

Did God Really Die?

One of the most difficult questions that Jewish people have about the Gospel and the New Covenant concerns the deity of Jesus. **If Jesus is God, where was God when Jesus died on the cross? If Jesus is God and Jesus died on the cross, do Christians believe that God died?**

Some Christians teach that God didn't die on the cross. Rather it was the human nature that God had robed Himself in. The man died but not the God. But this would deny the claims that Jesus made in his reply when Phillip asked him to show him the Father. Jesus said to Phillip in John 14:9 "He who has seen Me has seen the Father." And what about the words Paul spoke to the elders of the assembly in Ephesus in Acts 20:28, "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." Paul states very clearly that it was God who purchased the church with His own blood. The New Covenant, time and time again makes the claim that Jesus is God. If we worship a God who bled it would be inconsistent to deny that He can die. So we simply have to acknowledge that this truth remains to us a mystery.

Yet in our conversations with the skeptical Jewish person we should point out that Judaism is filled with many mysteries that defy logic and reason. Reason can lead us astray. Logic can only take you so far because the fundamental concepts of God are filled with paradoxes. Reason is good, but the human heart is deceptive. Throughout history, godly men have gone amiss by the attempt to apply reason to the great questions. God never promised us complete knowledge. Some truths are beyond our understanding. A God that we could confine to a logical box would be a poor thing indeed. The true and living God should be beyond us in many ways.

Judaism is filled with mysteries that all three sects of Judaism acknowledge. The Central Conference of American Rabbis in 1976 commenting on the spiritual state of Reform

Judaism in a statement issued on the centennial of Reform Judaism wrote: "*Amid the mystery we call life, we affirm that human beings, created in God's image, share in God's eternity despite the mystery we call death.*"¹ Conservative Jews as well acknowledge that there are mysteries concerning the nature of God. Ismar Schorsch, writing for the Jewish Theological Seminary on the core values of Conservative Judaism said "*Despite a fervent desire to encounter and behold God, there is a palpable reluctance to depict or render God concrete, to traduce the mystery.*"²

Finally Orthodox Judaism acknowledges that God is a mystery. Commenting on creation Rabbi Jonathan Glass writes:

What looked like a neat and clear account of Creation turns out to be full of mystery. And the Torah beginning with mystery is important—it reveals the very nature of Creation and of the Torah itself.

We tend to feel a need to clarify and understand the world around us, to grasp and digest every experience we have.

But we must never lose track of the mystery that pervades all of Creation. A sense of wonder is necessary in this world. We must know that we are part of something much larger than ourselves and our personal experiences, something we may never fully be able to understand.

The works of Creation refers to science, according to some Talmudic Sages. Science, too, resides in the tension between the known and the mysterious."³

So, did God die on the cross? We can answer a confident yes. In Jesus, God Himself got hungry, got tired, laughed and cried. And in Messiah, God Himself died. As Charles Wesley wrote in his wonderful hymn: *Amazing Love, how can it be, that thou, my God, shouldst die for me?*

-Roy Schwartz

¹ Reform Judaism A Centenary Perspective, Adopted at San Francisco, 1976 Scanned (and uncorrected) from text provided by Ms. Emily Grotta, director of communications for the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

² The Sacred Cluster - The Core Values of Conservative Judaism by Ismar Schorsch The Jewish Theological Seminary 3080 Broadway, New York, NY 10027

³ Commentary on Parashat Bereishit 5759 http://www.ou.org/torah/article/parashat_bereishit/