

The Apostles' Creed: The third day He rose again from the dead (10)

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth

I believe in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, our Lord

Who was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary

He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell

The third day He rose again from the dead

He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty

He will come again to judge the living and the dead

I believe in the Holy Spirit

The holy catholic Church; the communion of saints

The forgiveness of sins

The resurrection of the body

And the life everlasting

- The previous section, concerning Christ's suffering and death sets the background for our present section. Only from a real death, does a resurrection make a real difference. If Jesus had not really died, then we would not be talking resurrection, but resuscitation...and indeed, if He had not risen from the dead, we wouldn't be talking at all. Therefore, to appreciate the resurrection, we must appreciate death, and the Creed emphasizes the death of Christ extensively in this section so that the resurrection of Christ will be seen in all its glory.
- Death is the great enemy of mankind. It is the ultimate fear of all living beings because it is something we simply can't control or understand no matter how hard we try or how long we study it. We can talk about the stars in galaxies far, far away and we have unraveled (to some degree) the intricacies of DNA, and yet, the most frequently occurring event in all of life is a totally mystery to us. It is the great universal unknown, because no one ever comes back from it to tell the rest of us what it is like and what happens after it.
- Death is the penalty of sin. Adam would not have died, if he had not sinned. But according to the terms of the Covenant of Works, when Adam sinned, death entered the picture and has reigned over every son or daughter of Adam who have ever descended from him: *because of one man's sin, death reigned...* (Rom. 5:17), *...for the wages of sin is death,* (Rom. 6:23).
- Jesus was not a son of Adam—being the very Son of God—He did not inherit Adam's sinful nature, and, having never committed a single sin in His life, He was entirely immune from the penalty of death. Thus the only way He could die is to actually lay down His life on His own accord (cf. Jn. 10:18).
- Being fully man, He was able to die, but being sinless He wouldn't, unless, somehow, guilt was imputed to Him. And therefore, through imputation—or a reckoning to Him—He took the sins of His people upon Himself. Therefore, Jesus became sin—He had our guilt and sin imputed to Him—so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God—we get His obedience and righteousness imputed to us: *For our sake He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God* (2 Cor. 5:21). Thus, being counted as a sinner, He died in the place of sinners.
- But, it is at this point that the indispensability of the resurrection comes into clear view. If Jesus would not have risen from the dead, we would still be dead in our sin. Why? Because only by His resurrection was it "proven" that He is indeed the Son of God. And therefore, only by His resurrection do we know that His sacrifice was once and for all effectual for atoning for our sin. And therefore, only by His resurrection can we be confident that the penalty for our sin—death—has really been conquered. And furthermore, only by His resurrection can we be assured of the reality of eternal life. And, finally, only by His resurrection are we enabled to walk now in the newness of that eternal life.
- So, **first of all**, the resurrection proved that Jesus was really and truly the Son of God—...*concerning His Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by His resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord* (Rom. 1:3-4)—which means then that though descended from David "according to the flesh" (that is, Joseph was His earthly father), Jesus was not descended from Adam. Rather, He was born without a sinful nature, because His Father is God...not Adam.
- So, **secondly**, the resurrection tells us that His sacrifice was accepted by God as a pure and sinless sacrifice. In other words, until Jesus rose from the dead, it wasn't clear whether or not His death would actually atone for the sins of others. If He would have stayed dead, then it would have been established that He had His own sin to die for (cf. Heb. 7:27). But His resurrection proves that He could not be held by death, and thus the resurrection declares our justification before God, because it declares that God has

accepted the sacrifice of the sinless Jesus: *But the words “it was counted to him” were not written for his [Abraham’s] sake alone, but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in Him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.* (Romans 4:24-25)

- **Thirdly** then, the resurrection gives us confidence that the penalty for our sin—death—has really been conquered. In other words, *we see Him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.* (Heb. 2:9). Thus, because of the resurrection of Christ, we can say, *“O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?”...But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.* (1 Cor. 15:55, 57).
- **Fourthly** then, the resurrection assures us of the reality of eternal life. It does so because we are taught through out the Scriptures that we have been united with Jesus in His death, burial, and resurrection, and thus if He dies no more, but ever lives, we, being united to Him, can never die, but will also live forever: *...being justified by His grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.* (Tit. 3:7). *And this is eternal life, that they know You the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.* (Jn. 17:3). *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.* (Rom. 6:23). *The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, but He holds His priesthood permanently, because He continues forever. Consequently, He is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.* (Heb. 7:23-25).
- **Fifthly**, and finally, the resurrection of Jesus enables us to live in newness of life in the present age. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is at work within us, and therefore, because of the resurrection of Christ, we actually begin to live and experience that eternal life in the here and now: *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.* (Rom. 8:11).
- Now, if you have noticed, instead of seeking to prove the resurrection of Christ, we have actually been saying that the resurrection of Christ proves that salvation is found in Jesus Christ alone. Thus Paul would say (1 Cor. 15:14-19):

...if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

- *But*, Paul goes on to say in the very next verse (1 Cor. 15:20), *in fact Christ has been raised from the dead.* And at the beginning of this chapter he had cited the fact that the risen Christ had appeared to over 500 people (15:3-8), many who were still alive when Paul was writing, and in fact that Jesus had appeared to Paul himself. Thus, there is this tension between using the resurrection for proof of the Christian faith, and, at the same time, proof for the resurrection itself. And herein lies the rub to this day. Paul’s explicit statement is that Jesus, after His resurrection, “appeared” to many people, but, the fact remains, there were very many people that Jesus did not appear to. You see, He appears to and makes Himself known to some ...but not all—He proves His resurrection to some, but not to all—thus some believe, but some do not.
- But, when someone does not believe in the resurrection, it is not for lack of evidence; it is because they refuse to believe. In fact the Scriptures highlight two main evidences for the resurrection of Christ that all believers have found compelling, but unbelievers dismiss. And yet the dismissal is not because the evidence is not compelling, but because unbelievers categorically don’t believe that a resurrection could have happened. Thus, their unbelief drives their rejection of the evidence...it is a philosophical prejudice against the supernatural happening, not actually proof that it didn’t happen.
- The two main evidences for the resurrection of Christ given in the Bible are: 1) An empty tomb, 2) The numerous physical, bodily appearances of Jesus. Both of these combine to give solid proof of Christ’s resurrection: An empty tomb without actual bodily appearances of Jesus alive after His death, is not compelling, and, accounts of bodily appearances of Jesus, but yet a tomb that still has His body in it, is also not compelling. And yet together these two facts form a solid basis upon which the believer can rest their faith, but, both require one to believe that a dead man came back to life, and that is just too much for the unbeliever to believe.
- So, the resurrection is the proof of our faith, not really the part of our faith that we must prove to others. It is primarily a proof and comfort for believers. If Jesus rose from the dead, then there is salvation in Him.
- Thus we confess, ***I believe...He rose again from the dead.***