



Did God Turn His Face Away from Jesus on the Cross?

Matthew 27:46; Psalm 22

Following up from our sermon on suffering

At the center of our hope is God **with** us

Did God turn His face away from Jesus on the cross?

This question affects how we think about the character of God

To the question at hand, I say No.

I will address **three reasons** why it is commonly asserted

Jesus Himself says, “Why have you abandoned Me”

Jesus becomes sin in a way that the Father can’t look upon Him

Jesus vicarious substitute for the human sinner requires separation from God

PART ONE: “Why Have You Forsaken Me?” Jesus is quoting Psalm 22:1

In Matthew and Mark this quote is transliterated first in Aramaic and translated

Perhaps to mark it as a quote as distinguished from personal utterance

The gift of the Psalter through history of the church

Giving us language to use when we cannot muster our own

Seeing Psalm 22:1 in its own context

Hebrew poetry and parallelism: rhyming meaning

The rhyming counterpart line: *Why are you so far from saving me?*

God giving Jesus over into the hands of His enemies

(This was not a surprise to Jesus)

Difference between **not intervening** and **turning away from**

Illustration of the hospital episode with 2-year-old Forrest

Seeing Psalm 22:1 in the context of the whole psalm

The Psalms were memorized and internalized

Referring to the first line of Psalm 22 connotes the whole Psalm

The example of “Rockets red glare, the bombs bursting in air”

The overarching sentiment of the song is one of victory

Psalm 22 similarly moves through anguish toward deliverance and triumph

No doubt Jesus had meditated on this Psalm

The Psalm both shows His suffering and predicts His vindicated victory

No wonder He would want to refer to it!!!!

The mockery of the people: 22:6-8 (the people around the cross)

I am poured out like water: 22:14 (the water flow after the spear pierce)

Tongue sticks to my jaws: 22:15 (“I thirst”)

They have pierced my hands and my feet: 22:16 (dogs to nails)

They divide my garments, cast lots: 22:18

At verse 22 there is a shift: a trust overflowing in praise

I will tell of your name to my brothers and sisters; 22:22

At verse 26: the afflicted shall eat and be satisfied

At 28: for kingship belongs to the Lord

Ending with a statement of vindication for all time: see verses 30-31

Jesus’ “It is finished” parallels this

Most telling of all, see Psalm 22:24: *He has not hidden His face from Him*

PART TWO: Jesus became sin and so God had to turn away

Jesus “became sin” (2 Corinthians 5:21)?

Better, Jesus became the sin-bearer (see Leviticus 4:4, 1 Peter 2:24)

Jesus did not ontologically become sin because then He couldn’t have risen

See early Church Father quotes at the end of the outline

His righteousness and innocence is maintained throughout (see Luke 23:47)

The righteous sin-bearer

God eyes cannot look on evil: Habakkuk 1:13

1 God looks on sin everyday in me, you, and the whole world

2 Jesus AS God took on sin and never lost His divinity

3 Better to say sin cannot abide in the presence of God, not the other way around

God does not sin, and sin cannot survive around God, but God can be near it

PART THREE: God HAD to separate Himself from Jesus in order for Jesus to be a legitimate vicarious substitute for human sin

It is true that sin separates humans from God

This why we need to be reconciled, born anew, saved

In Genesis 3 in the act of the incipient sin notice the nature of the separation

Adam hides from God. God comes seeking Adam.

Human sin breaks humans away from God, not turn God away from humans

PART FOUR: Conclusion

“My Father is with Me,” Jesus says in John 16:32

Jesus continues to talk with the Father from the cross in Luke’s Gospel

The metaphor in Hebrews 9:12 of the high priest going into the holy place

The glory of the Father was to suffer with Jesus

Never leaving Him, neither will the Father or the Son or the Spirit ever leave us

EXTRA: Early Church Father quotes supporting the notion that Jesus did not literally become sin but rather is to be understood as the “sin-bearer”:

In the words of the Catechism of the Catholic Church: “Jesus did not experience reprobation as if He Himself had sinned. He was our sin bearer, but did not actually become sin as the early Fathers say:

Ambrosiaster: In view of the fact that he was made an offering for sin, it is not wrong for him to be said to have been made “sin”, because in the law the sacrifice which was offered for sins used to be called a “sin.”

Cyril of Alexandria: We do not say that Christ became a sinner, far from it, but being righteous (or, rather, righteousness, because He did not know sin at all) the Father made Him a victim for the sins of the world.

Theodoret of Cyr: Christ was called what we are in order to call us to be what He is.