

## 09 “THE DEATH OF ADAM” WAS SPIRITUAL DEATH, NOT PHYSICAL

“Yahweh God commanded the man, saying, ‘Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it; for in the day that you eat of it you will surely die.’” Gen. 2:16-17.

### INTRODUCTION

That the “sin of Adam” resulted in physical death for mankind is a widely held belief in many Christian assemblies. We will explore the Biblical evidence to show that “The Death of Adam” was spiritual.

### 1. IN THE DAY THEY ATE, ADAM AND EVE DID NOT DIE PHYSICALLY, BUT THEIR HEARTS WERE PROFOUNDLY ALTERED. AS ENEMIES OF GOD, THEY SUFFERED SPIRITUAL DEATH.

- A. “Eyes of them both were opened.” The Light of Unity was eclipsed by sensual dualism—good and evil.
- B. “Knew that they were naked.” Minds became carnal, corrupted.
- C. “Sewed fig leaves together to make...aprons.” Tried to mitigate guilt, shame
- D. “Man and wife hid.” Desire to elude, hide from God, alienation
- E. “I was afraid because I was naked.” They were fearful, ashamed, estranged
- F. “I hid myself.” Hid rather than humble self and confess, isolation from creator
- G. “The woman whom You gave me...” Enmity with God, human enmity, anger.
- H. “She gave it to me.” “The serpent beguiled me.” Blaming, self-righteousness, self-pity
- I. The innate consequence of pride, rebellion, and defiance of God was exclusion from His presence.

### 2. THE BIBLE IS THE HISTORY OF A LOVING CREATOR OVERCOMING THE SPIRITUAL DEATH OF ADAM AND RAISING MAN TO LIFE IN COMMUNION WITH HIMSELF.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only [unique] Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.” Jn 3:16

### 3. OLD TESTAMENT RESURRECTION: NOT RAISING CORPSES, RATHER, RECONCILIATION TO GOD

**A. The Valley of the Dry Bones** in Ezekiel 37 conveys relational, figurative resurrection from death when God brought his people back from Babylonian captivity.

“And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall have opened your sepulchres, and shall have brought you out of your graves, O my people: And shall have put my spirit in you, and you shall live.” Ezk. 37:13-14

**B. God’s tenacious pursuit** of the love relationship with His people was resisted at every turn. Like the harlot wife of Hosea, they turned to other allurements and “died.”

**Spiritual Death:** “He [Ephraim] exalted himself in Israel, but when he became guilty in Baal, he died.” Hos. 13:1

**Spiritual Life:** But God will provide a way for Ephraim to “be converted that sit under his shadow: they shall live upon wheat, and they shall blossom as a vine.” Hosea 14:7

**C. Judah’s/Jerusalem’s apostasies** were many, as conveyed by Isaiah, but alienation/death will be turned to singing/resurrection/life.

**Spiritual Death:** “The dead shall not live. The deceased shall not rise. Therefore have you visited and destroyed them, and caused all memory of them to perish. Is. 26:14f

**Spiritual Resurrection:** “Your dead shall live. My dead bodies shall arise. Awake and sing, you who dwell in the dust; for your dew is like the dew of herbs, and the earth will cast forth the dead.” Is. 26:19f

### 4. OLD TESTAMENT SPIRITUAL RESURRECTION IN PAUL’S WRITINGS

**A. Paul drew his teaching on the resurrection** (also known as “light”) **from the Old Testament.**

“I stand to this day testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would happen, how the Christ must suffer, and how, by the resurrection of the dead, he would be first to proclaim light both to these people and to the Gentiles.” Acts 26:22-23

**B. I Corinthians 15** is an often quoted teaching of Paul on the resurrection in which he used the Hosea and Isaiah prophetic scriptures (above) to testify to the Corinthians about spiritual resurrection.

“But when this corruptible will have put on incorruption, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then what is written will happen: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’ ‘Death, where is your sting?’” I Cor. 15:54-55.” (based on Is. 25:8 and Hosea 13:14 as above). (Spiritual resurrection was future to Paul, but not to us.)

## 5. JESUS TAUGHT SPIRITUAL RESURRECTION

### A. Jesus, in keeping with Old Testament thought, used the word, “death” for being out of relationship and “life” for reconciliation/restoration/resurrection in the story of the Prodigal Son.

In the story of the prodigal son: “My son was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found.” Lk 15:24

### B. Jesus tells us that union with Him is Life/Resurrection.

- Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will still live, even if he [physically] dies. Whoever lives and believes in me will never die..” John 11:25
- “He who hears my word, and believes him who sent me... has passed out of [spiritual] death into [resurrection] life. John 5:24-5
- “This is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and him whom you sent, Jesus Christ.” Jn 17:3
- “It is the spirit who gives life. The flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and are life.” John 6:63

### C. Jesus’s physical death was a sign. A sign does not point to itself, but to that of greater importance.

“But he answered them, “An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, but no sign will be given it but the sign of Jonah the prophet. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” Mt. 12:39

### D. Jesus’s physical death pointed to the great spiritual reality that he was the first to be raised from the death of Adam i.e. raised from alienation from the Father.

- “My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me.” Matt. 27:46
- “For him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf.” 2 Cor. 5:21
- “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us.” Gal. 3:13

## 6. PAUL TAUGHT SPIRITUAL RESURRECTION

### The life that now belongs to believers is spiritual life i.e. resurrection/union with Christ.

A. “You were made alive when you were dead in trespasses and sins... Even when we were dead through our trespasses, [He] made us alive together with Christ.” Eph. 2:1-5

B. “You were dead through your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh. He made you alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses.” Col. 2:13

C. “If by the trespass of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God, and the gift by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many.” Romans 5:16-17

## 7. SALVATION FROM ESTRANGEMENT FROM GOD FREES US FROM THE FEAR OF DEATH.

“Since then the children have shared in flesh and blood, he also himself in the same way partook of the same, that through death he might bring to nothing him who had the power of [spiritual] death, that is, the devil, and might deliver all of them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” Heb. 2:14-15

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**Note:** The presence of the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden implies death was part of the original plan before the fall. We know that eating and reproduction require growth and death processes.

### SOME SYNONYMOUS TERMS

**SPIRITUAL DEATH:** alienation, sin, estrangement, separation, curse, “lost”, darkness, etc.

**SPIRITUAL LIFE:** resurrection, atonement, salvation, redemption, restoration, righteousness, eternal life, “found”, adoption, light, etc.

**RESURRECTION/LIFE IMAGES:** Messianic Banquet, Marriage Feast, Mount Zion, conquered death, wiping away tears, New Heavens and Earth, New Jerusalem, Kingdom of God, armor of light, house not made with hands, kingdom of light, “in Christ”, body of Christ, New Covenant, etc.

For further study: [The Death of Adam, the Life of Christ](#), by Don K. Preston, [The Resurrection: Israel’s O.T. Hope Chronologically](#), by Samuel G. Dawson, William Bell Jr., Daniel Rogers, etc.