignored or belittled the suffering of the needy.

He has not turned his back on them,

but has listened to their cries for help.

I think it's very interesting that there is a completely different way of interpreting the Lord Jesus' plaintive cry on the cross. Compelling, even. I hope you find it helpful.

Sue Bohlin

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“Is It Wrong to Baptize in the Name of Jesus?”

Did the Apostles baptize wrong in the Book of Acts since they baptized in the name of Jesus?

There is a debate that says believers must be baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Matt 28: 19) rather than in the name of Jesus only as the Book of Acts records. The Jesus-only people are also modalists which means they do not believe in the Trinity but in Jesus Only, hence they baptize only in his name. The confusion lies in the different formulas for baptism in Matthew and Acts. The solution is that either formula is acceptable since they are both Biblical. What is not acceptable is the modalist theology behind the Jesus Only belief that denies the personhood of the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Lawrence Terlizzese, Ph.D.

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“Does Sunday Church Violate the Sabbath Commandment?”

Hello Michael, I read your [article](#) on why Christians go to church on Sunday instead of the sabbath. Our Sunday school teacher gave us an assignment to find out how this goes along with the commandment “Remember the sabbath and keep it holy.” Are we breaking this command? Is there any scripture I can share with the class that explains this?

The command to observe the Sabbath is rooted in both creation and redemption. It was a non-negotiable command for Israel under the Mosaic Covenant. However, it seems to me that this is no longer the case for Christians today, for we are now called to relate to God under the terms and conditions of the New Covenant. Hence, I personally don't think that Christians

can violate this command for I do not think it is still in effect (at least not as it was under the Old Covenant).

That the Old Covenant has been made obsolete is stated explicitly in Hebrews 8:13. Paul recognizes that there will be difference of opinion among believers regarding how one observes (or does not observe) certain days like the Sabbath in Romans 14:5-6, 13. He clearly indicates that such observance is not necessary for salvation in Galatians 4:8-11. In Colossians 2:16-17 he says that we are not to judge (or let ourselves be judged) with respect to things like Sabbath day observances, for these things are but "a shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ." Finally, the author of Hebrews reminds us of that true Sabbath rest that remains for God's people today. This, I take it, refers to a "rest" that is available to us in some respects now, but will be fully and perfectly realized only in the future, in the new heaven and new earth. Insofar as this "rest" is available to us now, it is not limited to a single day of the week, but is rather a "perpetual" sort of "rest" that we can enter by surrendering ourselves completely to the will of God and trusting wholly in what Christ accomplished for us through His death and resurrection. In other words, we cease trying to earn God's favor by what we do and we "rest" in the fact that Christ has already done this for us! Properly understood, of course, this does not mean that we cease doing good works, which we are clearly told to do (see Ephesians 2:10 and Titus 2:14). It does mean, however, that we can get off the treadmill of trying to earn God's favor by what we do (and "rest" in the fact that Christ has done this for us).

The Sabbath day rest under the Old Covenant, then, is but a type or "shadow" of this fuller "rest" that we can enjoy in Christ—both now (through faith) and in the future new heaven and new earth.

Of course, there is nothing wrong with setting aside a day for rest each week, provided that one does not think that this

gains them some sort of special favor with God, favor that is somehow not available to all who trust Christ for salvation. In other words, as I understand it, a Christian is free to set aside a day for rest, but is not required to do so. All Christians, however, are clearly commanded to set aside time for worship and fellowship with other believers (see Hebrews 10:23-25). This, as I see it, is the primary purpose for Christians to set aside Sunday each week. It is to be a day for worshiping the Lord and enjoying fellowship with one another, and encouraging one another to love and good deeds.

Of course, not everyone will agree with what I've written here. But this seems to me to be the New Testament teaching about this issue.

Shalom in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn

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“If the Trinity Doctrine is Correct, Then Why Isn't It in the Bible?”

Okay, smart guy. . .if the Trinity doctrine is correct, then why do Catholic encyclopedias themselves admit that it was never taught in the bible? Why does Jesus say that God is greater than he is? Why did Jesus pray to God if God is Jesus? If Jesus died on the stake, how could he bring himself back to life in three days?

Thank you for your recent inquiry. Let me see if I can shed some light on the things you have questions about. You ask:

If the Trinity doctrine is correct, then why do Catholic encyclopedias themselves admit that it was never taught in the Bible?

You have misinterpreted what they said. What is *not in the Bible* is the use of the term "trinity." It, like many other terms, is a theological designation descriptive of what is *taught* in the Bible. And this concept of a tri-partite Being comes from many places in Scripture, from both Old and New Testaments.

Perhaps the most important is found in Matthew 28:18-20. From the very beginning, the early church baptized in the name of the "Father, the Son, and Holy Ghost" because it was one of the last things Jesus told his disciples to do: "And Jesus said, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.'"

This practice of baptizing converts in the three names of the Godhead was faithfully followed by the Apostles as they spread out to proclaim the Gospel in the first century, and the practice was still in effect at the time of the first major church council at Nicea (A.D. 325). In fact, this was the major topic under consideration. It was here that what we know as the "Doctrine of the Trinity" was hammered out by these church leaders who searched the scriptures and shaped what they believed to be the truth about the Godhead.. I point this out simply to emphasize that the practice of the Church reflected a universal acceptance of the concept of the Trinity for almost 300 years before the Church got around (because of persecution under the various Roman Emperors) to clarifying and resolving this issue at Nicea.

I think it is also important, in light of your question, for you to know something about this historic Council. Constantine, the first Christian Emperor, called this council, paid the expenses to bring 318 bishops (out of 1,800) from all over the Roman Empire to the little town of Nicea (which is near Constantinople), and served as both host and moderator during the deliberations, which lasted about six weeks.

Most of the bishops present were from the Eastern Mediterranean (Alexandria, Jerusalem, Antioch, Damascus, Ephesus) and they spoke Greek. In fact, only seven bishops represented the Western church, those who spoke Latin. Each major city throughout the Roman Empire had a bishop, and the bishops from the prominent cities I just named, by sheer representation, dominated the Council. So if anyone was responsible for coming up with the Trinity it was the Eastern church, not the "Catholic" church.

The elderly Bishop of Rome (who at that time was not considered a pope, but one bishop among equals), chose not to come himself due to illness. He did, however, send two of his associates.

All branches of orthodox Christianity—Eastern Orthodox, Protestant, and Roman Catholic, have universally accepted the conclusions of the Council of Nicea concerning the Trinity, namely, that the scriptures clearly teach God is One in Essence, but three in personality: unified, but also distinct. Incidentally, the term "catholic," for the first three or four centuries, was used to describe the *entire* church, the *universal* body of Christians sprinkled throughout the Greco-Roman world. At that time "Catholic" had nothing to do with the city of Rome. (_____, if you want more specific examples from scripture which teach a trinitarian God, let me know).

Why does Jesus say that God is greater than he is? Why did Jesus pray to God if God is Jesus?

Consider John 1:1-4: "In the Beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him; and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the light of Men."

This passage also addresses part of your first question as well. Note that there are two terms used in verse one: "the Word," and "God." What does it say about the Word?

"The Word **was**" – the Word existed in the beginning (Eternity Past)

"The Word was **with** God" – (Greek, *pros*, "face-to-face with")

"The Word **was** God." – (Full Deity. . .or God Himself).

Whoever the Word was, the Word possessed (1) eternal existence like God, (2) had face-to-face fellowship with God, and (3) is designated AS God.

Who was the Word? John 1:14 tells us: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." That's Jesus. The second person of the Trinity came and dwelt among us. He became the God-Man. Jesus was just as much man as if He had never been God, and just as much God as if He had never been man. . .two natures distinct, but linked together in one Person.

As a true human, Jesus had feelings, grew to manhood (cf. Luke 2:52), could become weary, thirsty, depressed, and die a human death. When Jesus said, "I thirst" on the cross, He was speaking from His humanity. When He said things like, "Your sins are forgiven you," or "Rise, take up your bed and walk," He was speaking from His deity.

In Christ's humanity, while here on earth, the Father WAS greater, because now Christ was relating to God the Father, not only out of the equality He possessed with His Father in eternal existence, eternal fellowship, and full deity, but now

also relating to Him as a man. This also answers your question about why Jesus prayed to the Father. The answer is simple: Jesus was praying from His humanity. He was a man with normal human emotions. He felt the need to pray as all men do.

_____, your questions have focused entirely on the divine nature of Christ, but His humanity is equally important for us. Consider this passage from Philippians 2:6-11: "Who, although He existed in the form of God, He did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped (competed for), but He emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond servant, made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore, God has highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the Name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father..."

The total uniqueness of Christ as the God-Man is absolutely necessary for human salvation. He is the Mediator Who, through His death, provides for us a bridge, or access, to God if we will accept it. And His humanity is necessary to accomplish this, because *Deity doesn't die*: "Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says, 'Sacrifice and offering (animals) Thou hast not desired, But a body (His humanity) Thou hast prepared for me. . .Behold, I have come to do thy will, O God.'" (Hebrews 10:5-7)

Further, the scripture makes it clear that the entire plan of redemption to bring about the salvation of human beings involved the entire Trinity. In fact, all the great acts of God throughout the scriptures involved the active participation of the Godhead:

- Creation of the Universe (Ps. 102:25; Col. 1:16; Job 26:31)

- Creation of Man (Gen. 1:1-3, 2:7; Colossian 1:16; Job 33:4)
- The Incarnation (Luke 1:30-37)
- Baptism of Christ (Mark 1:9-11)
- Christ's Death on the Cross (Psalm 22; Romans 8:32; John 3:16, 10:18; Galatians 2:20; Hebrews 9:14)
- Christ's Resurrection (Acts 2:24; John 10:18; I Peter 3:10)
- Inspiration of Scripture (II Timothy 3:16; 1:10,11; II Peter 1:21)

To each of the above events, the scriptures ascribe an active participation by each member of the Trinity.

If Jesus died on the stake, how could he bring himself back to life in three days?

If Jesus is God as well as man, He would have no trouble rising from the dead. The verses cited above (See Resurrection) indicate that Jesus, God the Father, and the Holy Spirit were all actively involved in the process of bringing Him back to life.

I might also add that historically, it is undisputed that during the early centuries there was rapid growth and a dramatic impact by Christianity across the Roman Empire. It is very difficult to explain this, if you just leave a dead Jew hanging on a cross. Nothing short of His actual resurrection can explain the boldness and unfailing commitment of the first disciples to proclaim it so, and, who were, with few exceptions, called upon to seal their affirmation to the truth of this event with their own, violent martyrdoms.

_____, I have taken some time to try to answer your questions. They are all good and important questions. And I hope you can see that there are good answers to these questions. But what is most important is if you really want them and believe them. Your note sounded angry, or hurt.

Perhaps you have been “burnt” in the past by some who claim to be Christians but who have deeply disappointed you. I hope not to do that.

And I hope this information is helpful to you, _____. I am a busy man, but if you sincerely want answers to your questions, I definitely have time for that. The ball is in your court.

Jimmy Williams, Founder
Probe Ministries

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“If God is Immaterial, What is He Made Of?”

I got into a debate with an atheist on the existence of God. I used the Cosmological Argument, and then demonstrated how God is timeless, space-less, and immaterial. He countered my conclusion with this question. “If God does not exist inside of time, space, and is not made of material, then in what way does God exist, and what is He made of, nothing?” I don’t know how to answer His objection, so I would appreciate it if you could help me out here. I hope that you will e-mail me your advice and direct me to some resources.

Probably the closest relevant biblical description we get of God comes from Jesus in John 4:24, “God is spirit.” But God is a personal (or better, tri-personal spirit) characterized by intelligence, will, etc. In this respect, many Christian philosophers prefer to think of God as an unembodied Mind.

In either case, however, the important thing to realize is

that God, as you already know, is not a material or physical being. God is spirit; that is, God is an immaterial, or spiritual being. We could also describe God as a spiritual substance. Obviously, this is a long way from saying that God is “nothing”! A spiritual being is not a physical being, but it is every bit as real as a physical being. Indeed, in the case of God, He is actually more “real” than the physical universe (which only exists because He created it and continually sustains it in being).

For some excellent resources on the cosmological argument, please see William Lane Craig’s site here:

www.reasonablefaith.org/site/PageServer?pagename=scholarly_articles_existence_of_God.

Craig is a top-notch Christian philosopher and is a world-recognized expert on the cosmological argument (as well as other issues).

Shalom in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn

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“What’s the Difference Between God’s Will and Man’s Will in Salvation?”

What is the difference between God’s will and man’s will in salvation? When someone chooses to believe in the Lord, do they believe by their own will or by God’s will? The Bible says, “For he chose us in him before the creation of the world

to be holy and blameless in his sight..." (Ephesians 1:4).

I think that (in a sense) both wills are involved when someone trusts Christ for salvation. God's will is primary and the human will is secondary. God desires all men to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4) and He provides sufficient grace for each person to be saved. Hence, when someone trusts Christ for salvation, they are not doing this on their own initiative or in their own will-power. Rather, they simply quit resisting God's grace and allow Him to save them. Those who persist in resisting God's grace will ultimately perish.

Thus, as one Christian theologian has observed, the difference between believers and unbelievers is NOT to be found in the believers; it is to be found in the unbelievers. The believer is one who simply allows God to save him (which is God's will and desire); the unbeliever is one who continues to resist God's grace.

Shalom in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn

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"Why Does God Create People Born Blind, Deaf, Etc.?"

Why does God create people who are born blind, deaf etc.? Why don't they get a chance to live life the way others would?

The great thing about your question is that Jesus Himself answered it! This account is found in John 9:1-3:

As He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?" Jesus answered, "It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him."

God's got a plan for people born with a disability. In their weakness, He can display His strength, His goodness, and His grace. This passage was life-changing for Nick Vujicic, a young man born without arms or legs. After a time of despair-filled depression, he heard this passage and it was a major "light bulb moment" for him. It changed everything. Nick has grasped that the reason he was born without limbs was so that God could be glorified in him in a special way. Today, he is a life-changer in the lives of millions of people worldwide. Check out his website "Life Without Limbs" at www.lifewithoutlimbs.org Here's a YouTube video of Nick: www.youtube.com/watch?v=H8ZuKF3dxCY

Actually, this is not an abstract concept for me; because I was [crippled by polio](#) as an infant, I've lived my life as if I were born with a disability. It's not a matter of "their" weakness, but "our" weakness.

I respectfully suggest that the reason it's easy to put an inordinate amount of stress on the idea of living a "normal" life free of physical limitations is the culture's emphasis on the temporal, physical dimension of life. Consider 2 Cor 4:17-18:

"For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

When we ONLY look at "the seen," the temporal, we can forget that the lasting, unseen realities outweigh them. I can

promise you that since God has shown me that the limits of my physical life are only “momentary, light affliction” that are producing in me “an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,” it allows me to focus on the things that really matter—things like letting God shine His light through me. He has shown me that He has been using my disability to scoop out my soul and create a bigger place for Him to fill; that He balances my physically diminished capacity with a larger spiritual capacity—and I’ll take that trade any day!

Now, I do realize that not everyone born blind, deaf, lame etc., turns in faith to Christ. Some people live their whole lives consumed by bitterness and anger at God for allowing them to be born that way. That is so sad, that they miss the opportunity to experience God redeeming their painful experience and turning it into something good and beautiful (in the unseen, eternal sphere).

I have written an article on our website called “The Value of Suffering,” that gives more reasons that God allows people to be born with disabilities and experience other kinds of suffering. I hope you will find it helpful in answering your question more fully:

Blessing you today,

Sue Bohlin

P.S. I just came across a phenomenal [blog post](#) by Randy Alcorn titled “Insights from a Precious Disabled Child of God.” He offers a short essay by a marvelously articulate 22-year-old woman. It’s one of the best things I’ve ever read.

Hearing God, and Sensing Life

Cass Harris 4/16/11

As I stood on the beach near my home in Alaska, taking in God’s creation, knowing full well that my precious Audience of One had my heart completely, I couldn’t help but

remember.

God had never been silent in my life. At 10 months I was diagnosed with a mild case of cerebral palsy. Too early to tell all the implications, the doctor gave my mother and father the gravest of warnings. Known debilitations were the inability to talk, walk, comprehend, eat on my own, use my hands; the list was endless. There was also a possibility of epilepsy, but no one wanted to acknowledge that. So, being the people of faith that they were, my parents did the only thing they knew to do. They thanked the physician, took me home and prayed like crazy that they'd know how to raise a special needs child.

As it turned out, my cerebral palsy wasn't nearly as bad as—according to the doctors—it should've been. My speech abilities left something to be desired, but I was communicating. My entire right side was two times weaker and smaller than my left, but I was walking. I'd never use my right hand as a hand I could depend on, but I could move it. I misunderstood numbers, but I could comprehend the tools given me to overcome that. The dreaded epilepsy turned into a reality when I was 12, and by the time I was 16, I'd already undergone three brain surgeries to 'fix' the disorder. In all, my life was an unsung miracle. At least among most humans.

If there's anything I've learned as a disabled individual, it's that the quantity of misinformed or ignorant individuals is never ending. And on top of that, as sweet as they may come across, those people are the ones that talk and squawk the loudest. My heart was totally God's, but they had no problem questioning that. And they had no problem testing their boundaries of information in front of my very innocent and sensitive heart.

“So! Cerebral palsy, huh? Did you know that as recently as 1985 they still left kids like you in caves to die in parts

of the world?!" The fact that I was born in '89 made that 'fact' even more fun to spout.

"It's too bad that your parents didn't catch the fact that you had cerebral palsy and epilepsy before you were born. Would've been so much easier on your parents to just try again, rather than stand by and watch you suffer through so much. You really are proof that abortion is merciful!"

Of all the insults, and all the "well-intentioned fact spewing," the merciful abortion line got to me the most. What God did they think they understood when they sweetly put the words "merciful" and "abortion" in the same sentence?!

As many disabled Christians will tell you; by the grace of God, having a disability, at times, is just a fast track to understanding His heart. When the rest of the world can rely on intelligent authors to explain heart issues; or motivational speakers to get them out of a funk, there isn't a known formula to explain away and comfort life-long rejection just because you don't look right. Sure, parents can give you love and support. And yes, friendship is still very possible, but, the only One that can truly make such pain worth living through is my Lord.

I remember the times that I'd brokenly inquired and cried out to God about how to handle the fact that my young heart felt as if the entire world just wanted me aborted; only because of two or three sweet yet ignorant individuals. I also remember feeling God's arm around me, rocking me to sleep after a mind-numbing seizure and my thought that "*maybe abortion would've been a Godsend!*"

His answer was simple, but amazingly just the thing that my broken heart had needed at the time. And to this day, at almost 22 years old, I still remember smiling as I heard Him explain.

“Child, your heart breaks because you only hear the fact that people are trying to reason away their moral mistakes by making it logical; and you’re the perfect subject. My heart breaks, however, because in announcing that they think abortion is merciful, they are telling **ME** that they believe I wasn’t involved in your creation. That I somehow turned my back while you were being created, and when I looked at you again, there was an irreversible mistake that I could just hope one of my other creations would step in and fix themselves.

“What they don’t seem to understand is that the precious ones they decide they should have aborted, are the ones that I created exactly that way for a reason. Although I love each creation, I also love the fact that there are some where their hearts are 20 times stronger than their bodies, and I can give them tasks that I would never give someone who is what some may deem perfect.

“My Precious Little One, I made you this way because I love you. I knew that your strong will, crazy adventurous heart and love for people would have been amazing tools used to make you forget me if you had the chance. And although you still walked away for a time, and didn’t hear or see me, you remembered the fellowship we were perfecting within your imperfections—not outside of them.

“Abortion? Why would you ever take the chance away to see just how deep My love goes, just because you want to ‘try again.’ My sweet Baby Girl, I knew what I was doing when I allowed your mama to carry you in her womb the way she did. I saw the pain she went through, and I had one hand on your little head, and the other hand held your heart, the entire time.

“You’re my beloved, my child. And I wanted you here. Don’t let the world tell you otherwise.”

“Does One Have to Believe in the Trinity to be Saved?”

Do you have to believe in the Trinity to be saved? I have a friend who is a Oneness Pentecostal who does believe Jesus is God who died for sins and rose from the grave. However, he does not believe in a Triune God. They believe God showed Himself as the Father, then the Son, and now the Holy Spirit.

You ask a very good question. Although the doctrine of the Trinity is a fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith, I do not personally think that a person needs to have an orthodox understanding of this doctrine in order to be saved. Indeed, when you think about it, many of the people in Christian churches today have an inadequate and unorthodox understanding of this doctrine (but this doesn't necessarily mean that they aren't saved).

The Bible is very clear that we are saved by the grace of God through faith in the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ. Certainly, in order to trust Jesus properly, one must have some genuine knowledge of who He is and why He is capable of saving those who trust Him. But the Bible never teaches that it is necessary to have a correct understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity in order to be saved. All that is required is trusting in Jesus, the One who is truly God and truly man, and who died for our sins and rose from the dead in order to reconcile us to God.

So the bottom line is this: although your friend has an unorthodox view of the Trinity, I personally believe that he

or she can still be saved through genuine faith in Christ. Of course, if one were to deny the deity of Christ, that would be another issue! But in the case of your friend, what he or she essentially holds is a modalistic doctrine of the Trinity. And this doctrine, while unorthodox, does not deny the deity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; it rather denies that there are three coequal and coeternal persons who are God. This is significant, to be sure. But I don't think it's the kind of false belief that will prevent someone who genuinely trusts in Jesus from being saved.

Shalom in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn

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“If Those Who Can't Choose God Go to Heaven, Why Give Us a Choice?”

I read at Probe.org some of the answers to the question of [whether babies are in heaven](#), and they still did not answer my question—IF the mentally retarded and infants are in heaven because of God's grace (before I go on, please don't think I am being disrespectful, because I love the Lord), then why did He create US with choice? Will the babies be grown up in Heaven and the formerly mentally retarded be complete? If so, how can God have a perfect relationship with them, if they have never been given a choice to choose against Him, like we were? Why didn't He just make us all that way?

Thanks for the question. Sorry to hear that the other articles didn't cover it for you, but your question is one that has no easy "one-size-fits-all" answer.

As earlier established, it is by God's grace that babies, and those too mentally handicapped to make a choice for or against Christ, go to heaven. One of the rationales for that belief is Jesus' descriptions of the kingdom of heaven. Jesus used illustrations of children to highlight the kind of character that would be present in heaven. In Matthew 18:1-4, Jesus tells about the humility found in children that serves as a guiding principle for all who wish to enter eternal paradise of God. In Mark 10:13-16, Jesus described the sincere faith and genuine trust necessary for those who are in heaven. He asserted that children have a recognized place in the kingdom (Matthew 18:10) for they (and by extension, the mentally challenged who cannot progress beyond a child-like mentality) illustrate the kind of spirit an adult must have to experience a place in God's kingdom^{1}.

Granted, deceased children and the mentally challenged do not have the option of belief; their development ended before the age of accountability where they could make a mature decision of trust^{2}. However, Christ died for all (Romans 6:10); the debt of sin was paid in full once and for all (1 Peter 3:18). Unless someone deliberately rejects that offer of grace, the offer still stands. Children and the mentally challenged cannot believe nor disbelieve, therefore they have not rejected Christ's atonement. The cancelled debt of sin is still valid on their account.

But, I think I understand the core of your question. It seems that you are asking this: why do babies, children, and the mentally challenged get a "free pass" to heaven without having to go through the angst and struggle that comes from the life of faith? Why do they get to go to heaven scot-free while adults have to struggle with the issue of choice and the resulting dilemma of eternal damnation?

Every human being is born with the potential of choice. It's in our DNA. It's a part of being human. Babies, children, the mentally challenged—all of us were born with the capacity for choice and free will. When those who cannot believe die, the full potentiality of their choice is cut short and they cannot fully exercise that capacity. They do not have any accountable works to speak against their character, therefore God ushers them into His presence. It may seem that it would be preferable to simply die as a child to assure one's place in heaven. But we must remember two things: First, as humans in the image of God, we were created for more than just heaven. If we were created simply for heaven, we would not have physical bodies, nor would we be resurrected in bodily form. Our created purpose was to be a physical representation of God's presence on the earth. Second, there is a trade-off in the premature death of a baby versus the full life of an adult. Babies and the mentally challenged do not have to experience the angst of choice and the struggles of faith but they also miss out on earthly life itself. A full earthly life can include the joy of a family and the shared happiness that comes from strong lifelong friendships. Adults have the opportunity to find and experience love on many different levels: platonic, fraternal, casual, romantic, and spiritual. Those who are Christians share in the fellowship of their spiritual family and are indwelled with the filling of the Holy Spirit.

People past the age of accountability do have the eternally crucial decision of choosing rightly of whether to follow Christ or not. They have supernatural assistance from God in the power of the Holy Spirit. In deliberation with our free will, God is there to assist us in our choice and interacts with our spirits to help us make an informed decision (John 16:8-11). Though the choice can be difficult for some, God illuminates the truth and testifies to our spirit that Jesus is Lord (Philippians 2:9-11).

Finally, we simply cannot argue with how God decides to give his grace. The classic example is the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16), where some of the workers were angry with the justice of the landowner. A landowner decided to hire workers to work in his vineyard, so he hired help throughout the day. The workers who were hired at the end of the day did not work that long, yet they were paid a denarius (a full day's salary). The workers hired in the early morning sweated and toiled in the heat, yet they too were paid a denarius. Those who bore the brunt of the labor grumbled against the landowner and asked why those who performed less labor received the same payment as those who worked all day.

The analogy holds for babies and the mentally challenged. Babies and the mentally challenged have not made a profession of faith or lived a life of struggle against sin and temptation. Nor have they had to face the real possibility of hell, yet they are ushered through the gates of heaven. Adult believers have the task of coming to trust in Jesus and obeying the will of the Father, or face the possibility of eternal condemnation.

The landowner's response to the hired men is the same response that our Father gives us. This is not an occasion for anger or jealousy but an opportunity for grace. God wants to extend his mercy to all and we should be happy with the reward set before us. We should not be envious that those who cannot believe get to experience the same honor as those who have borne the scars of struggles and difficulties. We should celebrate because we know that those individuals – the babies, the children, and the mentally challenged- are in a better place and are safe in the arms of our Lord when they die.

You asked why God created us with choice. You may find this answer to email helpful: [“Why Did God Create a Flawed World Where Eve Could Eat the Forbidden Fruit?”](#)

I hope that answers your question.

Nathan Townsie

Notes

1. Lightner, Robert P. *Safe in the Arms of Jesus: God's Provision for Death for Those Who Cannot Believe*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2000.

2. The age of accountability was the age that God considered a person to be morally responsible for his/her own behavior. In Jewish culture, age thirteen was the age that a person was considered to be a full member of the community and thus responsible for his/her sins. In Christendom, there is no definitive age; it is left to the discretion of the Lord.

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“What is the Relationship Between Worldview and Salvation?”

Dear Don,

1) What is the relationship between worldview and salvation? Can you have a predominantly non-Christian worldview and yet accept Christ as your savior? Likewise, can you have a perfectly accurate Christian worldview (perhaps like the demons who shudder) and yet not be saved?

2) What is the relationship between worldview and Christian maturity? How much “accurate Christian worldview” is needed in order to mature as a believer in Christ? Conversely, is there any indication that an increase of worldview data brings about

Christian maturity (e.g. fruit of the spirit, characteristics of elders, etc.)?

A quick answer to question 1) is yes and yes. People often come to Christ with a less than biblical worldview. Hopefully they don't stay there. Fortunately, we aren't the judge of how much information is necessary for salvation. If someone claims that they have placed their trust in Christ's work on the cross, God judges the adequacy of their faith. However, we are told to measure someone's maturity when leadership in the church is the issue.

The issue of having correct knowledge but not being saved is a real problem. Traditionally, faith has been described as having three components.

*a) Faith as **Knowledge** (notitia – Latin, literally: knowledge, from notus, known) Jude 3 “ . . . I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.” Consists of the propositions or content of the Christian faith. Knowledge is a necessary ingredient to having faith.*

*b) Faith as **Assent** (assensus – assent, agreement, belief; approval, approbation, applause) This aspect of faith goes beyond simple knowledge to being in agreement with or accepting the truth of Christian teaching.*

*c) Faith as **Commitment** (fiducia – trust, confidence, faith, reliance) In the case of Christianity, it is commitment to both truth claims and to the person of Jesus Christ as indicated by the way one lives his or her life. Christians may experience different levels of confidence in specific truth claims.*

Merely having the knowledge of Christ's saving work is insufficient for salvation.

Regarding your second question, you might want to look at Barna's book *Think Like Jesus*. It makes the argument that living a life of righteousness depends upon having a worldview similar to that of Christ. Both Romans 12:2 and the verse below seem to imply that knowledge and the renewing of the mind are important components of living a righteous life.

Philippians 1:9-11 "And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, 10 so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, 11 filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God."

Don Closson

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