

## QUESTION 53

### Christ's Resurrection

Next we have to consider those things that pertain to Christ's exaltation (questions 53-59): first, His resurrection (questions 53-56); second, His ascension (question 57); third, His being seated at the right hand of the Father (question 58); and, fourth, His power to judge (question 59).

Concerning the resurrection, there are four things to consider: first, Christ's resurrection itself (question 53); second, the quality of the one who rose again (question 54); third, the manifestation of the resurrection (question 55); and, fourth, the causality involved in the resurrection (question 56).

On the first topic there are four questions: (1) Was the resurrection necessary? (2) What about the time of the resurrection? (3) What about the order of resurrections? (4) What about the cause of the resurrection?

#### Article 1

#### Was it necessary for Christ to rise again?

It seems that it was not necessary for Christ to rise again (*non fuerit necessarium Christum resurgere*):

**Objection 1:** In *De Fide Orthodoxa* 4 Damascene says, "Resurrection is the rising again (*secunda surrectio*) of an animal that has fallen and decomposed." But as is clear from what has been said above (q. 15, a. 1 and q. 51, a. 3), Christ did not fall through sin, and His body did not decompose. Therefore, it was not, properly speaking, fitting for Him to rise again.

**Objection 2:** If an individual rises again, he is being moved to something higher, since to rise is to move upwards. But Christ's body remained united to His divine nature after its death, and so it could not have been moved to anything higher. Therefore, it was not appropriate for it to rise again.

**Objection 3:** Those things that are acts involving Christ's human nature are ordered toward our salvation. But as is clear from what has been said above (q. 49, aa. 1 and 3), Christ's passion, through which we were liberated from sin and punishment, was sufficient for our salvation. Therefore, it was not necessary for Christ to rise from the dead.

**But contrary to this:** Luke 24:46 says, "It was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead."

**I respond:** It was necessary for Christ to rise again, and this for five reasons:

First, in order to *commend God's justice* (*ad commendationem divinae iustitiae*), which involves exalting those who humble themselves for the sake of God—this according to Luke 1:52 ("He has put down the mighty from their thrones and has lifted up the lowly"). Thus, since Christ, because of His love for and obedience to God, had humbled Himself all the way up to death on a cross, He was exalted by God all the way up to a glorious resurrection. Hence, Psalm 138:2 says in His person, "You have known me—Gloss: 'that is, approved of me'—"when I sit"—Gloss: 'that is, in humility and suffering—"and when I stand"—Gloss: 'when I am glorified in the resurrection'.

Second, in order to *build up our faith*. For through Christ's resurrection our faith in His divinity was strengthened. For as 2 Corinthians 13:4 says, "Even though He was crucified through [human] weakness, yet He lives through the power of God." And that is why 1 Corinthians 15:14 says, "If Christ has not risen, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain." And Psalm 29:10 says, "What good will there be in my blood—Gloss: 'that is, in the outpouring of my blood'—"when I descend"—Gloss: 'that is, through various levels of evil'—"into corruption"—Gloss: 'as if to answer, "No good. For if I do not rise again at once and my body is corrupted, I will not make it known to anyone; I will not gain anyone".'

Third, in order to *raise our hope*. For when we see Christ, who is our head, rising again, we hope

that we, too, will rise again. Hence, 1 Corinthians 15:12 says, “If Christ is preached as risen from the dead, how is it that some among you claim that there is no resurrection of the dead?” And Job 19:25-27 says, “I know”—viz., through the certitude of faith—“that my redeemer”—i.e., the Christ—“lives”—having risen from the dead—“and”—therefore—“on the last day I will rise again out of the earth ... this my hope is laid up in my bosom.”

Fourth, in order to *inform the life of the faithful*—this according to Romans 6:4 (“Just as Christ rose from the dead through the glory of the Father, so you, too, should live in a newness of life.” And later (Romans 6:9): “Christ, rising from the dead, dies now no more; thus consider yourselves likewise dead to sin, but alive to God.”

Fifth, in order to *bring our salvation to completion (ad complementum nostrae salutis)*. For just as He endured evil things in dying to liberate us from evil things, so He has been glorified in order to move us toward good things—this according to Romans 4:25 (“He was handed over because of our sins, and He rose again for our justification”).

**Reply to objection 1:** Even though Christ did not fall through sin, He nonetheless did fall through death, since just as sin is a fall from righteousness, so death is a fall from life. Hence, what Micah 7:8 says can be understood to be said by the person of Christ: “My enemy, lest you rejoice over me because I have fallen, I will rise again.”

Similarly, even though Christ’s body did not dissolve through decomposition, nonetheless, the very separation of the soul from the body was a sort of dissolution (*dissolutio quaedam*).

**Reply to objection 2:** Christ’s divine nature was, after His death, united to His flesh by a personal union—though not by a union of nature like that by which the soul is united to the body as its form in order to constitute a human nature. And so by the fact that the body was united again to its soul, it was moved to a higher state with respect to its nature, though not to a higher state with respect to its person.

**Reply to objection 3:** Christ’s passion effected our salvation, properly speaking, as regards the removal of evil things, whereas the resurrection effected our salvation as regards the initiation and exemplar of good things.

## Article 2

### Was it fitting for Christ to rise again on the third day?

It seems that it was not fitting for Christ to rise again on the third day (*non fuerit conveniens Christum tertia die resurgere*):

**Objection 1:** The members should be conformed to the head. But we, who are Christ’s members, do not rise again on the third day after death; instead, our resurrection is deferred until the end of the world. Therefore, it seems that Christ, who is our head, should not have risen on the third day, but instead His resurrection should have been deferred until the end of the world.

**Objection 2:** In Acts 2:24 Peter says that “it was impossible for the Christ to be held fast (*detineri*) by hell” and death. Therefore, it seems that Christ’s resurrection should not have been deferred until the third day, but He should instead have risen again on the same day—especially because the Gloss on the passage quoted above (Psalm 29:10) says, “There would be no good in the outpouring of Christ’s blood if He did not rise at once (*statim*).”

**Objection 3:** The day seems to begin with the rising of the sun, which causes the day by its presence. But Christ rose again before the rising of the sun; for John 20:1 says, “On the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb, while it was still dark,” and Christ had already risen by that time, since what follows is this: “... and she saw that the stone had been rolled away from the tomb.”

Therefore, Christ did not rise on the third day.

**But contrary to this:** Matthew 20:19 says, “They will hand Him over to the gentiles to be mocked and scourged and crucified; and on the third day He will rise again.”

**I respond:** As has been explained (a. 1), Christ’s resurrection was necessary for the building up of our faith. Now our faith is both in Christ’s divine nature and in His human nature, since, as is clear from what has been explained (q. 36, a.4 and *ST* 2-2, q. 2, aa. 7-8), it is not sufficient to believe in the one without the other. And so, in order for our faith to be strengthened, it was necessary for Him to rise quickly and for His resurrection not to be deferred until the end of the world. However, in order for our faith in the reality of His human nature and of His death to be strengthened, it was necessary for there to be some length of time between His death and His resurrection. For if He had risen immediately after dying, it could seem that His death was not genuine and, as a result, that His resurrection was not genuine, either. But in order to make the reality of Christ’s death manifest, it was sufficient for His resurrection to be deferred until the third day, since it is impossible that within that interval of time no indications of life would appear in a man who seems to be dead even though he is still alive.

In addition, by the fact that He rose on the third day, what is commended is the perfection of the number *three*, which, as *De Caelo* 1 explains, is “the number of each thing” insofar as it has “a beginning, a middle, and an end.” Again, as Augustine explains in *De Trinitate* 4, in accord with this mystery it is shown that Christ, “by His one death,” which was light by reason of His righteousness, viz., His corporeal death, “destroyed our two deaths,” viz., the death of the body and the death of the soul, which are darkness because of sin. And that is why He remained in death for one full day and two nights. By this it is likewise signified that a third era was beginning. For the first era was *before the Law*, the second was *under the Law*, and the third is *under grace*. Again, in Christ’s resurrection the third state of the saints begins. For the first state was under *the prefigurements of the Law*, the second state is under *the truth of the Faith*, and the third state will be in *the eternity of glory*, which Christ has initiated by rising again.

**Reply to objection 1:** The head and the members are conformed in *nature* but not in *virtue* (*in virtute*), since the virtue of the head is more excellent than the virtue of the members. And so, in order to demonstrate the excellence of Christ’s virtue, it was fitting for Him to rise on the third day while the resurrection of the others has been deferred until the end of the world.

**Reply to objection 2:** To be held fast (*detentio*) implies a sort of compulsion. But Christ was not held fast by any necessity of dying (*Christus autem nulla necessitate mortis tenebatur adstrictus*); instead, He was “free among the dead” (Psalm 87:6). And so He remained in death for as long as He deemed necessary for building up our faith.

Now something that is done after a short interval of time (*fit brevi interposito tempore*) is said to be done at once (*statim fieri*).

**Reply to objection 3:** As was explained above (q. 51, a. 4, ad 1 and 2), Christ rose around dawn, when the daylight was already dawning, in order to signify that through His resurrection He was leading us toward the light of glory—in the same way that His death occurred when the evening of the day was already approaching and tending toward darkness, in order to show that by His death He was destroying the darkness of sin and its punishment.

And yet He is said to have risen again on the third day, where ‘day’ is being taken for a natural day, which contains a period of twenty-four hours. And, as Augustine explains in *De Trinitate* 4, “The night leading up to the dawn when our Lord’s resurrection was proclaimed belongs to the third day. For God, who told the light to shine forth from the darkness, in order that by the grace of the new covenant and by partaking of Christ’s resurrection we might hear, ‘Once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord’ (Ephesians 5:8), makes known to us in a certain sense that the day takes its beginning from the night. For just as, because of the future fall of man, the first days [of creation] are thought of lasting from

light until darkness, so, because of man's restoration, these [new] days are thought of as lasting from darkness until light."

And so it is clear that even if Christ had risen in the middle of the night, He could still be said to have risen on the third day, meaning a natural day. But now, given that He in fact rose at dawn, one can say that He rose on the third day even when 'day' is being taken for an artificial day (*accipiendo diem artificialem*), which is caused by the sun's presence, because the sun was already starting to illuminate the air. Hence, Mark 16:2 reports that the women had come to the tomb "when the sun had just risen." As Augustine explains in *De Consensu Evangelistarum*, this is not contrary to what John says, viz., "while it was still dark" (John 20:1), "because the remaining darkness is dispelled more and more to the extent that the light increases more and more. And the fact that Mark says, 'When the sun had just risen', should be taken to mean not that the sun was already being seen over the horizon, but that it was to coming close to that point."

### Article 3

#### Was Christ the first one to rise from the dead?

It seems that Christ was not the first one to rise from the dead (*Christus non primo resurrexit*):

**Objection 1:** In the Old Testament we read that some individuals were brought back from the dead by Elijah and Elisha—this according to Hebrews 11:35 ("Women received back their dead by resurrection"). Similarly, even Christ, before His own resurrection, brought back three individuals from the dead. Therefore, Christ was not the first of those who rose from the dead.

**Objection 2:** Matthew 27:52 reports that, among other miracles that occurred during Christ's passion, "tombs were opened and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep rose up." Therefore, it is not the case that Christ was the first one to rise from the dead.

**Objection 3:** Just as through His resurrection Christ is a cause of our resurrection, so through His grace He is a cause of our grace—this according to John 1:16 ("... of His fullness we have all received"). But others had grace in the time before Christ, e.g., all the Patriarchs of the Old Testament. Therefore, some individuals likewise came to the resurrection of the body before Christ.

**But contrary to this:** 1 Corinthians 15:20 says, "Christ is risen from the dead, the first fruits of those who sleep." Gloss: "Because He rose first in time and in dignity."

**I respond:** Resurrection is the restoration of life from death. Now there are two ways in which an individual is taken back from death:

In one way, only from *actual* death, so that, namely, the individual begins to live in some way after having been dead.

In the second way, the individual is liberated not only from [actual] death, but also from the *necessity* of dying and, what's more, from the *possibility* of dying. And this is true and perfect resurrection.

For as long an individual lives his life subject to the necessity of dying, he is in a certain sense dominated by death—this according to Romans 8:10 ("The body is indeed dead because of sin"). Again, that which is possibly such-and-such is said to be such-and-such in a certain respect (*secundum quid*), i.e., in potentiality. And so it is clear that a resurrection by which one is liberated only from *actual* death is an imperfect resurrection.

Therefore, speaking of a *perfect* resurrection, Christ is the first of those who rise from the dead, since by rising He was the first to attain a completely immortal life—this according to Romans 6:9 ("Christ, having risen from the dead, dies now no more"). But certain other individuals rose from the

dead before Christ by an *imperfect* resurrection, in order, as it were, to give an advance indication of His resurrection.

**Reply to objection 1:** And so the reply to the first objection is clear, since both those who were brought back from the dead in the Old Testament and those who were brought back from the dead by Christ returned to life in such away that they were to die again.

**Reply to objection 2:** There are two opinions about those who rose from the dead with Christ.

For some assert that they returned to life as individuals who were not going to die again, since it would be a greater torment to them if they were going to die again than if they had not risen. Accordingly, it will have to be understood, as Jerome points out in *Super Matthaëum*, that they did not rise before our Lord rose. Hence, the evangelist says, "... coming forth out of their tombs *after His resurrection*, they came into the holy city and appeared to many" (Matthew 27:53).

However, in *Epistola ad Evodium* Augustine, having recounted this opinion, replies, "I realize that it appears to some that by the death of Christ our Lord the same excellent resurrection was conferred upon the righteous as is promised to us at the end [of the world]. But if they are not going to sleep again by laying aside their bodies, it remains to be seen how Christ is going to be understood as 'the first born among the dead' if so many preceded Him in that resurrection. Now if someone replies that this is said by way of anticipation, so that the tombs are understood to have been opened by an earthquake while Christ was still hanging on the cross, but the bodies of the righteous rose not at that time but instead after He Himself had risen, a difficulty still remains with the way in which Peter argued [in Acts 2] that it had been foretold not of David, but of Christ, that His body would not see corruption (Psalm 15:10), viz., by appealing to the fact that David's tomb was in their midst. And he would not have appealed to them in this way if David's body were no longer there. For even if David had risen soon after his death and his flesh had not seen corruption, his tomb could still have remained. Moreover, it seems hard to believe that David, from whose seed Christ is descended, was not included in that resurrection of the righteous if an eternal resurrection had been conferred upon them. Again, it will be hard to verify that passage in Hebrews 11:40 regarding the righteous people of old, viz., 'that they will not be perfected without us', if they had already been established in that incorruption of the resurrection which is promised to us at the end [of the world], when we shall be made perfect."

So, then, Augustine seems to think that they rose about to die again. Also relevant is what Jerome says in *Super Matthaëum*, "Just as Lazarus had risen from the dead, so, too, many bodies of the saints rose, in order to bear witness to our risen Lord." However, in the sermon *De Assumptione* he leaves this question open (*sub dubio relinquat*). Still, Augustine's arguments seem much more effective.

**Reply to objection 3:** Just as those things that preceded Christ's coming were in preparation for Christ, so grace is a preparation for glory (*disposition ad gloriam*). And so it was fitting for the things that belong to glory—regardless of whether they have to do with the soul, e.g., the perfect enjoyment of God, or with the body, e.g., a glorious resurrection—to exist temporally first in Christ, as in the author of glory. By contrast, it was appropriate for grace to exist first in those things that were ordered toward Christ.

## Article 4

### Was Christ a cause of His own resurrection?

It seems that Christ was not a cause of His own resurrection (*Christus non fuerit causa suae resurrectionis*):

**Objection 1:** If anyone is brought back from the dead by another (*suscitatur ab alio*), then he is

not a cause of His own resurrection. But Christ was brought back from the dead by another—this according to Acts 2:24 (“... whom God brought back from the dead, with the sorrows of hell having been dissolved”) and Romans 8:11 (“He who brought Jesus Christ back from the dead will vivify our mortal bodies as well ...”). Therefore, Christ was not a cause of His own resurrection.

**Objection 2:** No one is said to merit, or to ask from another, what he himself is the cause of. But by His passion Christ merited resurrection; as Augustine puts it in *Super Ioannem*, “The humility of the passion merited the glory of the resurrection.” Again, Christ Himself asks the Father that He might be brought back from the dead—this according to Psalm 40:11 (“O Lord, have mercy on me, and raise me up again”). Therefore, Christ was not a cause of His own resurrection.

**Objection 3:** As Damascene explains in *De Fide Orthodoxa* 4, resurrection belongs not to the soul, but to the body, which has fallen through death. But the body could not have united itself to the soul, which is more noble than it. Therefore, that which rose in Christ could not have been a cause of His resurrection.

**But contrary to this:** In John 10:17-18 our Lord says, “No one takes my life (*animam meam*) from me, but I myself lay it down and I take it up again.” But to rise from the dead is nothing other than to take up one’s life again (*iterato animam sumere*). Therefore, it seems that Christ rose from the dead by His own power.

**I respond:** As was explained above (q. 50, aa. 2-3), Christ’s divine nature was not separated by death either from His soul or from His flesh. Therefore, both Christ’s soul and His flesh can be thought of in two ways: (a) in relation to His divine nature (*ratione divinitatis*), and (b) in relation to His created nature (*ratione ipsius naturae creatae*).

Thus, by the power of the divine nature united to it, (a) the body took back the soul that it had deposed and (b) the soul took back the body that it had dismissed. And this is what is said of Christ in 2 Corinthians 13:4 (“Even though He was crucified through [human] weakness, yet He lives through the power of God”).

On the other hand, if we think of the body and soul of the dead Christ in relation to the power of the created nature, then in this sense they could not have been reunited with one another, but instead it was necessary for Christ to be brought back to life by God.

**Reply to objection 1:** The divine power and operation of the Father is the same as the divine power and operation of the Son. Hence, these two [propositions] follow from one another, viz., (a) that Christ was brought back to life by the divine power of the Father and (b) that Christ was brought back to life by His own divine power.

**Reply to objection 2:** By His prayer Christ asked for and merited His own resurrection insofar as He is a man, but not insofar as He is God.

**Reply to objection 3:** In accord with its created nature, Christ’s body is not more powerful than His soul, but in accord with its divine power it is more powerful than the soul. Again, the soul, in accord with the divine nature united to it, is more powerful than the body is in accord with its created nature. And so the body and the soul mutually took one another up again by their divine power, but not by the power of their created nature.