

## Who Raised Jesus Christ from the Dead?

March 27, 2016<sup>1</sup>

### Background

Our study today is stimulated by a verse in 1 Peter,

1 Pet 3:18 For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.

“Quickened” means “made alive.” This verse is a clear reference to the resurrection, but it’s puzzling. We don’t usually think of the Holy Spirit as involved in the resurrection. What does Peter mean in this verse?

Let’s examine the role of each member of the Trinity in the resurrection. Most of our time will be spent on the Spirit, the point of Peter’s verse.

### Father

Numerous times, especially in Acts, we read that God has raised his Son (chart).

Act 2:23 Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: 24 **Whom God hath raised up**, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. ... 32 **This Jesus hath God raised up**, whereof we all are witnesses.

Act 3:14 But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; 15 And killed the Prince of life, **whom God hath raised from the dead**; whereof we are witnesses.

Act 17:30 And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: 31 Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by *that* man whom he hath ordained; *whereof* he hath given assurance unto all *men*, in that **he hath raised him from the dead**.

In fact, if you go through the gospel sermons in Acts, you will find that every one mentions the resurrection. Without the resurrection there is no good news. By itself, the death of Christ does not assure us of salvation. It simply proves that our sin is lethal. It is his resurrection that shows that he has satisfied God’s righteous demands, that he has done away with our sin. Because it can no longer hold him, it can no longer hold us.

In turn, the Son requested and depended on this intervention. The Scriptures describe him as crying out to the Father for resurrection:

Heb 5:7 Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto **him that was able to save him from [ἐκ “out of”] death**, and was heard in that he feared;

The reference here is to our Lord’s agony in the garden:

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<sup>1</sup> I originally presented material on these texts on Easter, 1999.

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Mat 26:39 And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, **let this cup pass from me:** nevertheless not as I will, but as thou *wilt*.

Contrary to common opinion, the Father did not deny his request. The cup here is an idiom for God's judgment against sin, which is common throughout the OT.<sup>2</sup> The Son did not ask that the cup would pass by him, but that it would pass from him. He was willing to undergo God's wrath, but he prayed that this judgment would not be permanent. The Scriptures warn of eternal suffering for those who disobey the Lord:

Isa 66:24 for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched;

Dan 12:2 And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame *and* **everlasting** contempt.

Perhaps the judgment he is about to endure as the sin-bearer will never end. He is praying that in fact it will end, that the cup will pass from him after he has drunk it, and the Father granted this request.

In particular, God used the resurrection as a way to manifest his glory:

Rom 6:4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was **raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father**, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

*Application:* This truth, that the Father raised the Son, is a great encouragement to us. When we are tempted to feel that the world is out of control and there is no one who can help, remember the resurrection. It shows the glorious power of God. If he can raise the dead, he can do anything.

## Son

The Son is not passive in his resurrection. He derives from the Father the power to take up his own life. He claimed this power in his initial confrontation with the Jews (chart):

Joh 2:19 Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days **I will raise it up.** ... 21 But he spake of the temple of his body.

The connection between his role and the Father's is that he takes up his life by power delegated from the Father.

Joh 10:17 Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, **that I might take it again.** 18 No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and **I have power to take it again.** This commandment have I received of my Father.

The Father enables him to take up not only his own life, but also all the dead at the last day.

Joh 5:21 For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth *them*; even so **the Son quickeneth** whom he will.

Joh 5:25 Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall **hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.**

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2 E.g., Ps 11:6; Isa 51:17, 22; Jer 25:15, 17, 28; Eze 23:31-33.

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The context (5:19-30) emphasizes the Son's inability to do anything by himself. The power that God has given him to do this deed that particularly manifests the Father's glory.

*Application:* God's power is not just "out there" somewhere. He chooses to exercise it through his people. To his Son he delegated the power of resurrection, not only his own but that of all humanity. Similarly, he will give us the power to do what he requires us to do. "I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me," Phil 4:13.

### Spirit

Finally we come to the verse that set us on this quest: 1 Pet 3:18. It and a close parallel pose a puzzle, resolved in yet another text.

#### The Puzzle

1 Pet 3:18 relates Christ's resurrection to the Spirit, but in a parallelism with the flesh that is confusing (chart).

1Pe 3:18 For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death **in the flesh**, but quickened **by the Spirit**:

In 1 Peter, "flesh" and "Spirit" are entirely parallel in Greek (not "in" vs. "by" as in AV). Both are simply nouns in the dative case, *σάρκι, πνεύματι*, used adverbially. So should look for a meaning that can fit both places.

Each of the two prepositions used by our translators often give the sense of the dative used adverbially, in various passages. But here, the parallelism of the construction suggests that we should understand them in the same way, and neither meaning quite fits.

- What if we translate both expressions with "in"? In this case Peter is saying that our Lord's body died, but his spirit rose. But this is heresy. He died spiritually as well as physically, separated from God by the burden of sin he carried. He rose physically as well as spiritually.
- Could we translate them both with "by"? Then the sense would be that the flesh killed him, but the Spirit raised him. But the Spirit played a role in his death as well: Heb. 9:14 teaches that "Christ ... through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God"

We may find some help in Paul's writings. Peter himself tells us that he knows of Paul's letters (2 Pet 3:15). At the start of Romans, Paul connects the Spirit with resurrection:

Rom 1:3 Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; 4 And declared *to be* the Son of God with power, according to the **spirit** of holiness, by the **resurrection** from the dead:

Notice three contrasts:

- **Made vs. declared by resurrection.**—v.3 describes the result of his physical birth; v.4 describes the result of his resurrection from the dead.
- **Seed of David vs. powerful son of God.**—Paul clearly sets the humanity and deity of our Lord side by side. The point is not that he *became* the son of God. He always stood in that relation to God. Rather he is *declared* to be the Powerful Son of God by the resurrection. The resurrection is the evidence that this son is powerful.

- **Acc. to the flesh vs. acc. to the Spirit.**—Here, as in 1 Peter 3:18, the resurrection is related to the Spirit. This time the construction is not the bare dative, but *κατά* with the accusative, appropriately rendered “according to.” But the meaning is not immediately clear. Moule suggests that “according to the Spirit” refers to the OT prophecies. But these prophecies describe his physical coming no less than his resurrection.

Paul uses the “flesh/spirit” contrast extensively to contrast our state before and after we were saved. For example (chart):

Rom 8:5 For they that are **after the flesh** do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are **after the Spirit** the things of the Spirit. 6 For to be **carnally** [fleshly] minded *is* death; but to be **spiritually** minded *is* life and peace. 7 Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. 8 So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. 9 But ye are not **in the flesh**, but **in the Spirit**, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.

Gal 5:16 *This* I say then, Walk in the **Spirit**, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the **flesh**. 17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. 18 But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. 19 Now the works of the **flesh** are manifest, ... 22 But the fruit of the **Spirit** is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

Perhaps the key to these verses is that Christ’s coming as seed of David deals with our unsaved condition in the flesh, while his resurrection deals with our position as believers in the Spirit.

### **Rom 7:1-6 as the Key**

Rom 7:1-6 in fact seems to develop this idea, in four steps: 1, 2-3, 4, 5-6 (chart). Note that 5-6 deal with the flesh/spirit contrast, while 4 deals with the death and resurrection of our Lord. This relation works out in more detail what Peter and Paul are saying elsewhere.

v.1 *states* the general principle that the law binds a man as long as he lives.

Rom 7:1 Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?

v.2-3 *illustrates* this from marriage.

Rom 7:2 For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to *her* husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of *her* husband. 3 So then if, while *her* husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.

At first glance it is confusing: the husband dies, but the law’s bondage over the wife ends. But “those who know the law” (v.1) would recall from Gen 2:24 that marriage makes two people one flesh, and the death of one is the death of the other. In the husband’s death the wife dies, though not the woman, and this death sets her free from the law of marriage.<sup>3</sup>

v.4 *applies* the principle to our relation with Christ.

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3 The insight is due to Stifler’s commentary, p. 120.

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Rom 7:4 Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, *even* to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.

Our marriage with him is viewed as having two phases. First, the focus is on his body, and when that is slain, we become dead to the law. Then we are married to him in his resurrection, free from the law.

vv.5-6 *explain* this change in terms of the flesh and the spirit.

Rom 7:5 For when we were **in the flesh**, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. 6 But now we are delivered from the law, ~~that being dead~~ being dead to that wherein we were held; that we should serve **in newness of spirit**, and not *in* the oldness of the letter.

While under the law, we were “in the flesh.” Now, v.6, we are “dead to that wherein we were held” (we, not the law, having died—AV is in error here), and as a result we “serve in newness of Spirit.”

Thus the death of Christ has broken the power of the flesh over us, while his resurrection has brought us into the life of the Spirit.

Paul follows the same pattern in 1 Cor 15:42-49 (chart):

The subject is the effect of resurrection (42).

1Co 15:42 So also *is* the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption:

Death consumes a natural body; resurrection yields a spiritual one (44).

1 Cor 15:44 It is sown a natural body; it is raised a **spiritual** body. There is a natural body, and there is a **spiritual** body.

Specifically, through his resurrection our Lord becomes “a quickening spirit” (45).

1 Cor 15:45 And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam *was made* a quickening **spirit**.

We come to bear that image ourselves (49).

1 Cor 15:49 And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

So in 1 Cor 15, as in Rom 7, our resurrection with Christ moves us from the realm of flesh to that of Spirit.

### ***The Resolution***

With these thoughts in mind, we can return to 1 Pet 3:18 and Rom 1:4 (chart).

- Our Lord’s incarnation and death was *with reference to* the flesh, “according to the flesh” because he was dealing with the problem of the flesh. Rom 8:3, he came “in the likeness of sinful flesh” to “condemn sin-in-the-flesh.” His death provides our *justification* from our sins, and deliverance from their *penalty*.

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- His resurrection was *with reference to* the Spirit, “according to the Spirit,” because it made him “a quickening Spirit,” able to endow his followers with that same Spirit (cf. John 16:7, “if I go not away, the Comforter will not come”). His resurrection enables the coming of the Spirit for our *sanctification*, to deliver us from the *power* of sin in our daily lives.

*Application:* Our Lord’s resurrection is the foundation for our spiritual life, the basis on which we are able to enjoy the work of the Spirit and the blessings of the New Covenant. We do not simply observe the glory of the Father in raising Christ, or look forward to the future resurrection of our bodies when the Son exercises his delegated power of resurrection. We share in Christ’s resurrection now. His new life is our new life, a life in the Spirit.

### Summary of the Three

The Father raised the Son to manifest his own glory. The Father is the *source* of the resurrection.

The Father gave the Son power to lay down and take up his own life, and in this power the Son will raise the dead physically at the last day. The Son is the *agent* of the resurrection.

Through resurrection, the Son becomes “a quickening Spirit,” able to bring spiritual life to his own people by giving them the Spirit. The Spirit and his work in our lives is the *purpose* of the resurrection, what Aristotle would call the telic cause of the resurrection (chart).

Rom 8:11 But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. 12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. 13 For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. 14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

This Easter, let us not only rejoice in the deliverance from our sin through the death of our Savior, but walk in the power of the Spirit that he has provided for us through his resurrection.