

On the Third Day He Rose from the Dead

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[0 : 00] The area of the Apostles' Creed that I've been asked to speak on is this statement in the Apostles' Creed, the third day he rose again from the dead.

Now, I'm essentially going to be asking two questions, really, about this truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

And the first question that I'll be asking, I'll say something about the words, the third day, but I'll say very little about that. But the two questions that I'll be exploring with you are, firstly, what is Christ's resurrection?

And secondly, how important is the resurrection? In the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, there are four Gospels.

The Bible, as probably most of us know, is made up of two parts. Something called the Old Testament, which is the bigger part of the Bible, and something called the New Testament.

[1 : 25] And the New Testament is about the birth and life and death and resurrection of Jesus. And the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, these are four portraits of the life of Jesus by those people, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

And mostly the rest of the Bible, New Testament, I should say, is letters written to the early Christian communities. Now, in three of those Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, we are told that Jesus repeatedly stated, you can read this for yourself, that following His death, He would rise again the third day.

Remember now, the line of the creed that we're looking at is, the third day He rose again from the dead.

So, according to these Gospel writers, this is precisely what Jesus repeatedly kept telling His disciples.

And also, when you read about this, you read that the disciples couldn't understand what He was talking about. But what I'm saying here is, if we can trust those Gospels, then this part in the creed, the third day He rose again, goes right back to the very lips and words of Jesus Christ.

[3 : 17] And that means that even this part of that statement, this part of the tradition, as I say, goes right back to the very words of Jesus Christ.

Now, had we looked at the beginning of Paul's letter to the 1 Corinthians chapter 15, we would notice that Paul said that he wanted to remind the people of the Gospel that he had preached to them.

And he also said to them that this Gospel he had preached to them, basically about the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, was he had received this from the first apostles.

Now, that's important, and the reason it's important, I said the letter itself is AD 54, but we have a fair idea that Paul, by AD 35, had received this tradition about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

So, what we have here is a man, the Apostle Paul, who was very close in time to the actual resurrection of Jesus Christ, only three to five years probably.

[4 : 49] And this strengthens the reliability, I think, of the claim of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

When I was thinking about how to approach this, I couldn't really make up my mind. There were several ways I was thinking of approaching it.

For instance, I was thinking of approaching it through the enigma of the account of Jesus Christ's resurrection appearances.

What am I referring to? You can read them yourself in the final chapters of each of the four Gospels. He appears out of nowhere, if you like, suddenly.

He is not initially, by some, recognized. He manages to go through locked doors.

[5 : 54] That's why I call it an enigma, because what we're talking about here is the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ. Some people thought they had seen a ghost.

And the biggest part of the enigma for me is at the end of chapter 28, with the Great Commission, when Jesus is standing in Galilee, saying, go out into all the world and preach the Gospel, it tells us that some of the eleven still doubted.

Why am I saying that? To try and put doubt in anybody here, far from that. I'm saying that to the resurrection of Jesus, his resurrection into this new life, which I'll speak about in a moment, in very different life from the life you and I have right now, is enigmatic.

We believe in it. As the Apostles' Creed says, I believe in God the Father. I believe in the Son and the resurrection of the Son.

Our belief in the resurrection, like any other part of our belief, is based on faith in God's Word, in God Himself, in Jesus Christ.

[7 : 24] Okay. What is Christ's resurrection? It is not resuscitation of a dead corpse back into their former bodily life.

In the Gospels, we have accounts of Jesus raising some dead people. The most famous for Christians is Lazarus.

Indeed, I think, maybe you don't hear much of that now, but it used to come into the culture that this person has had a Lazarus effect, meaning that somehow or other have come back from being, metaphorically speaking, dead.

All the individuals whom Jesus raised from the dead, including Lazarus, were raised to their former bodily life and state, and every single one of them subsequently died.

As we were seeing this morning, talking about that last enemy, death, death got them in the end.

The Bible calls this age that you and I live in one of the eon of sin and death.

[8 : 57] The age of sin and death. Those resurrections, no doubt, were signs and miracles attesting the identity of Jesus and powerful illustrations of the more momentous resurrection that Christ would herald as pioneer and forerunner of the end of time.

Christ's resurrection body is a body that has undergone radical transformation.

How do we know that? Again, if you read 1 Corinthians 15, Paul gets to the point of saying in verse 35, but someone will ask what kind of body do they come with?

That is people who are resurrected because he's talking about the resurrection, the future resurrection of Christians there. And without going through the thing verse by verse, read it yourself, 1 Corinthians 15, a radical transformation.

from a body that is perishable, says Paul, to a body that is imperishable, to a body that is corruptible and prone to decay, to a body that is incorruptible, to a body that is mortal, from a body that is mortal to a body that is immortal.

[10 : 45] And this imperishable, powerful, glorious, spiritual body surely must be the resurrected body and the resurrection body that Jesus had.

and perhaps because of that, because it is so unlike the bodies that you and I have, we have this enigma and this almost mystery about the resurrected state of Jesus Christ.

the other thing that should be noted is that the resurrection is part of the exaltation of Jesus Christ. because it's, if you like, as I say, phase one of that exaltation and of that glorification.

And so, it's important to think about the resurrection as if, you like, the opening, the opening shot in the exaltation of Jesus Christ, the opening prelude to His ascension and exaltation.

[12 : 12] In fact, it's very interesting that at the end of Matthew's Gospel, when Jesus is speaking to Mary Magdalene, He tells Mary Magdalene to go and tell His disciples, not as is commented in Mark and Luke, to go, as they say, Mark and Luke, go and tell the disciples, I have risen.

He tells Mary Magdalene to go and tell His disciples, He is ascending. Not even, I will ascend, He is ascending.

Remember, another time, Jesus said to this person, don't touch me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. There's a theologian that says that we Christians, when we talk about the great mysteries of God, they have, he said, this theologian, a doxological character.

What he meant by that is, doxological, as I said this morning, is worship and praise. They do not have a character whereby we are suggesting that we understand everything about the God-man or the Trinity or, or, or, or even here, the resurrected body of Jesus Christ.

we understand enough because Jesus also said to people, touch me and see that a, a, a ghost or a spirit doesn't, doesn't have flesh and blood and yet that same body could go through doors and that same body could appear just like that.

[14:21] So, Christ's body is resurrection body has undergone a radical transformation. And I want you to notice how this says the, that Jesus rose from the dead.

I touched on this this morning. Why, why are the writers using this phrase from the dead? Let me remind you of a story in John's gospel that I think can help us see the, the significance of this phrase from the dead.

I've already spoken of Lazarus. Okay, Lazarus and his sisters were friends of Jesus. Jesus got word that Lazarus had died.

Jesus makes his way to the family. We read all this in John's gospel chapter 11. Jesus makes his way to the family.

One of the sisters, Martha, hears that Jesus is just about arriving and she goes out to, to, to, to meet Jesus and she's clearly upset and crying and she says, you know, Jesus, if you had been here, my brother would never, never have died.

[15:44] She meant you'd probably be healing him. And Jesus turned around and said to her, your brother shall rise again.

And Martha said, and this is the bit I want you to capture, Martha said, I know he will rise again at the general resurrection in the last days.

we'll come back to it. And Jesus then flipped that answer and said, I am the resurrection. During the times of Jesus, there was a tremendous kind of fever around that it was the end days.

And there was a tremendous expectation that this general resurrection could be happening soon.

And that general resurrection was seen as a collective resurrection, a mass resurrection, if you like, for the end times and the end of days.

And this is why the writers used this phrase that Jesus was raised from the dead because it's saying they're here, the end days.

[17:17] They have in fact arrived. The future is here at the present because he has been raised, Jesus Christ, from among the dead.

Ever since the emergence, shall I say, of fallen humankind, death has reigned with a universal tyranny over humanity and indeed over all living creatures.

victory over death as the last enemy of this world's spiritual powers. The New Testament sees that there are spiritual powers that are evil in our universe.

And these powers have some sort of relation to death. I'm just going to try and get a reading for you from Hebrews in chapter 2 verse 14.

Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that's Jesus, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is the devil.

[18:55] Now, that's a difficulty. We say that God is sovereign and he's got all the sovereignty well, he's maybe sovereignly allowed the devil to have some power.

And by the way, just in passing, people talk a lot about the sovereignty of God and so on, but bear this in mind, that his sovereignty includes his sovereignty not to intervene in world affairs.

and I personally would have thought that is palpably obvious if we just think about history.

So, Christ's resurrection body is a transformed body, a body body that has undergone transformation.

How important is the resurrection? And I'll need to try and go through this very, very quickly because there's three things that I want to say about that.

[20:16] It's very important for the person and work of Christ. Let me read another text to you from Romans in chapter one.

We've already been reading from that. Paul makes this statement in Romans chapter one about Jesus.

He says about Jesus concerning God's Son who was descended from David according to the flesh. That is exactly correct.

Jesus historically in terms of his humanity, in terms of the facts of his coming into the human race and being a member of the human race, his birth and all that.

Let's remember that Jesus has a birth certificate and he also, if you like, has a death certificate. But he says, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit by his resurrection from the dead.

[21 : 30] Now, that's a challenging statement because some people have thought, oh, does that mean that Jesus was only kind of adopted to be the Son of God?

And of course, it doesn't mean that. He's already said in verse 3 concerning God's Son. But I think it means something like this, that he was declared the Son of God with power through his resurrection and that this is a tremendous encouragement to you and I.

The Apostle Paul once said that I strive all the time that I might know more and more the power of his resurrection. Can I just say if there's anybody here who thinks I couldn't be a Christian, I could never keep up with the things that a Christian is expected to be.

You're absolutely right and neither could I and neither could anyone here. But with Christ who has risen, who's exalted and that power is made available to you and me.

of course it doesn't come automatically, we have to seek it, we have to want it, we have to keep near Jesus in our spirit and in our life.

[23 : 06] So, this is important, this resurrection for Christ and it's certainly important in terms of this declaration that he was the son of God because remember all the people around him didn't think he was the son of God and thought he was either a troublemaker or a blasphemer and had him crucified.

And of course, Jesus' divinity was hidden. It was hidden in his incarnation. It was hidden in the fact that he was a person that sweated and got tired and got hungry.

it was not this the carpenter's son. Even the disciples hardly believed that he was a God.

And so, this resurrection is important for the person of Christ. But can I tell you another thing? It's important for you and I important for that it's a physical Christ, a human Christ that has been raised. It's interesting if we go back to Corinthians, what Paul says in verse 20 of Corinthians. Listen to this now and then verse 21.

[24 : 42] Christ's resurrection has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. And listen to this, for as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.

Christ's resurrection from his humanity to a spiritual body is critical for our hope as Christians that one day we will have our bodies resurrected and transformed like Christ's.

But what about, as I rush on, it's important for Christ and the person of Christ in his work, but what about its importance for Christianity?

Christianity? Well, somebody once said to me, see the thing about you Christians is nothing will prove your faith to be wrong.

Whatever objections we come with, you'll just believe anyway. The whole world could be reeling in the biggest mess in the world world, and you'll say, God reigns.

[26 : 23] The proposition, let me go back to the proposition, there is no such thing as resurrection of the dead. If anything, any truth of Christianity could stand or fall, could make Christianity stand or fall, it is this truth of the resurrection of Christ.

And that is why I read Romans 10, because it says, whoever believes in his heart or her heart, that Jesus has risen from the dead shall be saved, you cannot be a biblical and authentic Christian without believing in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Christ. It is the single most truth of the Christian faith around which the entire edifice of the faith stands or falls, and that is including our sin problem.

had Jesus Christ not risen from the dead, Christianity wouldn't have emerged in first century Israel and Judah.

It would never have emerged. changed. And so, it is almost infinitely important for both Christianity as a faith and for Christians as believers in that faith.

[28 : 28] No wonder the Apostle Creed puts it, it prefaces, remember that, all its three articles about God, about Jesus, about the Holy Spirit and the church with this, I believe.

This is not something that we can necessarily demonstrate scientifically. This is not something that we can show some sort of clenching argument.

Otherwise, there would be no need for faith. you are still in your sins, says Paul.

If this proposition, but notice, please note when you read that, the little conditional if, if, if, if.

If. Wow, it would be very hard to exaggerate, would it not, the importance of the resurrection, as I've said, for both Christianity and the Christian.

[29 : 48] what this tells us is our faith, Christ's sacrifice, the gospel, and the integrity of the early preachers are critical to our faith, sorry, are critical to the truth of the resurrection and the truth of its claim.

it's also important as we close, as well, I've mentioned it already, but it's also important for our hope. Christian salvation has a past, a present, and a future. Here, we have no continuing city. We live for a few short years and we're gone.

But, because Christ has risen, we too will partake. We might not know, we might not understand all the ramifications, in fact, we don't, all the ins and outs of it, all the intricacies of it, how it happens, and so forth and so on, and how it can be a physical body and occupy space, and how it's a spiritual body, and all the questions that might arise in our heads about these things. But the question is this, will we be one of those secondary fruits?

[31 : 40] Christ's resurrection is called the first fruits. It pictures them, if you like, as pulling all the others that are going to be resurrected along with him.

I finish by saying this, reciting any creed, whether it's the Apostles Creed or the Heidelberg Confession or anything, will never get us into the kingdom of heaven, if that's all that we're engaged in, in terms of you could get a parrot to recite a creed.

The question really is this, do we believe that Jesus Christ has risen? That's the question.

Is our faith in a living Lord and a living Lord Jesus Christ? Christ? Is our life lived in His resurrection power by His indwelling Spirit within us?

Here we're talking about the power of Christianity. We're talking about the dynamics of Christianity. Christianity. If you're not a Christian tonight, do you not feel attracted to such a Savior who died for your sins?

[33 : 31] And do you not feel attracted to such a Savior who was raised so that we might have a glorious hope for time and forever that we might be part of this new heavens and new earth?

Because, make no mistake about it, the other thing about this Christian salvation is in some senses it's got to do with the individual, but in a much larger sense it's got to do with a new redeemed humanity, a new cosmos.

In that sense, is it not exciting? Is this who you believe in? The risen and living Lord Jesus Christ? May it be so. Oh, that's. Oh, that's what I mean. ■t have little good.