



Soteriology

The Life, Death, and Resurrection of Christ

Introduction:

The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ form the foundation of the Christian faith. Through His sinless life, willing sacrifice, and victorious resurrection, God's plan of redemption was fully revealed. This study examines how Scripture presents Christ's perfect obedience, His atoning death for sin, and His triumph over the grave.

I. The Life of Christ

- The life of Christ is vital to the death of Christ. His life needed to be perfect, sinless, so that He could be the perfect sacrifice and be the perfect atonement. Let's take some time to examine the life of our Lord.

A. Was Jesus really born of a virgin?

- **Isaiah 7:14** — *Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, And shall call his name Immanuel.*
- 1. Isaiah prophesied the virgin birth, but what was the significance? Why is it important that Jesus was born of a virgin?
- 2. The virgin birth is vital to the Christian doctrine for at least three reasons.
 - a. First, it shows that salvation must come from God. God promised in Genesis 3:15 that the seed of the woman would crush the serpent's head. This prophecy is of Christ crushing Satan. God brought this to fruition by His own power, not by human effort. "The virgin birth of Christ is an unmistakable reminder that salvation can never come through human effort, but must be the work of God himself."¹
 - b. Second, the virgin birth made the hypostatic union possible. The hypostatic union is the union of human and divine natures in the person of Jesus.² "While the human nature that the Son of God received in his incarnation allows him to experience humanity, he does not exist as two persons. He is but one person with two natures—the divine and the human."³ No other possible way for Christ to come to earth would have so clearly united both humanity and deity into one person. The virgin birth perfectly accomplished the uniting of full deity and full humanity.
 - c. Third, and possibly the most vital, is that the virgin birth made possible Christ's true humanity without inherited sin. "All human beings have inherited legal guilt and a corrupt moral nature from their first father, Adam."⁴ That is what Romans 5:12 teaches: sin is passed down from the father; thus, all of humanity is corrupted by sin because of Adam. If Christ had been born from an earthly father, such as Joseph or a Roman soldier by the name of Pandira,⁵ He would have inherited their sin and been an imperfect sacrifice.

¹ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, Second Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020), 664.

² Douglas Mangum, *The Lexham Glossary of Theology* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014).

³ John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, eds., *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 264.

⁴ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, Second Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020), 664.

⁵ Daniel L. Akin, "The Person of Christ," in *A Theology for the Church* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2014), 411.

- i. “The story of Jesus being an illegitimate son of a soldier originated from early Jewish polemical traditions aimed at discrediting Jesus and Christianity. The Talmud first told a story that Jesus was the illegitimate son of a Roman soldier named Pandira, which was then used by the pagan philosopher Celsus to attack Christianity.”⁶
 - ii. “The fact that Jesus did not have a human father means that the line of descent from Adam is partially interrupted. Jesus did not descend from Adam in exactly the same way in which every other human being has descended from Adam. And this helps us to understand why the legal guilt and moral corruption that belongs to all other human beings did not belong to Christ.”⁷
 - d. “The result of the Virgin Birth was a God-man. God always was. The total human nature was conceived by the Spirit in the womb of Mary, and the Baby born was fully God and a perfect human being, united in one person forever.”⁸
3. What does the Bible say about a virgin birth? We have already seen that the virgin birth was prophesied, but what do the gospels say?
- **Matthew 1:18–25** — *18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. 19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily. 20 But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. 21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. 22 Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, 23 Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. 24 Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: 25 And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.*
 - **Luke 1:26–38** — *26 And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, 27 To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. 28 And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. 29 And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. 30 And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. 31 And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. 32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: 33 And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. 34 Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? 35 And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing*

⁶ Ibid., 411.

⁷ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, Second Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020), 664.

⁸ Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1999), 324.

which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. 36 And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. 37 For with God nothing shall be impossible. 38 And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.

4. "The biblical record reveals that Jesus Christ was born without a human father, conceived by the Holy Spirit, and born of the virgin Mary. The virgin birth impacts our understanding of the incarnation. The incarnation teaches that God became man in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. The virgin birth emphasizes both the reality of Jesus' humanity and his divinity as God's Son."⁹

B. Did Jesus live a sinless life?

1. "The sinlessness of Jesus is a most vital point in the Christian faith, on which there can be neither surrender, concealment, nor compromise."¹⁰
2. "Without [the sinlessness of Christ] there could be no true sacrifice, no atonement. Only the just could suffer vicariously for the unjust. Hence, the explicitness of the scriptures. It is as a logical necessity of Christianity that he was the "holy child," "the Holy One and the Just," "who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth," that he did always those things which pleased the Father, and was able to say "Which of you convinceth me of sin?"¹¹
3. The sinlessness of Christ is attested to all throughout Scripture.
 - **2 Corinthians 5:21 (NLT)** — *For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.*
 - **1 Peter 2:21–22** — *21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: 22 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:*
 - **Hebrews 4:15** — *For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.*
 - **1 John 3:5** — *And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.*
 - **Hebrews 7:26 (ESV)** — *For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens.*

II. The Death of Christ

- *For the sake of time, we will not go into the trials of Jesus. Jesus went through 3 religious trials and three civil trials before receiving a sentence to death.*
- #### A. Why did Jesus die?
- *We have already discussed how Christ needed to die if God was to save sinners. But that discussion is on the necessity of the atonement. Why did Jesus lay down His life?*
1. Jesus submitted to the Father's will.
 - **Matthew 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.*

⁹ Daniel L. Akin, "The Person of Christ," in *A Theology for the Church* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2014), 412.

¹⁰ Edward A. Lawrence, "The Divine and Human Natures in Christ," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 24, no. 93 (1867): 63.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 63.

- **John 10:17–18** — *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.*
- **Hebrews 10:7 (ESV)** — *7 Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.’ ”*

2. Jesus died to atone for the sin of the world.

- **Romans 3:23–25** — *23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; 24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: 25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;*
- **Romans 5:8–9** — *8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.*
- **1 Peter 2:24** — *Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.*
- **Hebrews 9:26–28** — *26 For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. 27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: 28 So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.*

3. We will look more in-depth at the atonement in the weeks to come.

B. The Method of Christ’s Death

1. “Crucifixion was Eastern in origin. The Persians practiced it, and Alexander the Great seemed to have learned of it from them. Phoenicia, famed for its barbaric practices, frequently employed crucifixion. Rome apparently borrowed it from Carthage and perfected it as a means of capital punishment.”¹²
2. Before the act of the crucifixion occurred, the victim underwent a series of things leading up to being nailed to a cross.
3. “Precrucifixion torture usually involved flogging, and could also include burning, racking, mutilation, and abuse of the victim’s family. Plato (though Greek) describes the general practice in precrucifixion tortures: ‘[A man] is racked, mutilated, has his eyes burned out, and after having had all sorts of great injuries inflicted on him, and having seen his wife and children suffer the like, is at last impaled (i.e., crucified) or tarred and burned alive.’”¹³
 - While Christ didn’t go through all of these things specifically, this shows the brutal nature of the crucifixion.
4. After undergoing torture, the victim of Roman crucifixion would be forced to carry his cross-bar to the place of crucifixion. The NT attests to this as well. Jesus tells Peter that his hands will be stretched and bound, then forced to go somewhere he doesn’t want to go (John 21:18). Jesus summons those who want to be His disciples to take up their cross to follow Him (Luke 9:23).

¹² Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1999), 326.

¹³ David A. Fiensy, “Crucifixion,” in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

- “The Gospel of John describes Jesus as “carrying his own cross” to the place of execution (John 19:17), while the Synoptic Gospels state that the executioners compelled Simon of Cyrene to carry Jesus’ crossbeam (Matt 27:32; Mark 15:21; Luke 23:26).”¹⁴
- 5. “Once the victim had arrived at the place of execution, executioners fixed him or her and the crossbeam to a tree or wooden post. Pseudo Manetho (third century AD) describes how crucifixion must have looked: ‘Punished on their tortured [bodies], they see the stake (i.e., cross) as their fate. In the bitterest of torment, they have been fastened with nails, [to become] evil banquets for birds and terrible scraps for dogs.’¹⁵”¹⁶
- 6. After being nailed to the cross, the victim of crucifixion would be raised up from the ground. Differing from common misconceptions, the victims wouldn’t be raised very high off of the ground. “Several texts suggest that the victim was kept low enough to the ground that dogs and other wild beasts could gnaw on the legs of the corpse.”¹⁷
- 7. This is what our Lord went through. This is what He submitted Himself to for the sake of His wretched creation. Christ obeyed the will of the Father and was crucified because He loved us. Was His love not demonstrated on Calvary?

III. The Resurrection of Christ

- “The resurrection of Jesus Christ is that central moment in human history that serves as the foundational doctrine of Christianity. After having truly assumed human nature and submitted to an agonizing and shameful public death, the eternal Son of God was truly raised from the dead in his glorified physical body, no longer subject to decay and death. His resurrection validates his identity as the divine Son of God, demonstrates his irrevocable victory over death and the grave, and secures both the present salvation and future physical resurrection of believers.”¹⁸

A. The Morning of the Sabbath

- **Matthew 28:1–9** — *1 In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. 2 And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. 3 His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: 4 And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. 5 And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. 6 He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. 7 And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you. 8 And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word. 9 And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him.*

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ *Apotelesmatica* 4.198f; Greek text in Hengel, *Crucifixion*, 9

¹⁶ David A. Fiensy, “Crucifixion,” in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

¹⁷ David A. Fiensy, “Crucifixion,” in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

¹⁸ Zachary Lycans, “Jesus’ Resurrection,” in *Lexham Survey of Theology*, ed. Mark Ward et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018).

B. Jesus's Victory Over Death

- **1 Corinthians 15:54–55** — *54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. 55 O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?*
- **Revelation 1:17–18** — *17 And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: 18 I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.*
 1. Jesus's resurrection shows His power over death and the grave. He was dead, but now is risen forevermore.
 2. The resurrection of Christ secured our salvation, as Romans 4:25 states that Jesus was raised for our justification.

Conclusion:

From His holy birth to His resurrection glory, Jesus accomplished all that was needed for our salvation. He lived without sin, died in our place, and rose again to give us life. The risen Christ is our hope, our righteousness, and the assurance of eternal life.