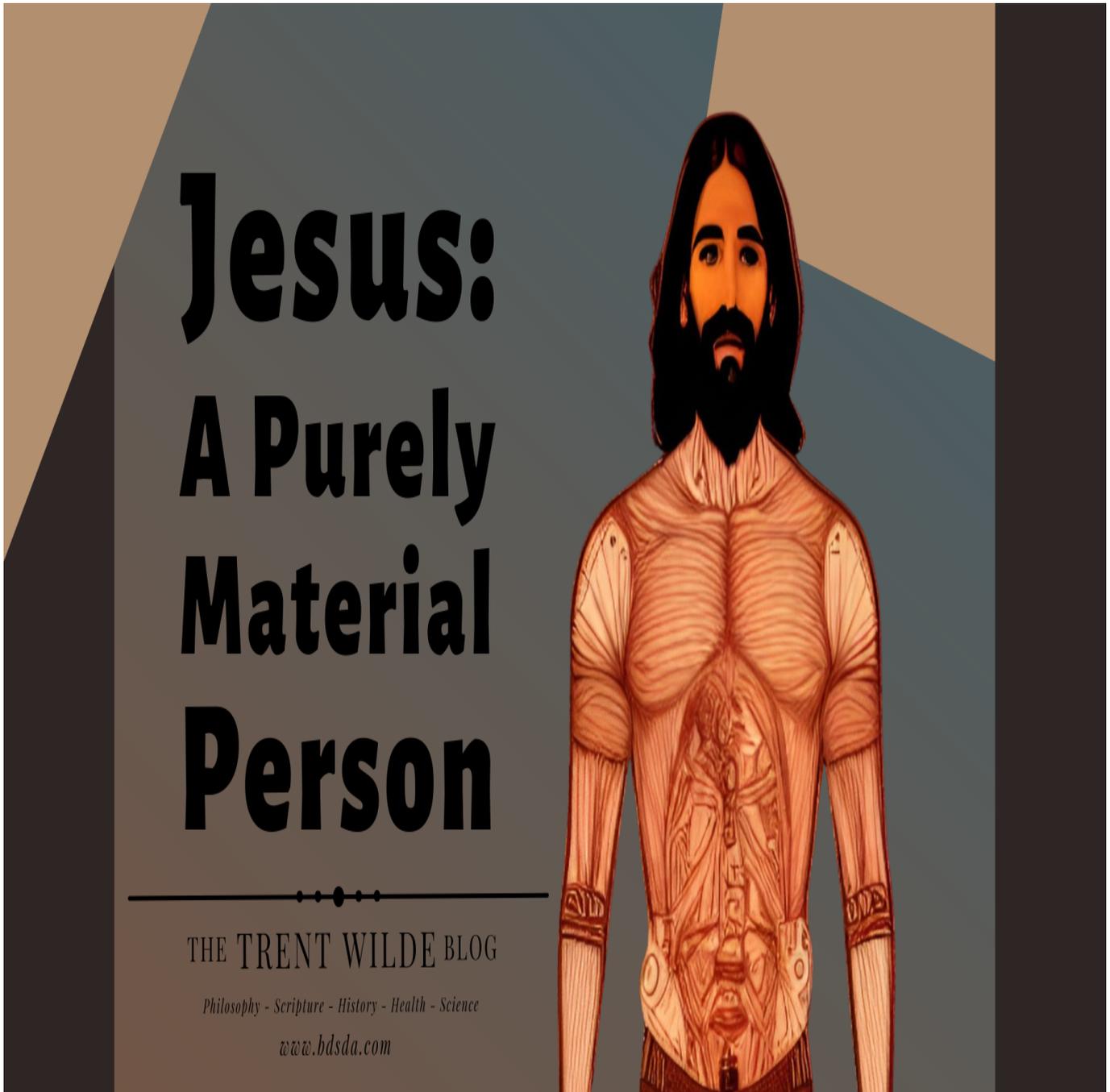


Jesus: A Purely Material Person

Description



¹The image of Jesus included in this banner is an edited version of an image I generated using WOMBO's Dream ai services. ([Podcast Version](#) & [Follow/Subscribe](#))

[In our last post](#), we saw that Jesus and his early followers had a materialistic understanding of human nature. They believed and taught that bodily resurrection is the *only* hope for a future life (a doctrine that is fundamentally inconsistent with the idea that we have immaterial souls).

In this post, we turn to Jesus's own nature. Since Christians typically understand humans to have a dual nature, it's unsurprising that they think of Jesus as a "dual being" as well, having a human body, but a divine soul or spirit. But from [our previous post](#), it should be clear that this sort of dualism is inconsistent with Jesus's own teachings. So it's really implausible to think that he or his earliest followers thought of him like that. And actually, a read-through of the earliest writings of Jesus's followers, reveals that they never described him as a "dual being," but always as a unitary being—a purely material person.

The gospels describe Jesus as teaching that he would die and be resurrected on the third day. And in all this description, there is no mention of an immaterial soul and no indication that he would exist separate from his body during his death. On the contrary, he describes his own death and resurrection in the same way as he describes everyone's death and resurrection. For sake of time I won't cite the passages, but you can find them easily by doing searches in the New Testament for words like "rise," "raised," and "resurrection."

Okay, let's now look at how Jesus is depicted at a few key points in the gospels.

In describing Jesus as a child, *The Gospel of Luke* says,

52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.
— Luke 2:52 (WEB) WEB stands for *World English Bible*.

If Jesus was a dual being, you might expect that his body would grow, but why would his *wisdom* grow along with his body? Dualists attribute wisdom to the soul, and if Jesus's soul was the 2nd person of the Trinity inhabiting his body, wouldn't it already have all wisdom? But here, the maturation of Jesus is said to include increasing in stature *and wisdom*. This is the way it is with all of us; our mental capacities develop in conjunction with the development of our bodies. Likewise, our mental capacities deteriorate along with our brains in old age. This is a powerful argument for the purely material nature of mental activity in general. And the fact that Jesus was no exception to this rule indicates that his mind too was simply the activity of his thinking organ, rather than being a separate non-physical soul inhabiting his body.

Alright, let's move to the next point:

If Jesus's followers believed he was a dual being with a non-physical aspect, perhaps the place you would most expect to see them mention it is when describing his death. But this isn't what you find at all. Consider these selections from *The Gospel of Mark* regarding Jesus's death, burial, and resurrection:

37 Jesus cried out with a loud voice, and gave up the spirit [the word "spirit" here is misleading, the word just means "breath"].

41

43 Joseph of Arimathea boldly went in to Pilate, and asked for Jesus's body.

44 He granted the body to Joseph. 46 He bought a linen cloth, and taking him down, wound

him in the linen cloth, and laid him in a tomb which had been cut out of a rock. 47 Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of James, saw where he was laid.

1 When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome,

2 came to the tomb

3

5 Entering into the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were amazed. 6 He said to them, "Do not be amazed. You seek Jesus, the Nazarene, who has been crucified. He has risen. He is not here. Behold, the place where they laid him."

7 selections from Mark 15:37-16:6 (WEB) (bracketed note added)

Notice, there is nothing here about a soul of Jesus continuing to exist while his body was dead. Instead, his body is plainly identified as being him — Jesus. The same body (the one that was Jesus) lived, was crucified, died, was buried, and then was raised from the dead on the third day.

Okay, let's go back to *Luke*. What I'm about to read comes from an account of the risen Jesus appearing to his disciples. This is what he said to them:

39 Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.

40 Luke 24:39 (NASB) ³NASB stands for *New American Standard Bible*.

It's hard to imagine a text plainer than that: The risen Jesus is a physical, corporeal person. It's not that the risen Jesus merely *had* a body; it's that he *is* a body. Again, he says, "Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself." Jesus, then, isn't a non-physical self dwelling in a physical body; he *is* his body — he is a purely material person.

This same materialistic understanding of Jesus is maintained while describing his ascension and while pointing forward to his second coming. Consider this passage from Acts:

9 When he had said these things, as they were looking, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight. 10 While they were looking steadfastly into the sky as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white clothing, 11 who also said, "You men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who was received up from you into the sky will come back in the same way as you saw him going into the sky."

12 Acts 1:9-11 (WEB)

This same purely material Jesus who lived, died, was buried and raised from the dead and who appeared bodily to his disciples is here described as being taken bodily into the sky, and it is promised that he — again, he same physical Jesus — will return bodily again, in the same way he went.

In this post, we really just scratched the surface when it comes to the materialistic understanding of Jesus among his early followers. If you want more, I recommend [subscribing to the podcast](#) and also just keeping up with the material we publish on this website.

Also, we have a series of live zoom meetings coming up from October 11-17 (2022) on a topic closely related to what we covered today. More specifically, it's on [The Personality of God: An SDA Pillar Doctrine](#).

UPDATE: The meetings are now finished. You can watch the recordings [HERE](#).

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