

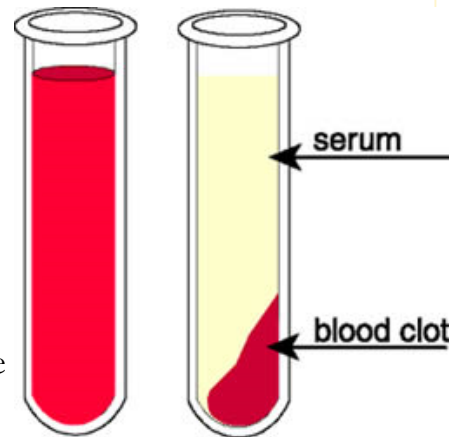
## The Issue of Blood and Water

**But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out. And he who saw it . . . knows that he is telling the truth, that you may believe. John 19.33–35**

The issue of blood and water from the side of Jesus is one of the most fascinating aspects of the crucifixion accounts. John says that he reported what he saw that *you may believe*. Believe what? Why, that Jesus was dead! It's important that we know that Christ died for we have no basis for affirming His resurrection unless we can first affirm that He died!

But how did the issue of blood and water prove this? Couldn't blood and water flow from a similar wound inflicted on a living person? Of course they could, but what I understand John to be saying is that the blood and water he saw leave Christ's side was solid proof that Christ had died. How so?

1. When death occurs, the properties of blood change. First, it is no longer under the pressure of a pumping heart; any movement it makes after death is due to gravity. Second, post-mortem blood clots, congeals, turns to jelly because (in part) the water-looking serum separates from the red clotting material. A flow of blood *and* water would indicate that this cellular breakdown had occurred. The appearance of post-mortem blood (*right*), therefore, is very different from what we see when we cut ourselves (*left*); so much so, that anyone with an experienced eye would know immediately whether death had occurred.



2. A soldier on a crucifixion detail likely had an experienced eye. To determine if Jesus was dead, the legionnaire didn't feel Christ's pulse but used his spear to make a hole that allowed blood to escape. My guess is that spear was inserted low on the torso (since gravity would be pulling the bodily fluids downward) where it would be likely that blood had pooled (there was absolutely no need to pierce the pericardial sac), and that not much blood and water actually exited. But enough came out for the soldier to confirm, based on what he saw—*flow* (by gravity, not hydraulic pressure) and *appearance* (congealed blood and serum)—that Christ was dead.

I don't know if the soldier realized that his method for determining Christ's mortal status carried an extremely high degree of probability, but it did. And when I read that nothing further was done to Jesus, it puts the matter of His death beyond dispute.

