

“Did Jesus Have a Sinful Nature?”

Did Jesus have a sinful nature? It is clear that he did not sin, but he was 100% human. Is it that he did not choose to sin but it was possible for him to do so? If the answer is yes, would this imply that we are being punished for the sins that we do and not just because we have a sinful nature?

Hello _____,

Thanks for your question. No; Jesus did not have a sinful nature. It's true that He was fully human, but like Adam before the Fall, His humanity was not in any way tainted with sin. Whether it was possible for Jesus to have sinned or not is a matter of debate. I do not think it was possible for Jesus to sin, for Jesus was not only fully human, He was also fully God and God cannot sin.

As believers, God does discipline us (and this can certainly be painful at times) as we learn in Hebrews 12:4-11. And yes, the Lord does discipline us for the things that we do, and not just because we have a sinful nature. Of course, it's important to remember that the Lord is very gracious and patient with us as well. But He will also discipline us out of love and in order to help conform us to the image of His Son.

Shalom in Christ,
Michael Gleghorn

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“Do Animals Have Souls?”

My name is C_____ and I am 13 years old in the 8th grade. A classmate told me she was a Christian but she didn't believe some of what the Bible says. I asked her for an example and she told me that the Bible said that animals don't have souls and how she believed that they did have souls. I would be very appreciative if you would help me on my quest to find out what the Bible says about that.

Dear C_____,

We have an answer to email about animals and souls and going to heaven: www.probe.org/do-our-pets-go-to-heaven/.

I would ask your friend where in the Bible it says animals don't have souls. Lots of people have heard things they repeat as true but they don't really know. When you ask [powerful questions like](#), “How do you know that?” and “Where do you get your information?” the answer is really, “Well, I heard. . .” or “They say that. . .” Which doesn't go very far in being persuasive, does it? <smile> In reality, the Bible doesn't anywhere say, “Animals don't have souls.” It's a much bigger issue than that, and it comes down to the fact that animals are not made in the image of God, like people are. (Note that angels are not made in the image of God either. Not being made in the image of God doesn't mean something doesn't have great value.) And it also matters how you define “soul.” If you mean “personality,” then of course some animals have souls. If I ask our Irish Setter Pele, “Pele, do you have a soul?” with a smile on my face and energy in my voice, he'll respond by breathing fast, wagging his tail, and smiling his doggy smile.

If you mean, “the spiritual place inside you where God can dwell,” then no they don't. If I ask our dog, “Pele, who made you? Do you know who God is? Did you know Jesus is Lord?” he'll just keep on wagging his tail. . . or sleeping. . . or

looking at me blankly—because those questions have no meaning to him. He is not a moral creature like we are. He cannot respond to the truth of the gospel because he has no understanding and no choice. He does, however, glorify God by his “dogginess.” He brings glory to God by just being the dog God made him to be. He has a place in God’s creation, and a very important place in our hearts. . . but he cannot become a part of the Kingdom of Heaven or the family of God like we are. Any more than he can choose to become a fish.

Hope you find this helpful.

Sue Bohlin

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“t’s Not Fair to Punish People with Hell for Believing What They Were Taught to Believe”

If all people are following the teachings of what have been taught to believe, how can any be punished? By punishment, I mean that some religions (Christianity) claim that if you don’t believe what they believe, you will go to hell.

Good question!

Two aspects to my answer: first, this question is coming from a man-based perspective, as if all religions were equally valid and only about what people are taught. (In other words, leaving God out of the equation.)

Philosopher J.P. Moreland gives this illustration: let's say I am with a group of people and I ask them to describe my mother. They all say, "I don't know your mother," and I say, "Go ahead and give it your best guess." One says, "52 and blue eyes and brown hair." Another says, "58 and slender, with silver hair." A third says "55, hazel eyes and blonde highlights." The problem is, they are all shots in the dark. They are nothing more than guesses. I'm the only one who knows what my mother looks like.

All religions are like that, with the exception of one. They are all shots in the dark, sheer guesses about the nature and character of God. Except for Christianity, since Jesus says He came from heaven to tell us what God is like because God is His Father. It wasn't a guess for Jesus to tell us about God, it was a reporting of fact. Which is why Christianity is bold enough to say, "This is what God is like, and all other truth claims about God are mere guesses."

The second part of my answer is that in Romans 1, God says that He has revealed enough about Himself in creation that men are without excuse:

...because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. (Romans 1:19-20)

Christianity is about our broken relationship with God being reconciled and restored through Jesus Christ, and only through Jesus Christ. God has spoken to us about His relationship with us, through His written communication (the Bible) and through His Son leaving heaven to come to earth and show us. Its true that if we try to get to God any way except through the one way He has provided—the death and resurrection of His Son—the

relationship will remain broken. Which means an eternity separated from God. . . which is hell.

How is it people can be punished for not believing (actually, the Bible's language is about trusting) in Jesus? Because regardless of what religion people are taught, God has still spoken through His creation: of the earth, of the cosmos, of the moral nature of human beings. And He holds everyone accountable for responding to the evidence He planted in His creation, even if it is contradicted by the teachings of the various world religions.

It's like a teacher telling her class that there will be a test on Friday, but rumors sweep throughout the class: that the test has been cancelled, or the test will be postponed to the next week, or that tests have been done away with altogether. Regardless of what rumors students may have heard, they are still responsible for what the teacher told them.

Hope you find this helpful.

Sue Bohlin

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“Why Can't God and Satan Settle Their Differences?”

Why do not all the religions of the world pray to God asking him and the Devil to get together and settle their differences? It is widely held that God answers prayers.

This type of praying would surely head the list of really important things to pray for. I believe it is written at one

time God and the Devil were very good friends existing in Heaven together. I also believe it is written while they were living together they had a big argument. The devil lost, and was tossed out. Would not the World be a better place if they improve their relationship?

I am thinking of all the people killed during the Crusades, the 30 years war, the Holocaust, the Civil War, the list is endless. I am also thinking about future babies, who will be born in the future, with their souls, not subject to future damnation. At least their chances would be better.

I believe God has written "blessed are the peacemakers." Would it be too much to ask for this? I have seen no answer to this question, your answer would be appreciated.

Interesting question!

I don't think it would do any good to pray that God and Satan get together to settle their differences for several reasons:

1. God is 100% good; Satan is 100% evil. Good and evil cannot peacefully co-exist, because good will eventually destroy evil.

2. We need to read the Bible as our only resource on what is true in the spirit realm because God gave us this information (as revelation). From what we can gather of what the Bible says about angels and demons, these powerful spirit beings do not have the capacity to repent as we humans do. They don't even understand what it is like to be forgiven and accepted back into friendship with God. Thus, to ask for Satan and the demons to change is like praying that black become white or negative become positive. It won't happen.

3. God already knows what the future holds, and He has told us a certain amount of that information. He has declared that at the end of time, He will throw Satan and the demons into a lake of fire for all eternity. What God has declared and has

recorded in scripture will not change because God already knows what He will do.

God cannot improve his relationship with Satan because Satan cannot and will not become other than what he is. And just as the nature of sunlight is to destroy mold, and the nature of boiling water is to destroy harmful bacteria, the nature of God's holiness is to destroy rebellion and sin. They cannot be reconciled.

Hope this helps.

Sue Bohlin

“What Do You Think of The Message Bible?”

I've seen some articles online claiming that *The Message Bible* is not true to the original Greek and that it is secretly part of the New Age Movement. I enjoy reading it and I have not felt that it is heretical. Do you have a comment?

Thanks for your letter. I've also heard some rather negative things about *The Message Bible*. However, there is at least one Probe staff member who also enjoys reading *The Message* – so you're not alone there! I'm afraid that I personally don't know much about it. I really doubt that it is part of the New Age Movement or Neo-paganism. Probably *The Message* is intended to be something more like a paraphrase of the Bible (like *The Living Bible*), rather than a translation (like the NASB or [NET Bible](#)). This CAN (and usually DOES) result in much more interpretative freedom for the one doing the paraphrasing (in this case, Eugene Peterson). Thus, the choice of words *may not*

always accurately reflect the Hebrew and Greek texts. It's important to bear this in mind. But this does NOT mean that it's secretly purveying New Age philosophy.

I think that *The Message* could be a great resource for reading, but I don't think it would be best for studying the Bible. If your goal is devotional reading, it's probably great. If your goal is to get (as best you can) at the original meaning of the text, you're better off reading the NASB or NET Bible. Of course, it's best of all if you can read Hebrew and Greek! But not many people can. At any rate, there's certainly nothing wrong with reading *The Message*. And if you like reading it, more power to you!

Hope this helps a bit.

Shalom in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn
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“If Child Sacrifice Is Sinful, Why Did God Require It of Abraham?”

According to Deut 18:10-12, “Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire...” OK, so at least as far back as Moses' time, human sacrifice was wrong – sinful.

But...why then would God test Abraham by asking him to make a

human sacrifice of Isaac? It seems to me that God is asking him to do something sinful to prove his obedience and devotion. That goes against God's character, doesn't it?

Thanks for your question. Much has been written about Gen. 22. Let me mention a few important points and refer you to some more extensive answers.

First, notice Gen. 22:5: "So he said to his servants, You two stay here with the donkey while the boy and I go up there. We will worship and then return to you."

The NET Bible comments, "It is impossible to know what Abraham was thinking when he said, We will. . .return to you." When he went he knew (1) that he was to sacrifice Isaac, and (2) that God intended to fulfill his earlier promises through Isaac. How he reconciled those facts is not clear in the text. Heb 11:17-19 suggests that Abraham believed God could restore Isaac to him through resurrection."

Second, notice vv. 7-8, "Isaac said to his father Abraham, My father? What is it, my son? he replied. Here is the fire and the wood, Isaac said, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering? 22:8 God will provide for himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son, Abraham replied. The two of them continued on together."

Again, the NET Bible comments, "*God will provide* is the central theme of the passage and the turning point in the story. Note Paul's allusion to the story in Rom 8:32 (how shall he not freely give us all things?)" (See http://www.bible.org/netbible/gen22_notes.htm).

Finally, we must remember that God never allowed Abraham to actually carry out the sacrifice. God never intended that he actually sacrifice his son. He apparently intended to test Abraham's faith in, and love for, God. It's a radical test, to be sure, but one which God never intended for Abraham to actually carry out.

For more information, please visit:

1. www.tektonics.org/gk/humansac.html
2. www.christian-thinktank.com/qkilisak.html
3. www.tektonics.org/whatis/whatfaith.html

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn
Probe Ministries

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“What About Household Salvation?”

What is your view on Household Salvation? (I am thinking of two scriptures: Acts 11:14–“...and he will speak words to you by which you will be saved, you and all your household” and Acts 16:31–“They said, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.’”)

Thanks for your letter. My view on Household Salvation is that each member of the household, upon hearing the Gospel message, can be saved on the one condition of personal faith in Christ. Acts 11:14 MAY be predictive (i.e. predicting that everyone in the household would respond positively to the Gospel with personal faith in Christ). Acts 16:31 makes it clear that personal faith is the necessary condition for salvation. I think this verse is just a shorthand way of saying that whoever believes can likewise be saved. To hold that an entire household could be saved on the basis of one member’s faith in Christ would flatly contradict all the New Testament passages that speak of the necessity of personal faith in Christ for

salvation.

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn

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“Is It Judging Others to Call Them Evil?”

Is it judging others to call them evil? For example, if someone rapes children, is it OK to say that person is evil unless he/she repents? Or is that judging others?

There is little to gain by referring to individuals as “evil” whether it is spoken directly to someone or just thought to yourself. Calling someone evil would certainly be considered inflammatory. The concept of evil is sometimes unnecessarily avoided or swept under the rug in our culture. However, calling someone evil rather than referring to their actions as evil is probably not necessary in most cases. Ultimately, sin is sin and everyone is capable of great evil. The example you gave, rape, is certainly evil and the one who commits such an act could properly be referred to as evil. There are no “little sins” in God’s sight, however, so the liar and glutton could also be called evil. So, no, it is not wrong to refer to someone as evil but it will probably prove counter-productive to actually call someone evil. A less inflammatory approach would be better.

If you do a word search for evil, you will find that the Lord Jesus did not hesitate to call some men evil if that’s what

they were. But then, He had the right to judge the thoughts and intentions of their hearts, being God and being informed by the Holy Spirit. Interestingly, the apostle Paul is the only NT writer who calls men evil, and that only occurs twice—and neither time is he referring to specific individuals. The rest of the time the NT writers talk about evil as a force and a chosen behavior, and the evil one (Satan). Given this perspective, we believe it would be wiser to rephrase the judgment of evil as applying to the beliefs and actions rather than calling an individual evil.

Sue Bohlin

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“What Advice Would You Give Someone Leaving an Abusive Church?”

We now realize that our church is [abusive](#). What advice can you give us?

I would advise you read a few books that will help during the difficult transition. *Recovering from Churches that Abuse* by Ron Enroth, *Healing Spiritual Abuse* by Ken Blue, and *The Grace Awakening* by Charles Swindoll. Often, there is a lot of hurt and bitterness. These books can help you overcome the pain and keep from becoming a bitter individual.

Second, I would advise you join a support group from a good church. There are very few support groups for spiritually abused victims but if you can find one, great. If not, a group

to share your experience and pray with is a great help.

Third, many abused victims want to inform members who remain at the abusive church. This can be very frustrating and time consuming. I do not recomend spending a lot of your energy doing this. It is best to leave it all behind and begin a new chapter in your life.

Finally, enjoy your new freedom. Visit churches and fellowships. You will realize that the body of Christ is a lot bigger than you can imagine and this is refreshing to see. In the process, you will meet a lot of neat Christians who may become your new family in Christ.

Patrick Zukeran

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“What’s Dominionism?”

Mr. Anderson:

I heard you say on Point of View that your guest, Craig Parshall, can speak on many issues. You were talking about that PBS person, Bill Moyers.

What’s this “dominionism” thing? I went to [Wikipedia](#) and it doesn’t sound like anything a true follower of Christ Jesus would want to be involved with.

I noticed that the May 2005 issue of *Harpers* magazine that Craig Parshall was talking about on the program actually used the term dominionism. I really think the authors in that magazine article and in the Wikipedia entry are misusing the term.

Dominion theology defines a small group of postmillennial Christians who are part of the [Christian Reconstruction](#) movement. They are trying to bring about God's kingdom on earth through government, societies, and cultures. That would not describe the theology or agenda of the members of the National Religious Broadcasters or the National Association of Evangelicals.

In fact, I can't think of a single prominent leader in either of these organizations that would hold to that theological position. Perhaps there is one that I don't know about, but it certainly does not describe the theology of NRB or NAE.

To put it simply, I don't think the term "dominionist" in the magazine or even in the Wikipedia entry is a fair description of the evangelical leadership in America.

Thanks for writing.

Kerby Anderson

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