

Did God Really Die?

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I think yes. Per my conclusion in the sermon, “When Jesus died on the cross, God died. At least the second *person* of the godhead; God the Son. Fully God and fully man that Jesus was, two natures in one person, inextricably combined, he died. God, actually gave his life for us.” (<https://coramdeobible.church/sermons/behold-the-lamb-part-1/>)

Here are some thoughts to support that:

1. The caveat is very important.

The caveat that, “*At least the second person of the godhead [died]; God the Son.*”

That’s important because I’m not saying or suggesting that the *triune* God died. Or that all *three* persons of the godhead died. Or that God in his *entirety* died. Just Jesus. “Just.”

2. This is a theological issue that we’re not able to fully resolve.

There are tensions here and there’s just not enough biblical information to completely settle them. Just like there are tensions in *other* theological truths. Like the sovereignty of God and free will of man; it’s an unresolvable tension. Or the nature of the Trinity; three persons in one essence. Or the holiness of God in Christ, and the fact that he bore our sin. How can that be? How can light have *any* fellowship with darkness? (2 Cor 6:14) Or what about the incarnation?

Similarly, there’s a tension between the unchanging nature of God as an eternal, living being; and the death of Jesus. Both are true, but somewhat opposed to each other. There’s even a tension within Jesus himself on this issue. How can he be the light of *life*, and succumb to the darkness of death? A light so bright that it *shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it*. (Jn 1:5) There’s a tension.

That doesn’t mean either side of the tension is false, just that we don’t have enough information or understanding to resolve the tension. In which case we should hold loosely to our convictions on this issue.

So it’s good to manage your expectations at the beginning, accept the fact that this is a theological issue we can’t fully resolve, and hold loosely to your conclusions no matter what your perspective.

3. There are 5 reasons for why God died when Jesus died (at least the second *person* of the godhead).

A. The word “died” doesn’t mean the cessation of all consciousness.

That doesn’t even happen to us as human beings. When we die, our spirits immediately go to either heaven or hell. In which case we’re very conscious. Always conscious. But we *are* cut off from the land of the living here on earth. We *are* dead to things below. We *are* separated from *this* realm. We suffer the loss of all that is good from an earthly perspective. Therefore, when Jesus died, he too was cut off from all things earthly. But he never ceased to exist or think or work. He even had the power to raise himself from the dead (Jn 10:17-18). That alone requires life and consciousness. Just not earthly life.

B. “The Lamb of God” in Jn 1:29 could mean the sacrifice God gave, or the sacrifice God made. The grammar allows for both.

It could mean the lamb of God’s offering, or the lamb that consists of God. Like someone announcing Taylor Swift at her concert by saying, “Behold the music of Taylor Swift!” It could mean, “Behold the music she offers!” Or, “Behold the music she embodies; the expression of herself.” The grammar allows for both the sacrifice God *gave*, and the sacrifice he *made* in the death of the second person of the godhead.

C. Simple logic implies it.

If Jesus is God (which we all agree he is), and Jesus died (which we all agree he did), then God died. Not the *entire* godhead, not the nature or essence of God, but the second *person* of the Trinity. God the Son.

D. The Hypostatic Union of Jesus requires it.

The Hypostatic Union is the combination of two natures, divine and human, in the one person Jesus. The Bible clearly teaches that Jesus was fully God and fully man. What happens to one nature is experienced by the other.

For instance, when Jesus in his human nature was tired, his divine nature experienced the same fatigue, even though he's also omnipotent. Like when he slept on the boat in the storm. Or when Jesus did miracles, his human nature fully participated even though his divine nature was ultimately responsible. We would even say, "Jesus did the miracle," without distinguishing or even referring to his natures. And rightfully so. What happens to one nature is experienced by the other.

Same for his death on the cross. It was experienced by his divine nature just as much as his human nature. *For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.* (Col 2:9) So too, the separation from the Father was experienced by his divine nature just as much as his human nature.

To say otherwise, to say that God didn't die or that his divine nature wasn't affected in the death of Christ, is to arbitrarily separate the God-man union and violate Scripture.

E. Only someone who is fully and infinitely God could bear the weight of, and full penalty for, the sins of the world.

A man, even a perfect one, couldn't do it. He couldn't bear the weight of the world's sin, let alone the full wrath of God. It takes a divine being to do that. Hence the incarnation.

Plus, how could a man, even a perfect one, *atone* for the sins of the world. How can just a man be a sufficient sacrifice to forgive the sin of the world, appease God's wrath, and reconcile us to God? Or to say it another way, how could a finite man pay the required infinite price for our infinite offense against God?

Infinite sin, against an infinitely holy God, requires a sacrifice of infinite worth.

4. One of the implications is that the fellowship within the Trinity was restored.

When Jesus was on the cross, *before* he died, his fellowship with the Father was broken in some way. Hence his question, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" That implies some sort of break in fellowship. Not a break in relationship, not a break in the Trinity, the godhead; but a break in their intimacy. Like when a husband and wife have sinned against one another and there's a loss of companionship between them. They're still married, they're still one, but sin has come between them. Same for Jesus and the Father on the cross.

But when Jesus died, it was finished. The forsakenness was both finalized and ended in one moment. Their fellowship was immediately restored. Because in that moment the debt was fully paid and his spirit was reunited with his Father in heaven.

5. Some theologians *don't* believe God died when Jesus breathed his last.

They reason that it's *impossible* for God to die, or he wouldn't be God. Therefore, when Jesus died, somehow God didn't, but still paid the full price for our sin.

I understand the thinking, but I think it compromises the Hypostatic Union. Somehow (according to their thinking), his natures had to separate while enduring God's wrath on the cross. Or, his divine nature was somehow exempt from his experience of death. But there's no biblical evidence for that. And it's contrary to the evidence we *have*. In the course of his life, his divine nature experienced everything his human nature experienced, and vice versa.

Those who hold a view of separation or exemption are also arguing from the standpoint or starting point of least biblical support. From a theological proposition or implication (that God can't die or bear his own wrath), to the conclusion that Christ's death on the cross did not involve his divinity.

I'd rather reason, as I do above, from the standpoint of *explicit* biblical truths (that Jesus is God and Jesus died on the cross), to conclude that Christ's death involved his whole person; his humanity *and* divinity.

6. Make sure this increases your awe, gratitude, and worship.

On the one hand, don't avoid thinking about this just because it makes your head hurt and the conclusions aren't firm. On the other, don't miss the point because you obsess on the minutiae.

Behold the Lamb. The glorious, mysterious, holy Lamb of God. Sufficient for our atonement and worthy of our praise. Behold him and never stop, with all the awe, gratitude, and praise he deserves.

Worthy is the Lamb, indeed.