

Redeemer OPC, Hawaii

Adult Sunday School

The Apostles' Creed (6)

“Fifth Article - Christ's Resurrection”

- I. Introduction. Review: The last couple of weeks we examined in some detail the creed's fourth article on the death of the Son. We looked at His suffering under Pontius Pilate and a great deal that it implied, including the historical significance, the significance of Christ's being condemned by the civil ruler, and the extent and nature of His suffering. We saw a couple of theological truths to draw from His suffering in His human nature, including the impassibility of God. Then we talked about the significance of His crucifixion, death, and burial, and we worked on what is often a problem phrase for many people, “He descended into hell.” We trust that it is no longer a problem for you, and that you can now guard against errors that have been associated with it in the past. Now we move on to examine the fifth article of the Apostles' Creed, “The third day He rose from the dead.”
- II. Resurrection on the Third Day. Why the third day? Again, we could simply say that it fulfilled prophecy, and we would be right. However, the prophecies of the resurrection on the third day are not as clear as even the prophecies of the crucifixion, and you may recall that they were somewhat figurative. One particular indication that Christ's resurrection would take place on the third day is tied up with a type in a rather interesting way. When God commanded Abraham to sacrifice his son, Isaac, it was on the third day after leaving home that they reached Mt. Moriah. It was the third day after Abraham had to consider the son of promise as good as dead because of God's command. It was the third day after Abraham had to trust God, and did trust God, that He is able to raise men from the dead. It was the third day when Abraham raised the knife, and God stopped him, and he received Isaac back from the dead, so to speak, as a type of the resurrection. That was one of the

things that the Scripture is very clear in telling us that God wanted to teach His people through that historical event, that there is a resurrection from the dead for His people that is connected with a resurrection of the ultimate Son of promise on the third day. Other “third day” events in OT Scripture also foreshadowed Christ’s resurrection. When King Hezekiah became ill and the Lord said he was about to die, he prayed and asked the Lord to keep him from it, so that Israel would not be deprived of a king to sit on David’s throne and deprived of the promised Messiah who would descend from David’s line. God answered by promising to heal Hezekiah so that he could return to worship God in the temple on the third day. Hezekiah the king received new life on the third day. What a foreshadowing of Christ the King who received new life by His resurrection from the dead on the third day to remain on David’s throne forever. When Queen Esther was faced with the fact that she was made queen “for such a time as this,” she ordered Mordecai and the rest of the Jews to fast and pray. She knew that if she went in to the king without being summoned, it would cost her life, so she gave herself up for dead. “If I perish, I perish.” On the third day, she went in to the king without being summoned, and the king extended his scepter to her signifying that he was well-pleased with her presence. By this, he granted her life anew back to her, so to speak, and through her, gave life back to all the Jews who were threatened with death by Haman and apart from her were themselves as good as dead. Hosea gave the people an even clearer allusion in 6:1-2: “Come, let us return to the Lord. For He has torn us, but He will heal us; He has wounded us, but He will bandage us. He will revive us after two days; He will raise us up on the third day that we may live before Him.” The Lord used this prophecy to indicate that salvation for His people was dependent on a resurrection to life that would happen on the third day. The trouble in Israel at the time was that they had not truly repented of their sins, so it was not a true return to the Lord (the word “return” was a Hebrew word that often, in a context like this, meant repentance). Repentance always accompanies faith

in God, His Messiah, and His promise, so it indicated that there was no faith in them any more than there was repentance. But be that as it may, the allusion still stood as the prophet recorded it under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and the people who were saying it didn't realize the full implication of what they were saying. Yet, God used them and the prophet to foreshadow Christ's resurrection from the tomb on the third day until which He remained under the power of death, the resurrection that sealed the salvation of His people. Any other reasons why His resurrection had to happen on the third day? All of the prophecies, types, foreshadowing, and the actual time that Jesus Christ remained in the tomb indicate that it was the perfect and sufficient amount of time for Him to satisfy the full penalty and consequence of every facet of death, including physical death, that man's sin had brought into the world and upon the race of all mankind. But let's consider for a moment the days themselves. He was crucified on the Passover, that OT sacrament that itself was a type of Him and His sacrifice. He remained in the tomb throughout the next day, which was the OT sabbath. In a sense, as Bishop Pearson said, that day for the sabbath observance died with Him—not the sabbath, just the day. He was raised on the third day, which was the first day of the week instead of the seventh day to indicate that a new age had begun, the age that would last until the consummation at His return, and our own resurrection from the dead. That Christian hope is something that we look forward to until then, so the Christian Sabbath is structured that way, at the first of each week looking ahead to that hope, but also, being the first day of the week, looking back in faith to the finished work of Christ upon which our salvation and our hope rest. The OT Sabbath was on the last day of the week because the people of God lived life with the promise of His advent and saving work ahead of them. The last day Sabbath held out the promise that at the end of their OT age, Christ would arrive and fulfill the promise by accomplishing the work their salvation would require. In the NT age, the Christian Sabbath is on the first day of the week because Jesus was raised on the third day,

which was the first day of the week. So, the day that we worship really does matter. Now, let's continue on to examine...

III. The Reality of Christ's Resurrection: "He rose again." There have been many objections and arguments against this fact throughout the centuries by those who want to discredit Christ, disprove Christianity, and reject God. None of those arguments or objections holds water, and in fact they sometimes have presented such twisted reasoning and implausible alternatives that they become silly and patently false. There was one that claimed that the "young man" at the tomb was not an angel but an actual young man. And when he said, "He is not here; here is the place where he lay," he was actually directing them away from the tomb they were looking at to another tomb. So, that means, these naysayers said, that the women, and later the apostles, were mistaken about the resurrection because they had been looking to the wrong tomb. That is a pretty ridiculous interpretation of that Scripture and a pretty ridiculous attempt at disproving Christ's resurrection. At any rate, there are affirmations of the reality of Christ's resurrection from the dead.

A. Prophecy Foretold It. We don't need to say much here because of the prophecies and types we brought up in the first section. We can simply add those prophecies of the resurrection itself that did not refer specifically to the third day. The most important is Ps. 16, which is the very Psalm from which Peter reasoned in Acts 2 during his first sermon on the Day of Pentecost that David could not have been referring to himself, so he must have been looking ahead and foretelling of Christ.

B. Witnesses Testified to It. This is the most obvious affirmation of Christ's resurrection. Those who themselves witnessed the empty tomb and the Person of the risen Jesus Christ after He died and arose from the dead testified to it in a number of ways. They told others about it. They preached it under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. They wrote it down as Scripture under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

They sealed their testimony with their own blood, as all but one of the apostles was martyred. Only the apostle John, “the disciple whom Jesus loved,” was not martyred. He was, however, thrown into a vat of hot oil by his persecutors, seeking his death; in God’s providence he lived through it. So, it isn’t like John didn’t suffer for his belief in Christ’s resurrection to seal his testimony.

- C. Scripture Records It. The unbeliever won’t accept this, but that doesn’t change the fact and truth that the Bible is the Word of God, and it plainly tells us many times that Christ arose from the dead bodily. And it is the Bible that God uses to convert the hearts of unbelievers, so we use it to preach and witness to Jesus Christ’s resurrection from the dead. These are the most plain and straightforward proofs that Christ is risen bodily from the dead. On, then, to...

IV. The Nature of Christ’s Resurrection: “He rose from the dead.” On a recent Resurrection Sunday, our sermon from Acts 2:24 covered most of what we need to know about the nature of Jesus Christ’s bodily resurrection from the dead. But we can stand a brief review before we bring out one or two more things.

A. Review.

1. Christ’s bodily resurrection from the dead demonstrated the sovereignty of all 3 Persons of the Godhead.
2. It demonstrated that Christ’s sacrifice of Himself on the cross was approved by God, and He declared it sufficient to have satisfied the full penalty for all the sins of all His people by raising Jesus.
3. It vindicated Jesus by proving that though He was looked upon with reproach by the self-righteous Jews, He Himself was not a sinner or criminal to be reproached. He was perfectly pure and innocent of all sin and above all suspicion; He bore the reproach and shame of others.

4. It proved that Jesus Christ was the sinless Son of God who went in place of others to bear their sin and guilt. He had none of His own. It therefore also showed that He was a qualified Substitute for sinners because He had no penalty to pay for Himself; He could pay the penalty for sinners.
5. It proved His complete fulfillment of all of God's law—what we call His active obedience—so that it could be credited to our account, as a requirement for our salvation.
6. For all of these reasons, we could say that His bodily resurrection from the dead seals our salvation to us and seals the proof of the gospel. Now, to cover a few additional, very important matters in connection with Jesus' resurrection.

B. Implications of Christ's Resurrection.

1. Christ's resurrection is the life of His people.
  - a. It is the pattern and power for the new birth. So, His resurrection provides what we needed for spiritual life when we were dead in trespasses and sins. When the Holy Spirit effectually calls one of the elect to Christ, the effectual calling is His use of the gospel as His instrument to bring about, through that calling, the new birth—regeneration. One may hear the gospel many times and not be called to Christ simply because it is not God's due time that He has determined from before the foundation of the world, and at that point it remains the general call of the gospel. But in the effectual calling, the Holy Spirit uses the gospel to unite the sinner spiritually to Christ and His death and resurrection. By that union, the sinner's old self dies as Christ died. Then, the elect sinner is raised up to new life as

Christ was raised up to newness of life to the glory of the Father. The sinner has become the subject of the new birth, a quickening to life, for which the death and especially the resurrection of Christ is quite obviously the pattern. If you want to know where in the Scriptures this is drawn from, you need look no further than Rom. 6:4ff. By the same token, it should become clear that the resurrection of Christ provides the power for this new birth and new life. The Holy Spirit's power accomplishes it miraculously in the heart of the elect sinner, yes, but it is by the same miraculous power that raised Christ from the dead, power that belongs not only to the Spirit of Christ, but also to Christ Himself. Upon this union with Christ and new birth, the Holy Spirit then creates faith in Jesus Christ in the heart of the newly quickened man, and through faith, God justifies the sinner on the ground of Christ's righteousness. But it is Christ's resurrection that had to take place in order for a sinner to have spiritual life in the first place. By the same token...

- b. It is the power for sanctification. That same new heart has new capacity and desire, or we might say renewed will, for holiness and to be the motivator behind a righteous life. It desires to be rid of the remaining sin that is the vestige of the dead old man that still clings. It cannot do this in its own strength; i.e., we cannot do this in our own strength. We are commanded to follow the example of Christ and obey God, but we are told, "For it is God who is at work in you both to will and to work for His good pleasure." God the Holy Spirit, who indwells every Christian, gives both the desire and the ability for us

to pursue holiness and obey, not as a contribution to salvation, but as a result of it and as a matter of love and gratitude for it. God the Holy Spirit provides the same resurrection power to provide us desire and ability to put sin to death and obey our Lord Jesus Christ. We fail so miserably so often to avail ourselves of that power and trust in the Spirit of Christ to give it to us when we face temptation! O, beloved brothers and sisters, how we need to seek the forgiveness that is in Christ for our weakness, sloth, and mistrust on this account, and repent, that we might count on and call upon Christ's resurrection power in our battle against sin and our bid to live a consistently godly life in obedience to Christ! And as we move through this life, then, we must keep before us the truth that...

2. The resurrection of Christ is the hope of His people.
  - a. It provides the pattern and power for our own resurrection from the dead. This could as easily fit under the life as well as the hope of His people. Christ's resurrection will provide the pattern and power for the new life to be given to our bodies at the last day. "Jesus lives, and so shall I," we who trust in Him can all say. But,...
  - b. It also is what guarantees our eternal life in glory, along with His perfect active obedience in keeping God's law and fulfilling the terms of the covenant of works that we sinners broke and cannot keep. He earned, or merited, eternal life for us by His perfect, personal obedience to God's law in thought, word, and deed every moment of every day of His earthly life and ministry on our behalf. But He also provides eternal life for us by way of the exaltation which the Father

gave Him as a reward for His willing and perfect fulfillment of His office of Mediator and Savior in His estate of humiliation; that is, His reward for completing His work of saving His people by humbling Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. What He was rewarded with because of the merits of His death, namely exaltation, we shall also be rewarded with as the beneficiaries of all that His death accomplished for our salvation, and as those whom He purchased by His death. His exaltation began with His resurrection from the dead. So, in both of these ways, Christ's bodily resurrection is the hope of His people. So, because of this, we can also say,...

3. Christ's resurrection from the dead is the glory of His people. It is the great seal on the gospel and all the truth claims of Christianity, over which we glory. It is the great seal on our salvation, in which we glory. It is the risen Christ, in Whom we glory.