

The DEATH of CHRIST and the BLOOD of CHRIST

The death of Christ and the blood of Christ are very closely linked in the Word of God. Faulty doctrine about the one will greatly affect the other. Both are central in God's redemptive program.

1A. The DEATH of Christ

- 1B. Many defective theologies turn attention from the physical death of our Lord, in one direction or another.
 - 1C. The modernist turns our eyes from Christ's death to His life and teachings as the basis for salvation.
 - 2C. The Catholic replaces His physical death with a sacramental death. To them He began dying when in the garden of Gethsemane, when drops like as of blood began seeping from His pores, and He suffers to this day, continuously dying as the "mass" is celebrated around the world.
 - 3C. Some place the emphasis on what Christ did during the three days following His death when He was in "hell."
 - 4C. Others take our eyes off of His physical death and focus them on the hours before His death when He supposedly "died spiritually" as He called out, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"¹
- 2B. No one is happier than Satan to have our eyes taken from the sacrificial death of our Lord Jesus Christ -- no matter where else we may look.

2A. The BLOOD of Christ

- 1B. Many also have turned away from what the Word of God has to say about the blood of Christ.
 - 1C. The legalist effectively sets the blood of Christ aside when he puts our works in place of Christ's death on the Cross for our salvation.
 - 2C. The modernist outright rejects, in determined unbelief, the whole doctrine of salvation from sin through the blood of Christ.
 - 3C. Those who teach it was Christ's suffering in Hades that saves us, can have no real place for the shedding of blood in their theology.
 - 4C. Those who teach it was a (bloodless) spiritual death that saves us can have very little need for the shedding of blood in their theology either.
- 2B. Why is there a tendency to spurn the teaching of the Word of God concerning the blood of Christ?
 - 1C. Aesthetic revulsion. It is repugnant (distasteful or obnoxious) to the flesh.
 - 2C. Intellectual rejection. It is a puzzle to the mind.
 - 3C. Satanic delusion. It is hated by Satan, for HE knows, whether we do or not, that we, like Tribulation saints, can overcome him "by the BLOOD of the Lamb" (Rev. 12:11).
- 3B. Why does Scripture speak of the "blood" of Christ in many places instead of merely

¹ This is the view taken by Mr. R. B. Thieme as expressed in his booklet, "The Blood of Christ."

the "death" of Christ?

- 1C. Because it is the right word -- or else the Holy Spirit made a mistake when He instructed Paul and the other writers of Scripture to use it over and over. There are at least thirty-nine references to the blood of Christ in the New Testament (See Rom. 3:25; 5:9; Eph. 1:7; 2:13; Col. 1:14; etc.). The doctrine of verbal inspiration holds that the very words of Scripture were chosen by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 2:13).
- 2C. To emphasize that His death was not a "natural" death, but a violent death brought about by others. See this thought in such verses as Matt. 23:30, 35; 27:6, 24, 25; Acts 5:28; etc.
- 3C. To relate His death back to the sacrificial types. His death was a sacrifice. Heb. 10:10.
- 4C. Because, in some way we may not clearly understand, Christ's blood -- not merely His death -- has some value to God which makes it "precious blood" (Lev. 17:11; Heb. 9:12 - 14; 1 Pet. 1:19; etc.).
- 5C. To clearly identify what kind of death is in view. "Death" can refer to physical death, spiritual death (as in Eph. 2:1, 5), positional death (as in Gal. 2:20), figurative death (as in Rom. 7:24; 8:10), or incarceration in the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:14). If the word "blood" were always replaced by the word "death" we might well wonder which death is in view. The mention of blood establishes that it is physical death

OBSERVATIONS and COMMENTS concerning the booklet, "The Blood of Christ" by R. B. Thieme.

On pages 11 and 12 Mr. Thieme states, "The Greek noun '*thanatos*' refers to His spiritual death. When it comes to His physical death, the Greek word is '*nekros*'. When the resurrection is mentioned it is often from *nekros*, not from *thanatos*." (Emphasis mine)

Is this true? Let us examine the Word of God and see. The following facts have been gleaned from Strong's Concordance, the Englishman's Greek Concordance, the Greek New Testament, and other such reference works.

While the word "*nekros*" is the word used for Christ's physical death, it is often used concerning the spiritual death of others. Observe Matthew 8:22 where those who are spiritually dead should bury their own physically dead (it is *nekros* in both cases). In Ephesians 2:1, 5 the unbeliever is dead (*nekros*) in trespasses and sins. Hebrews 6:1 and 9:14 refer to dead works -- are they physically dead? In Revelation 3:1 those addressed have "a name that [they] live and are dead [*nekros*]."

Why, then, does the New Testament use *nekros* when speaking of the resurrection of Christ (as it usually does)? The answer is simple. The word *nekros* means "dead" (an adjective) while the word *thanatos* means "death" (a noun). Neither in English or Greek are they the same word. Of course it would say that Christ was raised "from the dead," not "from the death."

What about the word "*thanatos*"? Does it always -- or even usually -- designate the SPIRITUAL death of Christ as Mr. Thieme declares? I discover no less than seventeen places where the word *thanatos* describes the PHYSICAL death of Christ. This is evident in each case, either from the sense of the passage or from the context. Among them are the following:

--- References to His being condemned to death, or thought worthy of death, by men. See for example Matthew 20:18; 26:66; Luke 23:15.

--- John 12:33. "This He said signifying what death He should die." The word here is *thanatos*, rather than *nekros*. What kind of death was He referring to? Verse 32 tells us plainly, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." Physical death on the Cross is the topic under consideration in this verse. There is no need to be lifted up from the earth to die a spiritual death.

--- John 18:32. "That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which He spoke signifying what death He should die." Here again it is *thanatos*, and, as the preceding verse shows conclusively, it is describing His physical death. Neither the Jews nor Pilate could accomplish a spiritual death for Christ.

--- Acts 2:24. "Whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death." Here the word *thanatos*, rather than *nekros*, is mentioned in connection with the resurrection (because the word required is "death," not "dead.").

--- 1 Cor. 11:26. How can breaking a loaf (which speaks of Christ's physical body) and drinking wine (representing His physical blood) "show forth" Christ's spiritual death?

--- Phil. 2:8. "And became obedient unto death [*thanatos*] even the death [*thanatos*] of the Cross."

--- Mr. Thieme declares, "In Col. 1:22 the word 'death' is in the singular -- one death. The Greek word '*thanatos*' refers to His spiritual death." But look at the preceding verse, Col. 1:21, and the first part of verse 22, "Yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death [*thanatos*], to present you holy --." How can this be spiritual death?

--- Notice 1 Peter 3:18. "For Christ 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 made alive by the Spirit." "Put to death" is the verb form of *thanatos* -- *thanatao*! Here is only one death, described by the word *thanatao*, and it is death in the flesh! It is truly a physical death, and not just a spiritual death accomplished while He was still alive physically, for it is followed by a resurrection.

On pages 12 and 13 Mr. Thieme states very dogmatically, "When His spiritual death was complete, Jesus Christ shouted, 'Tetelestai!' Obviously He could not have spoken if He were physically dead! And certainly if He was still physically alive on the Cross after salvation was complete, **HIS PHYSICAL DEATH COULD HAVE NOTHING WHATEVER TO DO WITH THE PAYMENT FOR SIN!** ... Jesus Christ was the only One who died twice on a Roman cross, and **ONLY HIS UNIQUE SPIRITUAL DEATH PAID FOR THE SINS OF**

MANKIND." (Emphasis mine)

Did Christ die twice, as is asserted very dogmatically here? I fail to find even one verse making this statement. However I do find several which say He died once (with the strong implication it was once only): "For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God" (Rom 6:10). "Who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself" (Heb 7:27). "So Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation" (Heb 9:28). "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit" (1 Pet 3:18). The above quotations are from the New King James Version.

He offers the following proofs for his assertion that Christ died twice on a Roman cross.

On page 12 he states that the only time *nekros* is used for spiritual death is when it is found in the plural, as the object of the preposition "*ek*." But *nekros* is usually found in the plural, and it always is plural when it is used as the object of *ek*. Three times the same expression found in Col. 2:12 (*ek nekron*) is used of Lazarus being raised from the dead (John 12:1, 9, 17). Did Lazarus die twice (before the resurrection of John eleven)? Did he die "spiritually" as Christ is supposed to have done on the Cross? How can exactly the same Greek phrase mean one thing in John 12 and something else, altogether different, in Colossians 2:12?

He claims that Colossians 2:12 should be translated, "God having raised Him from the death~~S~~," insisting that the use of the plural here indicates Christ died twice. However, in this suggested translation, he takes the liberty of replacing an adjective (dead) with a noun (death). It should be translated, "out from among the dead [ones]." as Wuest translates it. The adjective "dead" in Greek, as in English, can be used as a noun only by understanding it as meaning "dead ones." It cannot be replaced directly in either Greek or English with the noun "death."

He also uses Isaiah 53:9 to prove that Christ died twice. He translates it, "And He made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death~~S~~ [plural]." Just why the Hebrew would use a plural here I do not profess to know. Whatever it may mean, however, it surely cannot mean that He died spiritually and then died physically, resulting in two deaths. According to Mr. Thieme himself, Christ's "spiritual death" was concluded before He died physically. See where Joseph of Arimathea (the rich man in Isa. 53:9) came into the picture in Matthew 27:57 - 60. It was when evening came, and after Christ had already died (Matt. 27:50). The rich man did not even come into the picture until Christ's body needed a tomb. How, then, was He with the rich man in His spiritual death, which was, according the brother Thieme's view, already past before the rich man appeared?

If Colossians 2:12 and Isaiah 53:9 are the best proof he has, he really has no valid proof!

What about Christ's cry of victory from the Cross? Does the fact that He cried out, "It is finished!" before He died physically prove the physical death had "nothing whatsoever to do with the payment for sin"? If so, then John 17:4 can be made to prove that the Father never gave Christ the work of the Cross as a part of His work on earth. Before He even went to the

Cross He said, "I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do." It is true that the word here for "finished" is not the same as that used in John 19:30, and that it is in the aorist tense instead of the perfect tense, but that does not alter the point at issue. The difference between the perfect tense and the aorist, in Greek, is chiefly a matter of where the emphasis is placed. Both have to do with things completed in the past, but the aorist is viewing the thing accomplished, while the perfect is looking at the present result that follows the past action. In both verses Christ is viewing His work as being already accomplished, even though some of it still has not taken place in time. It is like Romans 8:30 where it says of the believers in the age of grace, "whom He justified He also glorified [aorist]." We are not yet glorified in experience, but it is so certain of fulfillment that in God's eyes it is already accomplished. Surely, if Christ is to say at all, to the ears of men, that His death has completed the work of salvation, He must say it just before He dies. He can hardly say it immediately afterward!

Another important incident at the Cross guards against the mistaken idea it was something previous to His physical death that provides man's salvation. In Matthew 27:51 it says, "And, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks were split." This is interpreted for us in Hebrews 10:19, 20. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh." In the Hebrews passage our access to God is through the veil, symbolizing His flesh, not His spirit. Observe also that it is by the blood of Jesus we enter into His presence. These considerations alone would prove it is Christ's physical death and the shedding of His blood that purchased our salvation. But perceive when this veil, the rending of which provided the way into the presence of God for sinful men, was split from top to bottom. It happened immediately after He yielded up the spirit (died physically)! Read Matthew 27:50 and check it for yourself.² It is not a "spiritual death" that gives us access to God, but a physical death involving His giving up the spirit (Matt. 27:50), shedding blood (Heb. 10:19) and allowing His flesh to be rent by death (Heb. 10:20).

In addition to the above considerations there are many passages of Scripture that clearly teach it was the physical death of Christ that purchased our redemption.

--- The gospel of salvation in which we stand is that Christ died for our sins and rose again (1 Cor. 15:1 - 4). Was this death physical or spiritual? It has to be physical for at least two reasons. It must be physical because it is followed by resurrection. Where is there a resurrection from a spiritual death? Also it must be physical because "He was buried." Just how and where would you bury a spirit? That little phrase evidently was inserted for the very purpose of guarding against a misinterpretation making either the death or the resurrection a spiritual matter. That grave puts a limit on the imagination and guards against false doctrine in this critical area of truth.

² Both Matthew and Mark clearly place this incident after His physical death had taken place. In Luke 23:45, 46 the order is reversed, with the rending of the veil in verse 45 followed by the cry commending His spirit to God in verse 46. In Luke, however, the rending of the veil is lumped together with the three hours of darkness of that afternoon, and the exact sequence of individual events is not in view. The verb is aorist in all three passages.

--- Hebrews 10:5 - 14. God prepared a body for Christ so He could do His (the Father's) will -- the doing of which would sanctify (set apart) every believer. The body was prepared so it could be offered as a sacrifice (vs. 10, 12). This one offering (the physical body of Christ as a sacrifice in physical death) sets believers apart from all unbelievers -- and perfects them forever. If this isn't salvation, what is? Where is there any room for a spiritual death in these verses?

--- As noted previously, Colossians 1:21, 22 indicate that it is physical death ("in the body of His flesh") which makes possible our reconciliation with God.

--- 1 Peter 4:1. "Forasmuch, then, as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind." While this verse does not state specifically that this suffering in the flesh was what provided our salvation, it was suffering for us, and surely there is no hint that the only effective suffering on the Cross was spiritual in nature.

--- 1 Peter 2:24. "Who His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree ... by whose stripes ye were healed." Surely Christ is portrayed as dying for our sins in this verse, and it is His body which is in view. In a spiritual death there would be no "stripes."

--- 1 Peter 3:18 has already been discussed.

SIN -- its CONSEQUENCES and its PENALTY. There is a difference.

God said to Adam, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." On the basis of this statement it is argued that what happened on the day of Adam's sin was the penalty for his sin. If so, it is this penalty Christ must pay. Since Adam did not die physically until many hundreds of years later, the penalty Christ must pay cannot be physical death -- but must be spiritual death. So runs his argument. (See page eleven of Mr. Thieme's book)

Just what did happen to Adam the very day he ate of the fruit?

--- He lost his desire for fellowship with God. Did God forsake him? No indeed! It was Adam who was hiding behind the tree, not God. It was not Adam crying out, "Why hast Thou forsaken me?" but God calling, "Adam, where art thou?" God sought him out, pleaded with him, and made provision for him through the physical death of a substitute.

--- He began to die physically, leading to eventual physical death, and (apart from God's gracious intervention) eternal "death" in the Lake of Fire. According to Hyman Appleman (a Jewish evangelist who spoke Hebrew before he spoke English) the expression "dying thou shalt die" (Gen. 2:17 -- Hebrew) cannot be literally translated into English. It means, "You will be dying, and dying, and dying, and dying ..." -- and so on and on, in a sentence with no end! The moment Adam sinned he began dying physically, he became dead in trespasses and sins, he later died physically, and through eternity, if God did not undertake for him, would suffer the second death in the Lake of Fire.

--- He became the owner of a fallen nature.

--- He died spiritually. He became dead in trespasses and sins as in Ephesians 2:1, 5.

None of these things happened to Christ on the Cross!

Can "spiritual death" -- as suffered by Adam on the day of his fall -- be the penalty for sin?

--- If so, then Adam bore his own penalty before he died physically, for he "died spiritually" the very moment he sinned.

--- If so, then unbelievers today are already bearing their own penalty, for they were born spiritually dead.

--- If so, why is there a judgment (Rev. 20:12) after they have already suffered the penalty, and why is there a second death (Rev. 20:14)?

--- If so, then the only sin bringing punishment is Adam's sin, for other men are spiritually dead before they have committed even one sinful thought or deed.

We must recognize that sin has both consequences and punishment. They are not the same. If a man killed his wife he would face serious consequences. He would not have anyone to care for the house or the children, he would suffer a guilty conscience, his friends and even his family would hate him, and he would be arrested and put in prison awaiting trial. These would be the consequences, not the penalty. In the case of Adam, the evil in the race which sprang from him, the loss of fellowship with God, spiritual death, the fallen nature, and even physical death, are all the consequences of his sin, not its penalty. The "second death" (the Lake of Fire), and all that flows out of the judgment of Revelation twenty, is the penalty.

Now back to the man who killed his wife. If someone else is to take the penalty for him, this substitute does not suffer the consequences flowing from the deed itself. He must only pay the penalty set by the judge.

In the courts of men someone else would not be allowed to satisfy justice for the guilty husband. If he were, however, it would be up to the court to decide what must happen to the substitute. Either he would have to suffer the very punishment determined against the husband; or pay a penalty that, in the judgment of the court, was its equivalent. If the penalty for sin is an eternity in the Lake of Fire, did Christ literally carry out the sentence? No, for He did not go to the Lake of Fire at all. But, in the wisdom and sovereignty of God, He accounted the suffering of a few hours and the one physical death of Christ as sufficient payment.³

Why could not Christ literally and fully suffer the identical punishment we would endure if we were not redeemed? There are some truths about Christ that would make that impossible.

³ Physical death was a consequence of Adam's sin, but Christ did not sin -- so death is not a consequence of sin to Him. With Him, then, it can be accounted a penalty.

--- He is only one man, the God-man to be sure, but only one. If He were, fully and literally, to suffer as the guilty, then He could only take the place of one man. All the others would be left without a substitute.

--- In Christ God and man are joined in one Person. His deity and humanity cannot be separated. Just as He could not have sinned, as man, while His deity stepped aside, so He cannot be cast into the Lake of Fire without going there as God as well as man.

--- Messiah has a future full of glorious activity that has been foretold in the Old Testament Scriptures. If He was cast into the Lake of Fire forever, as the lost will be, these prophecies would all go unfulfilled.

Therefore what Christ did must be the equivalent, in God's judgment, of the total penalty demanded of all fallen men of all time. As stated by Henry C. Thiessen, "Christ did not suffer the identical penalty, but He did suffer the equivalent penalty due the sinner, something a finite person could not do." (My emphasis) ⁴

There are some considerations that make it possible for His suffering and death to be fully an equivalent to the penalty decreed against fallen men.

--- Christ is God, and thus His life has infinite value. The few hours of intense agony on the Cross and the one physical death, when multiplied by the infinite value of His life and Person, more than equal the suffering of multitudes in the Lake of Fire forever. Only thus could He declare that His work of redemption was "finished."

--- His death was a voluntary sacrifice, not a life taken from Him by a vengeful God. This adds greatly to the value of His death in God's eyes. Only Christ could, in an absolute sense, give His life. Any other man, in "giving his life," even though voluntarily, is really only giving up a few years of his life -- for he would die later anyway. Only Christ could choose between dying and not dying at all -- ever.

--- As the lost will suffer in the areas of the spirit, soul, and body, so Christ suffered spiritually, emotionally, and physically on the Cross. See the remarks following on Psalm 22.

--- What He did and suffered was pre-determined as the adequate answer to sin by the Judge Himself, before the first sin was committed. If Christ's death on the cross satisfies the Judge, who are we to complain?

PSALM 22.

In the twenty second Psalm Christ is relating His own experience on the Cross. He describes three specific kinds of suffering He endured there.

⁴ Lectures on Systematic Theology, Henry C. Thiessen, 1983 edition, page 234.

--- Spiritual suffering (verses 1 - 5). Though the spiritual suffering of Christ is not called a "death" in the Scripture, it was no doubt, in His estimate, His greatest agony, for it is listed first in this Psalm. A glorious fellowship, unbroken from eternity, is interrupted. His cries for help during the day and in the night season (the three hours of darkness) are not answered, as were the prayers of David, Daniel, and many other Old Testament saints. Exactly what went on between Christ and the Father, during the three hours of darkness, we are not meant to know. If we had, God would not have "turned out the lights" during that time. Scripture hints at some possibilities however. Perhaps He tasted what the unbeliever will drink to the full when he is cast into "outer darkness" (Matt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30). It may have been particularly during these hours that Isaiah 53:10 was fulfilled, "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief: ... Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin." However this spiritual suffering is not a separate death, nor was it this phase of His suffering alone that took care of our sin. Isaiah tells us He was stricken for our transgressions when "He was cut off out of the land of the living" (Isa. 53:8).

--- Mental anguish (verses 6 - 8 and 13). Indifference, rejection, scorn, and ridicule from those He came to save were a source of acute pain to this sensitive, loving heart. Even among men, being unwanted and ignored can cause such suffering that one may be driven to take his own life in black despair.

--- Physical suffering (verses 14 - 21). His bodily pain was intense and prolonged. From the first slap in the face (Matt. 26:67) until the moment when He cried out, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit" He knew pain as perhaps no other could know it.

The lost will suffer in these same three areas -- spirit, soul, and body -- for eternity. Yet the word "death" used but once in this Psalm, and that in connection with His physical suffering. "My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death" (Psa. 22:15).

How important it is for us to be guided by the Word of God in regard to the place Christ's blood and His physical death have in providing our redemption! The reasoning of even the most highly educated men must be scrutinized carefully to determine whether or not it conforms to Scripture.

"Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you; unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:1 - 4 -- NKJV).

How very carefully God has guarded this truth! It was the physical death and resurrection of Christ that provides salvation for sinful men.