

# Who Raised Jesus from the Dead?

Many New Testament passages say that God the Father raised Jesus from the dead (e.g. Acts 2:24,32; Ephesians 1:19,20). Yet, Jesus said He had the power or authority to lay down His life and take it up again (John 10:17,18). How do we reconcile these seemingly contradictory ideas? Who raised Jesus from the dead?

The New Testament indeed contains passages that attribute the resurrection of Jesus to God the Father. At the same time, Jesus also spoke about His own authority to lay down His life and take it up again. This apparent contradiction can be reconciled by understanding the doctrine of the triune Godhead and the cooperative work of the three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

While it is true that some passages attribute the resurrection to God the Father, other passages emphasize Jesus' own authority and power over His life and death.

John 2:19 says, "Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." Verse 21 says that He was speaking of the temple of His body, referring to His resurrection from the dead.

Who raised Jesus from the dead? According to this passage Jesus says that He will raise Himself. This is proof of His own innate divine power. Someone who depended on a power outside of himself for resurrection could not say this. Jesus not only foretold His resurrection, but that it should be effected by His own power. There were others that were raised at different times from the dead, but Christ was the only person that ever raised Himself! This was the great sign to prove him to be the Messiah; for concerning Him it was foretold that He should be bruised (Isaiah 53:5), cut off (Daniel 9:26), and yet that He should not see corruption (Psalm 16:10). These things were fulfilled in Jesus, proving therefore that He was the Son of God (Romans 1:4).

In John 10:17-18, Jesus said, "For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment have I received of my Father." Here again Jesus is asserting His own authority and ability to lay down His life and take it up again, demonstrating His divine power.

The Young's Literal Translation of this passage says, "no *one* takes it from me." This would include men and supernatural beings. The laying down of Jesus' life for the salvation of man was entirely voluntary. The Father did not compel Jesus to lay down His life, not could Satan have touched His life had He not laid it down voluntarily. (See also Matthew 20:28; John 6:51; Galatians 1:4; 2:20; Ephesians 5:2; Philippians 2:8; 1 Timothy 2:6; Titus 2:14; and Hebrews 9:14, which all say that the sacrifice of Christ's life was given of Himself.)

Some manuscripts have the aorist tense, "no one *took* away". According to this reading the word would point back to the work of Jesus as conceived and accomplished in the eternal counsel of God, where His sacrifice of Himself was not exacted, but was His own spontaneous offering in harmony with the Father's will. This would argue against the idea that Jesus was 'begotten' by the Father sometime in eternity past for the express purpose of dying for a future rebellious race, since in that case Jesus wouldn't have had any

choice. The clear meaning here is that Jesus had this choice and He made this choice of His own free will (c.f. Isaiah 6:8).

The Greek word translated "power" in the KJV rendering of John 10:18 is *exousia*, which means "authority", "right", "privilege". This means that Jesus had the right, granted to Him by the Father, to exercise His own divine power in laying down and taking up His life.

Jesus in rising from the dead freely obeyed the Father's will. The Father's will was still the ultimate source of the action of the Son. Both death and resurrection were in accordance with a commission received from the Father. As with all of His activities while He was here on earth, Jesus acted according to the Divine commandment in executing these things.

John 4:34 - Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.

John 5:30 - I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.

John 6:38 - For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.

The above texts in no way suggest that Jesus is subordinate or in any way inferior to the Father by nature. Philippians 2:6,7 make it clear that Jesus was equal with God but laid aside the prerogatives of divinity that were His by right. As the Son of man, and our perfect example, Jesus did nothing without the concurrence and the authority of God. There is and has always been perfect harmony between all members of the Godhead. At no time has any Person of the Godhead acted independently of the other Persons of the Godhead. These statements of Jesus when He was on this earth as a man simply say that He did not seek to gratify His own will, as distinct from the Father's, or in opposition to it, but that His own will is swallowed up into the will of the Father.

When Jesus said "No one taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself" it was the one thing which Christ claimed to do 'of Himself'. And the precise words used by two of the Gospel writers of His death bring this out very clearly: He "yielded up" (literally "let go") "the ghost" (Matthew 27:50); "gave up the ghost" (John 19:30). The other two Gospel writers have "He breathed out", and Luke shows clearly that the surrender of life was a willing one by giving the words of surrender: "Father into Thy hands I commend my spirit."

Another text that shows that Jesus had the complete power over His own life is John 11:25: "Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

A resurrection is a return to life, and Christ is the author of that return. This is an expressive way of saying that the whole doctrine of the resurrection came from Jesus, and the whole power to effect it was His. Jesus cannot be the author of the resurrection, without also being the source of life. Note that Jesus does not say that He *has* the power of the resurrection or that He *has* life, but that He *is* the resurrection and He *is* the life. Jesus' words also indicate that He was able of Himself to raise men from death to life, without asking it of His Father. Indeed in His prayer to the Father Jesus makes no request, but simply expresses thankfulness (vss. 41,42). But in this prayer is an acknowledgment of the Son's complete harmony with the will of the Father.

As we noted above, the resurrection of Jesus is a result of the cooperative work of all three members of the Godhead. This cooperative work of the Trinity is also evident in New Testament passages such as Romans 8:11 which states, "If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you." This passage emphasizes the role of the Holy Spirit in raising Jesus from the dead. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of life (Romans 8:2), and where the Spirit is present there is also life. Note also that the three Persons of the Godhead are here mentioned as taking part in the final resurrection of the dead, just as they all have been active in the conversion of man. Thus the saints will be quickened "by the Spirit" as a coefficient cause with the Father and Son, even as all three persons of the Godhead were involved in the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

Many New Testament texts speak of God the Father raising Jesus from the dead. Taken together with the aforementioned texts, these passages highlight the cooperative work of the Trinity in the resurrection, with an emphasis on the Father's role.

In light of the doctrine of the Trinity, we understand that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinct persons but share the same divine nature. Therefore, the resurrection of Jesus is a unified action of the Trinity, where God the Father, through the power of the Holy Spirit, raised Jesus from the dead. Jesus, in His divinity, also had authority over His own life and participated in the resurrection.

## Conclusion

That it was the Father who raised Christ from the dead is repeatedly stated in the New Testament. At the same time Jesus declared that He Himself had power to lay down His life and to take it again. These two declarations regarding the resurrection are not contradictory. Though Christ had life in Himself, yet as the incarnate Son who "took upon him the form of a servant" (Philippians 2:7), He could "do nothing of himself" (John 5:19). Jesus exercised His divine power only at the command of the Father. Thus although "the Saviour came forth from the grave by the life that was in Himself" (*The Desire of Ages*, pg. 785), He did so at the call of God His Father.

Rather than being contradictory, these passages reveal the multifaceted aspects of the divine act of resurrection, highlighting the unity and cooperation within the Trinity while affirming Jesus' own authority and power.