

On Suffering and God

Question #1:

What is pain? What does pain feel like?

Of course, each of us feels pain subjectively but can you describe it enough for someone else to understand just how you feel it? I guess not.

You see, when you declare your pain to another person, the person really can't feel it so he uses his imagination by recalling a time he felt pain, and then judging by how much you are crying/shouting, he modulates his imagination of the memory of his pain - increasing or reducing the amplitude - as a way of estimating your feelings, then he acts accordingly. We call this empathy.

Now imagine you had to explain your pain to someone who has never felt pain before. How do you do it?

On the flip side, imagine you have never felt pain before and someone tries to explain his pain to you. How would you understand?

Furthermore, who is at fault when this miscommunication happens? Are you somehow deficient for simply not being able to relate or is the person deficient because he feels the pain?

Imagine a world where nobody felt pain. Would empathy exist? How would we treat one another? Would morality exist?

I guess the question I really want to ask is: Is it a good thing if we are unable to suffer?

Response #1:

Either it is or an eternity with God in a Resurrection Body like the one that Jesus Christ has is a bad thing.

Question #2:

[Odi Ariwodo](#) is the resurrection body unable to suffer?

Response #2:

Perfectly so. And in the eternal state, there will be absolutely no suffering of any kind anymore. So, not only will the Resurrection Body be perfectly immune to suffering, but the very environment for which it is designed cannot accommodate suffering. See 1 Corinthians 15:42-45; 2 Peter 3:13; and Revelation 21:4.

Question #3:

[Odi Ariwodo](#) none of these shows an inability of that body to suffer though.

There will be people resurrecting to spend eternity in hell you know.

Now if we never suffer, we will never be able to hurt one another even if we tried. Would you agree?

Response #3:

_____, your line of questioning was a little bit baffling to me, but I figured that my answer would jog your memory. I'm quite sorry to see that you think differently on this.

40 There are also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. 41 There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory.

1 Corinthians 15:40-41 NKJV

That is to say that bodies differ from one another in quality even in Resurrection, which is the context of the above passage.

2 And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake,
Some to everlasting life,
Some to shame and everlasting contempt.

Daniel 12:2 NKJV

28 Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice 29 and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.

John 5:28-29 NKJV

That is to say that there are two types of Resurrection Bodies. One is suited to an eternity with God and the other to eternity separate from Him.

20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

Philippians 3:20-21 NKJV

That is to say that the Body that the Lord Jesus has right now is the specific type that we believers look forward to having. It is most certainly not what unbelievers will have in the Lake of Fire.

In sum, the Resurrection Body that Paul is concerned particularly with in 1 Corinthians 15 (cf. vv. 22-24) is not some universal one that all humans will have when the Lord Jesus raises the

dead. It is specifically the one that Christians will have when He raises us from the dead to be with Him eternally. That is the Body that I spoke of. It is perfectly invulnerable to any kind of suffering.

As for what those passages show, a body that is weak as Paul describes our natural body in 1 Corinthians 15:43 is one that is vulnerable to harm. A body that is powerful, on the other hand, as he describes too in the same verse is one that cannot be harmed. I think that this is too painfully obvious to warrant a debate. So, yes, the passages I offered you did demonstrate that the Resurrection Bodies that Christians will have will be invulnerable to any kind of harm or pain. That is partly why there will be no pain or suffering of any kind in the eternal State for Christians, just as Revelation 21:4, which I also referenced for you in my last response, says.

As for your argument at the end, I do agree that if we are invulnerable to harm, we can never cause pain to each other. But I'm afraid I don't see what that has to do with anything. According to the Bible, the perfect world that God has planned for believers in eternity will have no pain or suffering, and this must be a good thing and therefore your starting argument is wrong or else it is bad and your starting argument is correct. I personally stand with the Bible, so I cannot agree that your position is correct.

However, I know that you are trying to prove that God's goodness is compatible with the existence of suffering. I totally agree with that notion. The Bible teaches it. But it certainly does not teach the line of argument that you chose to pursue here.

Prior to the existence of man, there was a perfect universe that God created too, completely absent of all suffering and every negative thing. It was angels that were created to rule over it then. Was it then a bad world because there was no suffering in it? I think not. Not even a little bit.

When God destroyed that universe and then recreated it into this one we now have, He still deliberately made that second creation to be absent of all negative thing for the first couple that He created. Adam and Eve had no suffering of any kind at all until they sinned. Was it a bad thing then? Of course not. May such a thing never be said!

Suffering is merely a good God's response to creature wickedness. That's it. The only argument that anybody might have against this is that even people who strive to do good (and the only truly good Human to ever live too, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself) also suffer apparently undeservedly, so that it seems as if this good God is unjust sometimes. But that is an ignorant argument to make.

Sometimes, the Lord God allows the good to suffer in order to condemn those who afflict them with suffering. In the case of the Lord Jesus, a Good Person offered Himself in exchange for others whom He loved, taking their deserved suffering upon Himself so that they would not need to suffer it anymore. Is any of this bad? Is it wicked for God to allow the wicked to exercise their free will even when doing so means that the good suffer at their hands? If it is, how can the Lord show that they are truly wicked and deserving of the judgment coming to them? Is it bad

that a Good Person would accept responsibility for the sins of those He loves so that He can bear their punishment and make it possible for them to be forgiven by a just God? If it is, what then is good?

As far as the experience of good people (that is, believers in Jesus Christ) who suffer undeservedly goes, everyone is here on Earth to make an emphatic eternal choice about God. So, every choice about faith in Jesus Christ will be tested. Those who believe will especially be tested by adversity in order to prove that they really prefer to believe. Is this wrong? Is it not right to give everyone all the opportunity that they need to make a choice that they will never again be able to change once this life is over for them?

As far as the Bible is concerned, this is what the Truth is. Suffering exists because God is perfectly just and cannot ignore wickedness. If creatures were not wicked, suffering would not exist. If suffering didn't exist, we would still have a good state of existence. We don't need to know suffering in order to appreciate the generosity of God. Those who need to know suffering in order to appreciate God's generosity and kindness to us are already wicked people who do not trust Him or believe in what is manifest about Him. In other words, only the wicked need suffering in order to appreciate happiness. The elect angels, for example, have never suffered anything at all, but they are still praising God all the time and doing His Will.

I'll add two more things:

1. In addition to my arguments above, the ability or lack thereof of our resurrection bodies to experience suffering is immaterial if we will never experience pain or suffering in the eternal state. So, while my arguments should explain the biblical position about resurrection etc, the issue of being able to experience pain is already defeated in any case.

2. I focused on the question you asked at the end, but in the matter of empathy, there is no issue at all. The elect angels have never caused harm to one another, yet they are ministering spirits providing spiritual support to us who are going through tremendous difficulty in our fight of faith. So, when you ask about morality and how we would treat one another if we have never experienced pain, the elect angels appear to be conclusive proof that there is no need for pain and suffering in order to be able to love others and care for them.

Question #4:

No, (God does not suffer) but can He suffer? Yes.

Response #4:

That is an amazing claim to make? Can you prove that a perfect God that cannot change in any way is able to suffer?

17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

James 1:17 NKJV

8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.
Hebrews 13:8 NKJV

18 that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.
Hebrews 6:18 NKJV

I don't see any biblical reason to make such a big claim. In fact, even common sense would put the lie to it. How can that which self-exists be vulnerable in any way to anything external to itself? It makes absolutely no sense.

Question #5:

[Odi Ariwodo](#) is Jesus God? Did Jesus suffer?

Response #5:

_____, but that is the most elementary truth of Christianity! That Jesus Christ was God Who put on human flesh in order to be able to suffer death for us:

9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.
Hebrews 2:9 (NKJV)

5 Therefore, when He came into the world, He said:
“Sacrifice and offering You did not desire,
But a body You have prepared for Me.
Hebrews 10:5 NKJV

7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.
Philippians 2:7-8 NKJV

These Scriptures and so many more teach very clearly that because God in His Deity can never be hurt in any way, the Lord Jesus had to take on the form or nature of a creature in order to be able to suffer. That was partly why He became a Man. The other reason is that because it was Man who sinned, it was Man that had to pay the price for human sin and rebellion. I can understand the confusion, but this ought not to be a problem even for a baby believer.

Question #6:

[Odi Ariwodo](#) so in other words God can suffer?

I really don't see any confusion here. If Jesus is God and he suffered then it simply means that God can suffer.

I guess the next question would be: When Jesus took the form of a man, did he cease to be God?

Response #6:

I'm afraid it is not that simple, and no, God cannot suffer. I'm not sure that I know any way to say it more clearly than I did.

Jesus was God before He became Man. Because He was unable to suffer anything because of His Deity and because the person guilty before God was Man, He took on the created nature of a Man in order to be able and to qualify to experience human suffering and the suffering meant for the human rebels.

Philippians 2:7 in the Greek says that the Lord Jesus "voided" (the word in Greek is keno from which we derived kenosis and which is translated in some versions as "emptied") Himself, that is, that He sort of excluded His Deity in His human experience. That is to say that He did not take advantage of His Deity to go through His Human experience. This is why, for example, He could say that even He did not know the day or hour of His Return while He was still in unresurrected human flesh although being God and therefore omniscient He should have known. He did not know because He was not "using" His Deity while in unresurrected flesh at the time. It was only after His Resurrection that He was glorified, that is, that His Deity was united with His Humanity so that there is no kenosis for Him anymore.

It is true that this is not an easy concept to understand, but even a baby believer would know that God cannot die or suffer any pain. It is one thing to acknowledge an inability or difficulty in understanding how Jesus was God and still able to die for our sins and quite another to claim that because Jesus was God and died for our sins, God is somehow vulnerable to suffering of any kind. That is ridiculous on so many levels.

Question #7:

[Odi](#) not my kind of conversation but I am a bit curious; to whom was Jesus communicating to in his prayers, Himself? (that is if he was a deity devoid of his divinity as you explained)

Or

Are you suggesting that his divinity was ascribed the luxury of personhood such that he maintained his own and same person herein and thereof?

Response #7:

I'm happy to answer any questions about what I believe, but I honestly don't have any patience for mockery. That's just a warning upfront. There is a reason that I hardly ever engage in apologetics anymore on Festus's page.

We Christians who accept the testimony of the Bible believe that God is a Trinity. That is, we believe that there are three distinct Persons each of Whom is God in their own right. But they are not three gods because they are in perfect unity with each other. Their Individual Wills are perfectly aligned so that they never disagree over anything. In meeting and dealing with one, you deal with them all.

Therefore, the Lord Jesus could pray to the Father in His Human flesh while He was on Earth because He is a distinct person from the Father and the Spirit.

Also, I said nothing like He was "devoid of His divinity." I said that He "voided" Himself. That is a translation sometimes favored for the Greek word "keno," but it is not necessarily the most adequate one for that. The idea in Philippians 2:7 is just that the Lord Jesus did not take advantage of His Deity. If He did, He would not have been able to live a truly human life or even die a human death. How it is possible that He could be Deity and not use Deity is not described in the Bible beyond the fact that it was accomplished by the Holy Spirit.

Question #8:

I asked a genuine question, you answered, where was the mockery though.

Let's proceed, shall we?

Three distinct persons whose will align. What makes them one is the identity of their will and not the fact that they are actually same in which plain simple English would have it.

It seems, even more mysterious, that there are many instances in the Bible in which Jesus' will did not align with the father's (If it is thy will let this cup pass me by). We can say, what binds this three distinct persons is an agreement of will. A near perfect model would be that of the institution of marriage.

takes a deep breath this is what you mean by a trinity, right? A tri unity of three DISTINCT persons who share an agreement, albeit absolutely.

Let's go back to the original question. Did the person of Jesus suffer? Yes! Did God implement he implement a medium or act, by making himself human, that enabled him to suffer? Yes. DOES IMPLY CAN.

Albeit, Festus, I was heading somewhere. In christian theology, the afterlife(heaven) is devoid of suffering. This is not a good thing because.....?

Response #8:

I didn't say that you were mocking. I was only giving you fair warning. Whenever I enter these conversations, people who have never encountered me tend to think that I am game for frivolous debate; I'm just warning you that I'm not. As long as we can have a respectful, decent conversation, I am happy to speak with you.

As for your argument that there was any misalignment between Jesus's Will and that of the Father, I'm not sure how you read "let this cup pass from me" to mean that He had a different desire than the Father had. He Himself had just told His Disciples that He was going to Jerusalem to die for the sins of the world. Why then would you think that that prayer meant that He had a different desire? During His last meal with the disciples, not only did He use a graphic

demonstration (the foot-washing) to show that He came to serve human beings with His Death on the Cross, but He also used the ritual of communion that He Himself instituted that same night to demonstrate that He was going to suffer and die for us willingly. He also told His disciples that the command that He had from the Father was that He could only lay His Life down willingly. It could not be taken forcefully from Him. Given all of this, it does not at all follow that He had a different will than the Father did, albeit at this point we are talking of Him as the Human Servant of the Father rather than as God.

Regarding your other argument that His being God meant that God suffered something, if a believer right here is having trouble understanding that, what hope do you as an unbeliever have to understand it? Nevertheless, I'll explain again. The Lord Jesus acquired two different natures as soon as He put on a human body. One was His Deity that has always existed. The other was the human nature that only began to exist after Mary had her firstborn. These two natures were kept separate from each other by the Holy Spirit, so that the Lord Jesus could live a true human life and experience everything that human beings can experience. In His Deity, there was much that He could never have been subject to. Those things became possible to Him in His Humanity. Consider the example I gave earlier. As God, He knew all things. Yet, He did not know the precise Day or Hour of His Second Advent while He was here on earth prior to His Death and Resurrection. There are only three possible ways to explain that:

1. He was lying or mistaken
2. He was just any other man and could not possibly have known something no creature had been given to know.
3. He was not using His Knowledge as God at the time and was speaking as a true Human who only knew whatever God granted Him to know

We Christians who trust the Bible don't believe that Jesus ever lied or made mistakes. We also don't believe that He was just another man. We understand that He was God Who took on a Human Body in order to die for our sins. So, we believe that as Philippians 2:7 teaches, because of kenosis, He did not use His Omniscience at the time. Likewise, He could suffer and die as a Man, something that He could never have been able to do as God.

Please understand that while I would urge you to believe this to be true for your own eternal safety, I am only writing here to explain what the Bible teaches. I couldn't care less what anyone thinks makes sense in this regard. Only two things can happen here: you can show that the Bible does not teach this or you can just reject it. But I won't be interested in trying to persuade you that it is in fact true.

Question #9:

1. Neither of us is trying to convert the other here. It was needless to stress on.

2. My original question was directed to the OP. I only asked about the Trinity to get clarity on the age long mystery. Regrettably, I must stress that I am as dissatisfied as ever. It seems there is no how a theologian or any apologetic can put it in plain simple English.

3. "...Let this cup pass me by" clearly points to the fact that the sayer desired a different turn of events. Unless you are arguing that the statement in and of itself is not to be taken literally, wait! Is that what you are saying?

4. Back to the OP, if God cannot suffer (not minding the logic by which you arrive at that) how can he make moral decisions on our behalf.

Even if he could and the only event in which he ever did was during his time here, what happened before that? As in, in what capacity could he make good moral judgments.

Caveat: NO. 4 is totally in relation to the OP

Response #9:

Regarding your #2, that is to be expected. Not a single human being can even become a believer without accepting the Truth of the Trinity because Jesus is a Gift from the Father for our sins against God. So, anyone who is unwilling to bow the knee to God will never be at peace with the Trinity.

As for your #3, the words mean exactly what they mean. They were a demonstration of the great trial awaiting the Lord and of His readiness and willingness to face it because it was the Father's Will for Him to face it. It was a lesson for us.

Regarding your #4, God does not make moral decisions for anyone. He gave us a free will for us to make our own moral decisions. But He certainly makes laws and gives us commandments. I don't see why He needs to be vulnerable to suffering to be able to command His Own Creatures.