

4. Christ was total perfection in body, soul, and spirit therefore He was never subject to physical death. The only way Christ could die physically was from an act of His own volition.
5. Thus, our Lord's vicarious sacrifice for us on the cross was also an act of supreme volition. He did not have to stay on the cross and endure the punishment for our sins. Christ could have dismissed His spirit anytime He chose.
6. But we know from Hebrews 12:2b that "for the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."
7. Since physical death was a voluntary act by Christ, it becomes obvious that He did not choose to give up His spirit until He had completed His assigned mission of dying spiritually for our sins.
8. This enables us to conclude that the mission was accomplished while He was still physically alive. That mission was to become identified with our sins in His own body as a substitute for us. He became a curse so we might be justified before God through faith in Him.
9. The spiritual death of Jesus paid for our sins. He did not dismiss His spirit until that work was done. When this work was done, He offered up His human spirit to the custody of the Father.
10. The best English word to describe the Lord's transfer of His human spirit from His physical body into the third heaven is "consign."⁴
11. The Lord's physical death resulted in a trichotomous consignment of the Lord's Person to three different individuals:
 - (1) Our Lord's human spirit went into the care of God the Father in heaven:
Luke 23:46a And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit."
 - (2) His human soul went into the care of the Holy Spirit in Paradise:
Luke 23:43 And Jesus said to the criminal, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise."
 - (3) His human body was placed in a tomb owned by Joseph of Arimathea who:
Luke 23:53 And he [**Joseph**] took it down and wrapped it in a linen cloth and laid Him in a tomb cut into the rock, where no one had ever lain. (NASB)

⁴ "To give over to another's care; to give, transfer, or deliver into the hands or control of another." Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, eleventh ed.



12. While on the subject of the spiritual and physical deaths of Christ, this would be a good opportunity to address a question recently posed to me by a member of our Internet congregation:

If Adam went from being trichotomous before sin, to being dichotomous after sin, and this is what is meant by spiritual death, did Jesus Christ go from being trichotomous before the cross, to being dichotomous while on the cross? If Jesus Christ did not die spiritually the same way Adam died, why refer to Christ's death on the cross as being spiritual? It seems (we are) using the same term of "spiritual death" but meaning two different things depending on whether (we) are referring to Adam or Christ.

13. Here is the answer to a very good question:

- (1) There are two categories of spiritual death:
 - a. **Real** spiritual death, which applies to Adam and the entire human race born from his line.
 - b. **Substitutionary** spiritual death, which is separation from God in a state of perfection and impeccability. This applies only to Jesus Christ.
- (2) **Real** spiritual death is a reference to Adam's original sin which is imputed to every member of the human race at physical birth.

Romans 5:12 Just as through one man, Adam, the original sin entered into the world and so spiritual death through the original sin of Adam, consequently, spiritual death spread to all men because all sinned when Adam sinned. (EXT)

- (3) **Substitutionary** spiritual death is a reference to the work of Jesus Christ on the cross.
- (4) When Adam died spiritually he became dichotomous with a body and soul having suffered the loss of his human spirit. This resulted in separation from fellowship with God.

Jude 19 These are the ones [unbelievers] who cause divisions, worldly-minded [ψυχικός, (*psuchikós*): "soulish" or "natural man," i.e., possessing only a soul as opposed to πνευματικός, [*pneumatikós*: those who possess a human spirit], devoid of the Holy Spirit. (NASB)

- (5) The original sin was the catalyst for the sinful nature which is transferred genetically to every member of the human race. The original sin is imputed to the sinful nature at physical birth. This means each of us was born physically alive but spiritually dead in a status of total depravity and in need of a Savior.

- (6) This results in every person being born in a dichotomous state of body and soul only. The body is biological life produced by human procreation for which a soul is created *ex nihilo* and imputed to it by God at selection.
- (7) This is total separation from God and total helplessness to do anything about it.
- (8) The spiritual death of Christ is substitutionary and took place on the cross in a status of total perfection and impeccability.
- (9) For Christ spiritual death occurred when our sins were imputed to Him and were judged by the justice of God. During this time of judgment—between noon and 3:00 P.M. on 14 Nisan—the Lord was separated from fellowship with the Father.
- (10) The only characteristic that the **real** spiritual death of the human race and the **substitutionary** spiritual death of Jesus Christ have in common is **separation from God in a state of judgment**.
- (11) The judgment of Christ lasted for three hours while He maintained a status quo of perfection and impeccability. The judgment of members of the human race can last a lifetime or until one believes in Christ for salvation.
- (12) As noted, the **real** spiritual death of the human race is documented in Romans 5:12 while the **substitutionary** spiritual death of Christ is the subject of:
Romans 5:8 God demonstrated His own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died spiritual death as a substitute for us.
- 14. After the judgment was finished the Lord dismissed His spirit into the care of the Father, His soul into the care of the Holy Spirit, and His body to the tomb.
- 15. Three days and three nights would pass before the world would know if God was satisfied with the work of Christ on the cross. The historical proof that Jesus *is* the Christ occurred at the resurrection.

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead:

The spiritual death of Christ is of no effect without the resurrection. Had everyone who witnessed the crucifixion understood what we know today as a result of New Testament doctrine, they would have anxiously awaited the passing of the three days and three nights with great fear and trembling.

According to the Lord's own prophecy they knew they could expect the resurrection after 72 hours had elapsed following His burial—just before sundown on the afternoon of 14 Nisan:

Matthew 12:40 "... just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

This means that anytime after sunset the following Sunday night (Saturday night on a Gentile calendar) the resurrection could occur.

Traditional Christianity has the crucifixion occurring on Friday afternoon and the burial occurring at about 6:00 that night with the resurrection occurring before sunrise Sunday. Assuming it occurred at 6:00 A.M. Sunday morning this only accounts for 36 hours, only half the amount prophesied by our Lord. Why is it important that it be the 72 hours our Lord indicated?

Many cultures do not believe the spirit leaves the body immediately. For example, the Tasmanian culture held that the spirit did not leave the body until sundown. Bronze-Age Greeks believed that the spirit remained in the body until the body began to decay. The Aztecs of the Western Hemisphere believed that the spirit remained in or around the body for four days. Fifth century B.C. Greek historian Herodotus relates in his writings that the Greeks never embalmed a corpse until after three days.

According to the Mosaic Law a person who was defiled by means of contact with a corpse was to purify himself on the third day and seventh day:

Numbers 19:11 "The one who touches the corpse of any person shall be unclean for seven days.

v. 12 "That one shall purify himself from uncleanness with the water on the third day and on the seventh day, and then he shall be clean; but if he does not purify himself on the third day and on the seventh day, he shall not be clean."

Many ancient cultures believed that the spirit could revitalize the body anytime within a three-day period. After three days, the general belief was that the spirit would not return. Obviously then, if the Father had resurrected Jesus after only 36 hours the general assumption could well have been that Jesus was never really dead.

Our Lord's resuscitation of Lazarus from the dead gives us a clear indication of what the Jewish view on this subject happened to be in the first century AD:

John 11:38 Jesus therefore again being deeply moved within, came to the tomb [of Lazarus]. Now it was a cave, and a stone was lying against it.



John 11:39 Jesus said, "Remove the stone." Martha, the sister of the deceased [**Lazarus**], said to Him, "Lord, by this time there will be a stench, for he has been dead four days."

This event occurred about three weeks before the crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Its details were fresh in the minds of all who knew about it. The miracle of raising Lazarus was designed to demonstrate that only through divine intervention can the power of death be overcome.

Thus, we see the miracle of the resurrection occurring after our Lord's body had been sealed for three days and three nights in the tomb.

This fact—that Jesus Christ died physically, was buried for three days and three nights in the tomb, and then rose again—becomes the central doctrine of Christian theology and faith.

Paul includes the resurrection as an integral part of the Gospel in:

1 Corinthians 15:3 I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died [**as a substitute**] for our sins according to the Scriptures [**Psalm 22; Isaiah 53**],

v. 4 and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures [**Psalm 16:9-10; Jonah 1:17 cp/w Matthew 12:39-40**]. (NASB)

In this same passage, Paul uses a debater's technique to demonstrate that those believers who deny the resurrection make him and his fellow apostles false witnesses and if this is true then their entire faith is in vain:

1 Corinthians 15:12 Now if Christ is preached, that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?

v. 13 But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised;

v. 14 and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain.

v. 15 Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we witnessed against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised.

v. 16 For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised;

v. 17 and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; and you are still in your sins.



1 Corinthians 15:18 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ [believers who have died] have perished.

v. 19 If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied. (NASB)

If one accepts the contention of some in the Corinthian church that there is no resurrection, then even Christ is not resurrected and as a result our faith is in vain, the testimony of the New Testament apostles is false, we are still lost in our sins, those who have preceded us in death have perished, and we are of all men most to be pitied. This leads Paul to his sarcastic conclusion in:

1 Corinthians 15:32b If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.

We do not believe as did some of the Corinthian church, that there is no resurrection of the dead. We believe that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, the Son of the living God. We believe He endured substitutionary spiritual death on the cross in payment for our sins. We believe that when He died physically that He voluntarily exhaled his human spirit into the presence of the Father and His soul into the care of the Holy Spirit. We believe His body was buried and remained in the tomb for 72 hours before the reunion of His human spirit and soul occurred with His body. We believe that this resulted in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. We believe that He remained on this earth for 40 more days and that He was observed by many who knew Him according to the Scriptures:

- (1) To Mary Magdalene at the tomb in John 20:11-18.
- (2) To Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of James, outside the tomb in Matthew 28:1, 8-10.
- (3) To Cléopas and his fellow disciple on the Emmaus road in Luke 24:13-32.
- (4) To Peter in Luke 24:34.
- (5) To ten disciples (minus Thomas) on the evening following the resurrection in John 20:19-25.
- (6) To eleven disciples, including Thomas, one week later in John 20:26-31.
- (7) To seven of the apostles plus over 500 believers at the Sea of Tibérias in John 21:1-2.
- (8) To James, the Lord's half brother, confirmed by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:7.
- (9) To the eleven apostles in Matthew 28:16-20.

(10) And His final appearance with the eleven apostles on Mount Olivet just before the ascension in Luke 24:50-53 and Acts 1:3-12.

Luke confirms the validity of these post-resurrection appearances in his introduction to the book of Acts:

Acts 1:1 - Dear Thēóphilus Luke's benefactor who supported him in the writing of his Gospel and Acts]: I composed my first book [the Gospel of Luke] concerning all Jesus set out to do and to teach,

v. 2 - until the day in which He was taken up [ascension], after He, through the Holy Spirit, had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen [the Lord selected apostles, apostles did not].

v. 3 - After His suffering [the cross], He also presented Himself alive [in resurrection body] to these apostles by many demonstrative evidences being shown to them, over a period of forty days, during which He spoke to them of matters concerning the kingdom of God. (EXT)

And finally, the testimony of the angel at the tomb to Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of James, in:

Matthew 28:6a - "He is not here, for He has risen."

With these testimonies from Scripture, we are able to sing with enduring confidence and eternal gratitude Robert Lowrey's rousing, stentorian chorus of his hymn, "Christ Arose!":

UP FROM THE GRAVE HE AROSE
WITH A MIGHTY TRIUMPH O'ER HIS FOES;
HE AROSE A VICTOR FROM THE DARK DOMAIN,
AND HE LIVES FOREVER WITH HIS SAINTS TO REIGN.

HE AROSE! HE AROSE!
HALLELUJAH! CHRIST AROSE!⁵

(End 2023 Easter Special: "Christ Arose!")

⁵ Lowrey, Robert. "Christ Arose." In *Inspiring Hymns*. Compiled by Alfred B. Smith. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Music, 1951), 121.

