

DOCTRINE OF CHRIST – part 7

II. THE STATES OF CHRIST

- A. The State of Pre-Incarnation
- B. The State of Humiliation
- C. The State of Exaltation

Shorter Catechism Q.28 Wherein consisteth Christ's exaltation? Ans: Christ's exaltation consists in His rising again from the dead on the third day, in ascending up into heaven, in sitting at the right hand of God the Father, and in coming to judge the world at the last day. Phil 2:9-11 "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of *things* in heaven, and *things* in earth, and *things* under the earth; And *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Christ's exaltation includes the Resurrection of Christ, His Ascension, His current Session with the Father, and His Second Coming in future. God-willing, today, we will consider the resurrection of Christ, a central tenet of Christian doctrine.

1. **The Resurrection of Christ** – Jesus Christ was raised from the dead. Read Lk 24:1-3 & Mt 28:1-11. See also Mark 16, Luke 24, John 19, 20, 21.

Luke 24:1-3 "Now upon the first *day* of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain *others* with them. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus."

Matt. 28:1-11 "In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first *day* of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. 2 And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. 3 His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: 4 And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead *men*. 5 And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. 6 He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. 7 And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you. 8 And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word. 9 And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, **All hail**. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. 10 Then said Jesus unto them, **Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me**. 11 Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done."

- a. **Importance of the Physical Resurrection of Christ.**

1. The entire system of Christian doctrine stands or falls with the resurrection of Christ. Alan Cairns said "*The historical, factual reality that the Lord Jesus Christ rose again from the dead in the body in which He had been crucified is the cornerstone of Christian doctrine.*" R C Sproul wrote "People can have a religion without believing in the resurrection, and they can even call it a Christian religion, but it has nothing to do with the biblical message of Christ and the original Christian faith."
2. The Apostle Paul said there is no Christian faith without the resurrection of Christ. If Christ was not raised from the dead, then we are still in our sin and our faith would be in vain. Christians of all people would be the most miserable. (1 Cor 15:14-20 And if Christ be not risen, then *is* our preaching vain, and your faith *is* also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: 17 And if Christ be not raised, your faith *is* vain; ye are yet in your sins. 18 Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. 19 If in this life only we have

hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. 20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, *and* become the firstfruits of them that slept.)

3. William Lane Craig, a Christian Apologist wrote: “Without the belief in the resurrection the Christian faith could not have come into being. Even if the disciples had continued to remember Jesus as their beloved teacher, they could not have believed in Him as Messiah, much less deity. The disciples would have been crushed and defeated men. Even had they continued to remember Jesus as their beloved teacher, His crucifixion would have forever silenced any hopes of His being the Messiah. The cross would have remained the sad and shameful end of his career. The origin of Christianity therefore hinges on the belief of the early disciples that God raised Jesus from the dead.” “It is difficult to exaggerate what a devastating effect the crucifixion must have had on the disciples. They had no conception of a dying, much less a rising, Messiah, for the Messiah would reign forever (cf. John 12:34). Without prior belief in the resurrection, belief in Jesus as Messiah would have been impossible in light of his death. **The resurrection turned catastrophe into victory. Because God raised Jesus from the dead, he could be proclaimed as Messiah after all** (Acts 2:32, 36 This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. ... Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.). Similarly, for the significance of the cross – *it was his resurrection that enabled Jesus’ shameful death to be interpreted in salvific terms. Without it, Jesus’ death would have meant only humiliation and accursedness by God; but in view of the resurrection it could be seen to be the event by which forgiveness of sins was obtained.* Without the resurrection the Christian way could never have come into being.”

b. **Reasons to Believe Christ Rose From the Dead** [adapted from *rbc ministries*]:

1. A Public Execution Confirmed His Death.

Jesus stood before Pilate, the governor of Judea, as the religious leaders accused Jesus of claiming to be the king of the Jews. Pilate publicly pronounced Jesus innocent (Mt 27:22-24), yet the crowd demanded His death. Pilate acceded to the mob’s request and sentenced Jesus to be crucified. Jesus was beaten, whipped, and sentenced to a public execution on a hill outside of Jerusalem. Brokenhearted friends and mocking enemies shared in His deathwatch. As the Sabbath neared, Roman soldiers were sent to finish the execution. To quicken death, they broke the legs of the two criminals. But when they came to Jesus they did not break His legs, because from experience they knew He was already dead. As a final precaution, however, they thrust a spear into His side (saw blood and water flowed out proving that Jesus had been dead for some time Jn 19:33-34).

2. A High Official Secured The Tomb. (Mt 27:62-66)

The next day, religious leaders again met with Pilate. They said Jesus had predicted He would rise in 3 days. To make sure that the disciples could not conspire in a resurrection hoax, Pilate ordered the official seal of Rome to be attached to the tomb to put graverobbers on notice. To enforce the order, soldiers stood guard. Any disciple who wanted to tamper with the body would have had to get by them, which wouldn’t have been easy. The Roman guards had good reason for staying alert—the penalty for falling asleep while on watch was death.

3. In spite of Roman Guards, the Tomb was Found Empty.

On the morning after the Sabbath, some of Jesus’ followers went to the grave to anoint His body. But when they arrived, they were surprised to see the huge stone that had been rolled into place over the entrance to the tomb had been moved. Jesus’ body was gone! As word got out, two disciples rushed to the burial site. The tomb was empty except for Jesus’ burial wrappings, which were lying neatly in place. In the meantime, some of the guards had gone into Jerusalem to tell the Jewish officials that they had fainted in the presence of a supernatural being that rolled the stone away. And when they woke up, the tomb was empty. The officials paid the

guards a large sum of money to lie and say that the disciples stole the body while the soldiers slept. They assured the guards that if the report of the missing body got back to the governor, they would intercede on their behalf.

4. Many People Claimed to have Seen Jesus Alive.

About AD 55, the apostle Paul wrote that the resurrected Christ had been seen by Peter, the 12 apostles, more than 500 people (many of whom were still alive at the time of his writing), James, and himself (1 Cor 15:5-8). By making such a public statement, he gave critics a chance to check out his claims for themselves. In addition, the New Testament begins its history of the followers of Christ by saying that Jesus “shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:” (Acts 1:3). Christ showed Himself alive to:

- **the women** on the way home from the empty tomb (Mt 28:9-10 And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. 10 Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.)
- **Mary Magdalene** (Jn 20:14 And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.)
- **the Emmaus disciples** (Lk 24:13-33)
- **Peter** (Lk 24:34 Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.)
- **the Apostles without Thomas** (Lk 24:36-43 v.36 And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace *be* unto you.)
- **the Apostles with Thomas** (Jn 20:26-29 v.26 And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: *then* came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace *be* unto you.)
- **the Seven fishing in Galilee** (Jn 21:1-23)
- **the Apostles with 500 other disciples** (1 Cor 15:6 After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.)
- **James** (1 Cor 15:7 After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.)
- **the disciples on the Mount of Olives** (Acts 1:3-12 v.3 To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:)

5. His Apostles Were Dramatically Changed.

When one of Jesus’ inner circle defected and betrayed Him, the other apostles ran for their lives. Even Peter, who earlier had insisted that he was ready to die for his teacher, lost heart and denied that he even knew Jesus. But the apostles went through a dramatic change. Within a few weeks, they were standing face to face with the ones who had crucified their leader. Their spirit was like iron. They became unstoppable in their determination to sacrifice everything for the one they called Saviour and Lord. Even after they were imprisoned, threatened, and forbidden to speak in the name of Jesus, the apostles said to the Jewish leaders, “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). After they were beaten for disobeying the orders of the Jewish council, these once-cowardly apostles “did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ” (Acts 5:42).

6. Witnesses Were Willing to Die for their Claims.

History is full of martyrs. Countless men and women have died for their beliefs. For that reason, it is not that significant to point out that the first disciples were willing to suffer and die for their faith. But it is significant that while many will die for what they believe to be the truth, few if any will die for what they know to be a lie. That psychological fact is important because the disciples of Christ did not die for deeply held beliefs about which they could have been honestly mistaken. They died for their claims to have seen Jesus alive and well after His resurrection. They died for their claim that Jesus Christ had not only died for their sins but that He had risen bodily from the dead to show that He was like no other spiritual leader

who had ever lived.

7. Jewish Believers Changed Their Day of Worship

The Sabbath day of rest and worship was basic to the Jewish way of life. Any Jew who did not honor the Sabbath was guilty of breaking the law of Moses. Yet Jewish followers of Christ began worshipping with Gentile believers on a new day. The first day of the week, the day on which they believed Christ had risen from the dead, replaced the Sabbath. For a Jew, it reflected a major change of life. The new day, along with the Christian conversion rite of baptism, declared that those who believed Christ had risen from the dead were ready for a new relationship with God based on the sin-bearing, life-giving help of a resurrected Savior.

8. Although it was Unexpected, it was clearly Predicted in Scriptures. The disciples were caught off guard. They expected their Messiah to restore the kingdom to Israel. Their minds were so fixed on the coming of a messianic political kingdom that they didn't anticipate the events essential to the salvation of their souls. They must have thought Christ was speaking in symbolic language when He kept saying over and over that it was necessary for Him to go to Jerusalem to die and be resurrected from the dead. Coming from one who spoke in parables, they missed the obvious until after it was all over. In the process, they also overlooked the prophet Isaiah's prediction of a suffering servant who would bear the sins of Israel, being led like a lamb to the slaughter, before God "prolong[ed] His days" (Isaiah 53:10).

9. It was a Fitting Climax to a Miraculous Life.

While Jesus hung on a Roman cross, crowds mocked Him. He helped others, but could He help Himself? Was the miracle suddenly coming to an end? It seemed like such an unexpected ending for someone who began His public life by turning water into wine. During His 3-year ministry, He walked on water; healed the sick; opened blind eyes, deaf ears, and tongue-tied mouths; restored crippled limbs; cast out demons; stilled a violent storm; and raised the dead. He asked questions wise men couldn't answer. He taught profound truths with the simplest of comparisons. And He confronted hypocrites with words that exposed their coverup. If all this was true, should we be surprised that His enemies didn't have the last word?

10. It Fits the Experience of Those who Trusted Him.

The apostle Paul wrote, "If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you" (Romans 8:11). This was the experience of Paul, whose heart was dramatically changed by the resurrected Christ. It is also the experience of people all over the world who have "died" to their old ways so that Christ can live His life through them. This spiritual power is not evident in those who try to add belief in Christ to their old life. It is seen only in those who are willing to "die" to their old life to make room for the rule of Christ. It is apparent only in those who respond to the overwhelming evidence for Christ's resurrection by acknowledging His lordship in their heart.