
BIBLE TALK

This week the question is: **If Jesus was God, how could He die?**

This is the question which the atheist and agnostic asks. This is the question asked by those who deny the deity of Christ and the trinity of the Godhead. If Jesus was really divine and equal with God the Father, how could He have died? The argument says:

- (1) God, because of His very nature, cannot die.
- (2) Since Jesus died, He could not have been God.

WHAT IS DEATH

Let us begin our investigation by first defining death. Some have erroneously defined death as "the ceasing of all functions of life," "loss of consciousness," or "annihilation."

If this is an accurate description of death, then it would indeed be difficult to imagine how Jesus could die if He were really God. After all, it is impossible to think that God could be annihilated, or that all functions of His life could cease.

But what does the Bible say about death? According to the Word of God what is death and what happens when a man dies? Biblically, death means "separation" -- that is, the spirit of man is separated from the body of man. When this separation occurs, death has occurred. When the spirit separates from the body, the body ceases to function, but not the spirit. The body becomes unconscious, but the spirit of man remains conscious and is aware of events taking place around it.

Let me give you some Scriptures to support this definition of death:

James 2:26

²⁶ For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

Notice, the body dies when the spirit is separated from it. The body ceases to function, but the spirit continues to operate.

Ecclesiastes 12:7

⁷ Then the dust will return to the earth as it was,
And the spirit will return to God who gave it.

Here we learn that the body, which is composed of dust, simply degenerates into dust again, but the spirit returns to God. The spirit continues to operate and maintain consciousness even after separated from the body.

Notice carefully:

Luke 8:54-55

⁵⁴ [Jesus] put them all outside, took her by the hand and called, saying, "Little girl, arise."
⁵⁵ Then her spirit returned, and she arose immediately. And He commanded that she be given something to eat.

Here a young maiden had died. When Jesus restored her to life the Bible specifically states that her spirit came again into her Body. Many more passages could be given that illustrate the same point -- death is a separation of the spirit from the body.

JESUS' BODY AND SPIRIT

Now, when the Bible says that Jesus died, it simply means that His spirit was separated from His body. The body of Jesus ceased to function, but His spirit did not. His spirit remained alive and maintained consciousness.

Just moments before Jesus died on the cross He said to one of the thieves being crucified with Him:

Luke 23:43

⁴³ ... today you will be with Me in Paradise."

When both Jesus and the thief died that very day, their bodies ceased to function, but their spirits were carried by angels to paradise and they maintained a conscious existence.

THE RESURRECTION

Consider also the resurrection of Jesus. Not only does the resurrection of Jesus prove His deity, but it illustrates what death really is.

John 2:18-22

¹⁸ So the Jews answered and said to Him, "What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?"

¹⁹ Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

²⁰ Then the Jews said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?"

²¹ But He was speaking of the temple of His body.

²² Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said.

Here Jesus is promising that He will raise Himself up after being dead for three days. Now if death meant "unconsciousness," it would have been impossible for Jesus to raise Himself up again, because someone who is unconscious cannot do anything. But death is simply the separation of the spirit from the body; the spirit maintains consciousness even though the body ceases to function.

The point is, Jesus dying on the cross did not indicate weakness on His part. It did not mean He was a mere man. Dying on the cross did not mean that Jesus temporarily ceased to exist. It simply means the Lord temporarily left His physical body. His body ceased to function, but His spirit was as conscious as ever. On the third day, before His physical body began to decay the Lord raised Himself up proving beyond doubt that He was truly God in human flesh.

Matthew 10:28

²⁸ And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

The wicked Jews who murdered Jesus on the cross were only able to kill the body of Jesus, but they were not able to kill the spirit of Jesus.

The death of Jesus did not mean He was completely mortal, but the resurrection did prove beyond doubt that He was divine!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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