

# CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

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Series:	The Heidelberg Catechism	Pastor/Teacher
Number:	30	Gary L.W. Johnson
Text:	I Corinthians 15:13-19	
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## The Third Day He Rose Again From the Dead

### 17. Lord's Day

#### Question 45. What does the "resurrection" of Christ profit us?

**Answer:** First, by his resurrection he has overcome death, that he might make us partakers of that righteousness which he had purchased for us by his death; (a) secondly, we are also by his power raised up to a new life; (b) and lastly, the resurrection of Christ is a sure pledge of our blessed resurrection. (c)

(a) 1 Cor. 15:16 For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: Rom. 4:25 Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. 1 Pet. 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, (b) Rom. 6:4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. Col. 3:1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Col. 3:3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. Eph. 2:5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) Eph. 2:6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: (c) 1 Cor. 15:12 Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? 1 Cor. 15:20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. 1 Cor. 15:21 For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. Rom. 8:11 But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

The New Testament does not discuss the sufferings of Christ in either an abstract or a sentimental fashion. Rather, the focus is on the meaning, significance, and purpose of His suffering. The writers of the New Testament clearly indicate, as the late G.C. Berkouwer has written, "that His suffering was not senseless, tragic or hopeless. This becomes especially manifest in the historical fact of his passage from humiliation to exaltation, Jesus Christ's resurrection from the dead. It is impossible to separate the fact from the significance of the resurrection, as though the main thing were the idea rather than the historical reality of the resurrection. The Scriptures present the message of Christ's resurrection as being of essential and decisive significance. Again and again the apostolic message calls our attention to both the crucifixion *and* the resurrection. The fact of the cross is followed by the 'but' of the fact of the resurrection. This 'but' expresses the joy and superior power of God's activity in the glorification of the Son of man (Acts 2:23; 3:11f.; 4:10; 13:29)."<sup>1</sup>

The resurrection of Christ, is the cardinal doctrine of the Christian faith, a point underscored by the Apostle Paul—"if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless<sup>2</sup> and so is your faith" (I Corinthians 15:12-19).

## I. THE VERACITY OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

No serious modern historian or New Testament scholar (even those identified with the infamous *Jesus Seminar*) doubts that Jesus was in fact a real historical figure and that He was crucified.<sup>3</sup> The veracity of Christ's *bodily* resurrection from the dead is evident from the gospel records (Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, and John 20).

A. The Recorded Testimonies. The angels (Matthew 28:5-7; Luke 24:7), the Roman guards (Matthew 28:11), the Apostles (cf. I Corinthians 15:5-7 for a sample listing of Christ's post-resurrection appearances). In the Book of Acts there are over *twenty* references to the resurrection. "The number," declares Wilbur Smith, "...will amaze anyone who has not given this particular point serious consideration (see, e.g., 1:1-3, 22; 2:24, 30-33; 3:15, 26; 4:10, 33; 5:30; 10:40, 41; 13:23, 30, 31, 33, 37; 17:3, 18, 31; 26:22, 23)."<sup>4</sup>

## II. THE NECESSITY OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

"The core of the matter is not reached till it is perceived that the Resurrection of Jesus is not simply an external seal or evidential appendage to the Christian gospel, but enters as a *constitutive element* into the very essence of that Gospel. Its denial or removal would be the mutilation of the Christian doctrine of Redemption, of which it is an integral part."<sup>5</sup>

A. For the Fulfillment of Prophecy. Christ, on the road to Emmaus, declared to the two disciples, "Did not Christ have to suffer these things and then enter His glory? And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Himself" (Luke 24:26-27).

## III. THE EFFICACY AND BENEFIT OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

The resurrection of Christ is not simply a grandiose display of God's miraculous power. It did demonstrate the power of God (Ephesians 1:19, 20), but it was not done like some Steven Spielberg special effect. Christ's resurrection was the public declaration of our acquittal before God. "Just as our sins and Christ's death are closely related, so there is an intimate relationship between Christ's resurrection and our justification"<sup>6</sup> (cf. Romans 5:9, 19).

A. Our Justification. Christ's resurrection demonstrates that His death atoned for our sins. Listen to the wisdom of the Dutch Puritan, Wilhelmus à Brakel. "Let such a person go to God and ask the Lord, while pleading upon the resurrection of Christ from the dead (1 Pet. 3:21), 'Are not my sins punished? Has not my guilt been atoned for? Has not my Surety risen from the dead and thus entered into rest? Art not Thou my reconciled God and Father? Am I not at peace with Thee?' May such a person thus wrestle to apply all this to himself on the basis of the promises made to all who receive Christ by faith, until he experiences the power of Christ's resurrection unto his justification and being at peace with God."<sup>7</sup>

B. Our Sanctification. This is Paul's point in Romans 6:4-5. The same emphasis is stressed in Colossians 3:1. The Christian is to live a new life, one that manifests the reality of the resurrection.

**CONCLUSION:** Michael Horton, in one of his many books, writes as follows: "The claims of the disciples are not made on the level of psychology, anthropology, morality, sociology, marketing, or even – at least initially – theology. They are historical claims. The eye-witnesses do not tell us about private experiences that they had, encouraging us to experience the same things: 'You ask me how I know he

lives? He lives within my heart.’ Nor are their claims based on the relevance of the events: ‘Jesus changed my life and he can change yours too.’ The disciple’s witness, unlike much of what we hear in Christian circles, was more like legal testimony than a pitch for a product or an interview on a talk-show. The court was to make its judgment, not on the basis of the psychological or moral impact of these experiences, but on the basis of whether or not these events which the eye-witnesses reported actually took place.”<sup>8</sup>

“Glorious victory – over the Fall of Adam and all its tragic consequences; that is the far-reaching significance of the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ! The 16<sup>th</sup> century Scottish Reformer, John Knox, considered the resurrection of Christ to be ‘the chief article of our faith.’ John Calvin writes:

‘Nevertheless [after having discussed the marvelous achievements of his death], we are said to “have been born anew to a living hope” not through his death but “through his resurrection” [I Peter 1:3p]. For as he, in rising again, came forth victor over death, so the victory of our faith over death lies in his resurrection alone. Paul’s words better express its nature: “He was put to death for our sins, and raised for our justification” [Rom. 4:25]. This is as if he had said: “Sin was taken away by his death; righteousness was revived and restored by his resurrection”...

‘But because by rising again he obtained the victor’s prize – that there might be resurrection and life – Paul rightly contends that “faith is annulled and the gospel empty and deceiving if Christ’s resurrection is not fixed in our hearts” [I Cor. 15:17p].’

“These two realities, Christ’s death and his resurrection, must always be held together in order to comprehend the significance of either, and in sum, the significance of the whole Christ event. Calvin notes this interconnection: ‘So then, let us remember that whenever mention is made of his death alone, we are to understand at the same time what belongs to his resurrection. Also, the same synecdoche applies to the word “resurrection”; we are to understand it as including what has to do especially with his death.’

“Hence, the victorious resurrection of the Lord, following his atoning death, exercises never-ceasing, life-giving influence in many different directions: it is the firm foundation of Christianity – our forgiveness for the past, our strength for the present, and our hope for the future. Its wide, reviving and restoring range can be considered under four points: (i) sins are eternally paid for in full: believers are justified; (ii) it is the power of our regeneration, and sanctification; (iii) it is the power and model of our glorification; and (iv) it is the overcoming of the decay of time.”<sup>9</sup>

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> G.C. Berkouwer, *Studies in Dogmatics: The Work of Christ* (Eerdmans, 1965), p. 181.

<sup>2</sup> The word translated “useless” in the NIV is KENOS. It means empty, without consent, basis, truth or power, without result or profit, an illusion or delusion. Paul uses the word here and elsewhere (cf. II Corinthians 6:1; I Thessalonians 3:5; Galatians 2:2; Philippians 2:16) to suggest that under certain circumstances, certain things would be pointless, fruitless, or in vain.

<sup>3</sup> See the massive amount of evidence and documentation by Craig Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels* (IVP, 1987). He correctly notes that “much skepticism about the gospels’ reliability stems from faulty methods used in analyzing the gospels or from faulty presuppositions on which those methods depend,” p. XVIII.

<sup>4</sup> W.M. Smith, *The Supernaturalness of Christ* (rpt. Baker, 1978), p. 192.

<sup>5</sup> James Orr, *The Resurrection of Jesus* (rpt. Klock & Klock, 1980), p. 274.

<sup>6</sup> Herman Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith* (rpt. Baker, 1956), p. 370.

<sup>7</sup> W. à Brakel, *The Christian’s Reasonable Service I* (rpt. Soli Deo Gloria, 1992), p. 632.

<sup>8</sup> M. Horton, *In the Face of God: The Dangers & Delights of Spiritual Intimacy* (Word, 1996), p.111.

<sup>9</sup> D. Kelly, *Systematic Theology II* (Mentor Books, 2014), p. 477.