

The Doctrine of Christ: What the God-Man Has Done

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[0 : 00] Okay. I was staring at this tripping hazard here and thinking through there's got to be a way to include that in a sermon illustration. And there's probably some guy who can figure that out in ways that I don't know how to do.

So, all right. So, let's feel like a lot of stuff's been moved around up here. Okay. All right. Maybe we're straight on now. Okay.

Well, what we're going to do is we're going to be continuing in our series, well, this is a two-part series on the doctrine of Christ and learning about not just the person of Jesus Christ, but what he has done for us.

So, let me begin with prayer and then we'll continue this journey of understanding who it is God has given us in Jesus Christ. So, let's pray. Father, we're grateful that we have this opportunity to learn from your word.

And I know that sometimes our hearts have grown dull to it. Our ears get stopped up. Our eyes have become blinded. And so, I pray, Lord God, you would give us eyes to see, ears to hear, hearts to understand.

[1 : 09] Lord, we hear these words, but we know that they need to reach down to the depths of our heart so that we can understand not just the facts, but really be able to truly see, truly apprehend, truly enjoy the beauty of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Lord God, I'm asking that this morning you may hold me back from saying anything that is untrue or unhelpful. You may give me guidance and be able to say things that are true, that are right, that are words that challenge us, words that encourage us, the words that we need to hear.

May your spirit guide us. We come to you gathering in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, trusting that the same power that raised him from the dead is at work here this morning.

The same spirit that he has poured out is among us. And so, Lord God, be at work in marvelous and profound ways, we pray. Amen. Well, last week I brought up this question, what is it that sets the Christian faith apart from every other religion?

What is it that sets the Christian faith apart from every other spiritual experience? And I suggested to you that everything in the Christian faith flows out of two realities.

[2 : 33] First, we understand that God is a trinity, that in eternity, God is a relational being. In eternity, God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God, three persons, each one fully God, each one distinct from one another.

And that means that in eternity, God is not a being who is alone, but he is fundamentally a being in relationship, a being governed by love.

And our whole world was created by a God within whom is love and relationship.

That shapes our reality. Our whole world was created as a Father's gift to his Son. Second, we understand that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man.

He's not half and half. He's not one or the other. He's both. Everything about the Christian faith that delights people.

[3 : 41] Everything about the Christian faith that disgusts people. All of it flows from those two things. And that second doctrine that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man, that is summarized by a single word.

And that word is incarnation. Incarnation. And that word simply means that God took on flesh. God the Son, he continued to be God.

He will remain God forever. In eternity, he is God. But 2,000 years ago, he became man as well. And he will remain a man forever.

This doctrine lends a very unique shape to the Christian faith. That sets it apart from every other religion. There's something that's unique about a God who takes on flesh, who dwells among us. Every other religion is abstracted in some way. What I've noticed about almost every other belief system when you dig into how did this come about? Where did this come from? Almost always, it's either a single man who receives a revelation that no one else can verify.

[4 : 49] That was granted to him alone. That's, for example, Islam, where Muhammad receives a revelation in a cave that only he receives. And writes it down in the Quran.

Or Mormonism, where Joseph Smith receives these tablets of gold that only he can translate and deliver to other people. There's no verification for any of it. Or it's a belief system that is subjective. It can't really be tested. It's not really grounded in historical reality. It's more about the inward reality of the soul. What can you say about that? It can just be felt and experienced somehow.

But the Christian faith is very different from that. It has its beginnings with ordinary eyewitnesses. Average Joes.

People like you and me. Who encountered someone whom they could not explain as a mere man. And together, all of these witnesses, not just one individual person, but all these witnesses wrote down what they experienced and what they were told after several years of encounter with this man, Jesus Christ.

[6 : 06] And that's why the book of 1 John begins with these profound words that can be said of no other religion. They say, it says, That which was from the beginning, which we, together, we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked on and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life.

The life was made manifest. It was revealed. And we have seen it. And testified to it.

And proclaimed to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us.

That which we have seen, which we have heard, we proclaim also to you.

So that you, too, may have fellowship with us. And indeed, our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. That is profound.

There is no other faith that can say these things. That there is a real man named Jesus of Nazareth. His existence is established by sources outside of the New Testament as well.

[7 : 19] No credible and serious historian doubts that he existed. And the New Testament gives for us eyewitness accounts. These multiple accounts piece together for us a story of what this God-man has done.

Because if someone like this comes to earth, we would do well to learn why it is that he did all the things that are recorded in the four Gospels of the New Testament.

Now, there are a few summaries of the life of Christ. The teachings of the apostles that we have in the Bible include a few key places where they give just a brief summary of Jesus' life story.

And one example is the sermon that David read for us at the beginning of our service. The apostle Peter was preaching that on the very same year that Jesus had risen from the dead.

Summarizing what it is that had just happened. Here's another summary in Philippians chapter 2 verses 5 through 11. And this one zooms out and it tells the whole story from beginning to end.

[8 : 28] Now, if you have one of the Bibles that our ushers handed out, you'll find this on page 980. And I invite you to turn there. Philippians chapter 2 verses 5 through 11. And what's happening here is this is the apostle Paul who himself only came to faith years after, a few years after Jesus Christ rose again and ascended into heaven.

And Paul, who formerly was a persecutor of the church of Jesus Christ, was bitterly opposed to the Christian faith. Now he is turning around and telling the story of Jesus Christ to one of the churches that he founded.

They're reading his letter and he is telling them the story so that in their own lives, they can live out that same story that Jesus lived. Because to be a Christian means that where Jesus went, you go there too.

Your life takes on the same shape as his life. And so Paul tells them this story. He says in Philippians 2 verses 5 through 11, he tells them, have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.

In other words, here's the mindset that you've got now that you belong to Christ Jesus. He says, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name.

[10:13] So that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth. And every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

This is a story in which God the Son begins in a state of equality with God. He is fully God.

And he remains that way throughout the story. But while remaining fully God, he humbles himself to the most degrading place possible.

He becomes a man as well. But a man who becomes a servant of all. And a man who is crucified on a cross.

The place of greatest shame. The place of the lowest degradation possible. And now his return to glory is triumphant.

[11:17] Not only does God the Father honor him as God, but now he receives an additional honor. That additional honor is that he is honored as the perfect man.

This is a story for which the world of Jesus' day was not quite ready. And you can see that in the Gospels. How many people are utterly baffled by him.

Who cannot seem to understand what it is he is doing. How he is living. Why he is making the decisions he makes. Why he is saying the things he says. And yet God was at work even before Jesus Christ came to earth.

God did work in preparation for all this. How did God prepare the world for the coming Christ? Well, first, God allowed the world to descend into depravity.

The world is not as evil a place as it could possibly be. We could certainly imagine a world that is much worse than our own. But we live in a world that there is no corner of our world that is not touched in some way by sin and evil.

[12:28] The more you study world history, the more you know that. Sometimes I listen to people who talk about, man, people are getting worse and worse all the time.

The world has never been as evil as it is now. I'm like, are you kidding me? Go sit down for a few minutes. Listen to history books. Listen to what our world has been like over the course of many years.

I know when I taught a class on the history of the Old Testament and some of the practices of ancient cultures, I could just see some of the people sitting in my class just absolutely horrified and cringing about what the Assyrians...

Basically, the Assyrians were kind of like Nazi Germany, except what if it ruled the world? The more you become appalled at the horrors that we are capable of.

In our sanitized culture, these things, we kind of have ways of shutting these off to the side and pretending that there are not great evils happening. But the extent of human history has revealed who we really are and that we cannot save ourselves.

[13:35] We've tried. We've produced better philosophers, better rulers, better lawgivers, and none of it's worked. We need a Savior sent by God.

He is the only one who can set things right. We cannot pick ourselves up by our own bootstraps and get ourselves out of this mess. Second, God provided for the transmission of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

That's another way that he prepared the world. He provided for the transmission of this gospel message. In Romans chapter 5, the Apostle Paul remarks that at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly.

At the right time. And then in Galatians chapter 4, he again says that when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his son born of woman.

And indeed, the timing was perfect. For the first time in history, the whole Mediterranean world was united under a single consistent governance centered in Rome.

[14:38] And united long enough that this Roman peace was enforced. And that led to a network of roads that made travel and communication all over the empire possible in a way that was never true before.

Greek culture spread around the empire. That led to a common trade language so that wherever you were in the Roman Empire, there were people who could understand you. That's not something to be taken for granted.

Thanks to Greek culture, there was now a restless search for new religion and new philosophy. People were being primed to receive good news. Throughout the empire then spread the Jewish diaspora.

These were Jewish people who were living in these communities outside of Palestine, all over, dotted in cities all over the Roman Empire, ready to receive the good news that their God had sent his long-awaited Messiah.

And Messiah was their word for Christ. Because God had not only been preparing the world for this Messiah, for this Christ, he had been preparing the Jewish nation for this as well.

[15:50] And they too had a long history which you yourself can read because it's recorded in the Old Testament of the Bible. And this history revealed that they also needed to be saved from their own sinful nature.

That history revealed that no relationship with God, no covenant with God was possible unless somehow God intervened. The Old Testament includes many direct prophecies of a coming Messiah, a coming prophet, a coming ruler.

Some of the Jews of Jesus' day, the Jews of Jesus' day recognized some of these, others they did not. But Jesus and his apostles pointed to many of these things.

And the Old Testament is also littered with many things that we will call, we could call types of Christ. What is a type? A type is an imprint which may serve as a mold or pattern.

Think of old printing presses that would, you know, this is where our word typing comes from, right? Because you'd have these old printing presses with these letters that you would coat in ink and then apply to the paper and would leave this impression in ink on the paper.

[17:05] That is what a type is. It is this mold or pattern that is imprinted. Some of these types were persons. We have Adam as the representative man.

Isaac as a sacrificial son. David as a shepherd king. Moses as a faithful minister and intercessor. These little sneak previews of a coming Christ.

Others of these types were events. The clothing of Adam and Eve and animal skins. God's deliverance of Israel from slavery in Egypt. There were types that were objects.

The tabernacle where God made his dwelling among us. The bronze serpents in the wilderness where people could lift up their eyes and be saved. Others were institutions and ceremonies.

The sacrificial system. Ceremonial laws. The priesthood. A calendar of holy days and feasts. There were the offices of prophets and priests and kings that appeared to give people the categories that they would need to understand what Christ was going to do.

[18:08] And in all of these ways, God primed and prepared the world. He primed and prepared the Jewish nation in particular to receive its king. And we could spend a lot of time talking about the birth of Jesus Christ.

Talking about his life and ministry. BK has already covered that at length in his Life of Christ series. And if you want, you can find that on our website.

And rather than run through all of that again, I will just simply move on from that. But if you are on your website looking that up, listening to the life of Christ, how he was born, what his, the events of his life, what took place during his life, you can also find there on our website the short summary on our affirmation of faith.

And this tells a story of Jesus Christ in brief. And so here's what our affirmation of faith says about Christ. The supreme revelation of God is found in Jesus Christ, who is both fully God and fully man. The Son of God is a fully divine person of the Trinity who has existed eternally. In order to save human beings, he added to his divinity a full and perfect human nature.

[19:27] And became Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus was miraculously conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of a Jewish virgin, Mary.

He lived a sinless life in obedience to God the Father. And his obedience culminated in his death as a payment of the penalty for the disobedience of sinful humans.

God vindicated him. God vindicated him when he raised him bodily from the dead. And he ascended to heaven where he is free from the limits of this world.

He now intercedes for us who believe in him and preserves us in our relationship with the Father while we await his personal return. Now, in this story, we're going to pass over the birth and life of Christ as significant as they were.

And what we want to do is talk about his death, his resurrection, his ascension, and the fact that he is seated at the right hand of God. How does scripture confirm that Jesus Christ truly died and rose from the dead?

[20 : 33] How does it confirm that Jesus Christ truly died and rose from the dead? It might surprise you to learn that many people have... It might not surprise you to know that many people have objected to the idea of the resurrection.

But it might surprise you to learn that many people have objected to the idea that Jesus even died. Muslims across the world, those who are well-versed in their teachings, believe that Jesus was actually drawn up into heaven and he did not actually die on a cross.

Other people have argued that, well, maybe Jesus didn't really die. He just passed out on the cross and they buried him and then he woke up again. In fact, the authors of the New Testament anticipate that people would question, did he actually really die on the cross?

They go into great detail about the events surrounding his death. They go to the point of listing the names of eyewitnesses and saying, yeah, all these people saw this happen. They could confirm that he died.

They were watching all of these things. Roman soldiers verified his death. These are men who are experts in death. They used physical means. One of them pierced his side with a spear.

[21 : 49] The fluids that came out, the blood and water indicated that this man had died. He wasn't still alive with a beating heart. He was dead. Jesus himself prophesied repeatedly that he was going to die.

His apostles, after he rose again, uniformly preached that, yes, he had truly died. And then what about the resurrection? Sometimes it's common now, you know, when we sometimes live in what C.S. Lewis called chronological snobbery, where we look back on people in the past and think, what a bunch of idiots.

What a bunch of rubes. How can I believe any of this stuff? We know better. People of Jesus' day weren't dumb, okay? They were not easily suckered into a supernatural story.

They, the idea that Jesus had risen from the dead was not one that people easily bought into. The early church faced a tremendous amount of skepticism.

And you can tell when you read the New Testament, because there's all these details that are included that as you read them, you're like, man, they really went out of their way to demonstrate that, no, no, no, this really happened.

[23 : 00] And I know what your objections are and your explanations are for why it couldn't have happened that way. No, no, no, no, no, no. Here's what happened. There's so many details that are included to defend this testimony from attacks.

Some people may have said, you know, perhaps the women, they found this empty tomb because they went to the wrong gravesite. You know, it was early in the morning and they didn't really know where it was and they just made a mistake. And the tomb was empty and they thought, well, I guess he's risen.

Well, in Luke chapter 23, Luke makes it very clear. The women saw the tomb and how his body was laid on the evening that he died.

They made special note of exactly where it was. When they returned on Sunday, they knew in advance where they were going. They weren't dumb. They didn't get turned around.

Their GPS didn't give them wrong directions. Perhaps Jesus, you think, well, maybe he woke up from a swoon, from being passed out, and then he broke his way out of the tomb.

[24 : 02] Well, that's impossible. The gospel accounts point out he was bound really tightly in a burial shroud, just bound up tight. The entrance was sealed with a great stone.

There was an armed guard posted outside of it. Like, good luck, even if you're Houdini, how do you get out of that? Let alone a guy who is half dead and locked away inside of that tomb without food and water for a couple days' worth of time.

Perhaps the disciples stole the body. Well, the gospel of Matthew explicitly mentions, yeah, that's a common story.

It says that, in particular, this story has been spread among the Jews, that the disciples stole the body. They broke into the tomb. And the gospel of Matthew talks about how the guards were paid to say that, oh, we fell asleep.

We fell asleep. Most of the disciples, however, keep in mind, would end up being martyred, put to death for proclaiming the resurrection. That's not what you expect from a band of frauds and grave robbers.

[25 : 18] Perhaps the disciples were just, you know, maybe something supernatural did happen, and the disciples were seeing a ghost. Maybe it was the ghost of Jesus. Well, that was certainly their first thought. But the gospels emphasize that Jesus' physical body was, in fact, restored to life.

In Luke and John's accounts, Jesus makes it a point. He invites them to touch him. He demonstrates in front of them that he could eat food. This was a resurrection of his physical body, not just some sort of, oh, spiritual resurrection.

He just appeared again as a spirit. But he really did rise from the dead. In all, the Bible records at least nine appearances of the resurrected Jesus. Some of those were resurrection appearances to his brother James, who didn't believe in him up to that point.

But later became a leader in the church in Jerusalem and was put to death for his faith. His adversary, the Saul of Tarsus, he appeared to on the road to Damascus.

Saul became a believer. He changed his name later to Paul and wrote much of the New Testament that we have today and was put to death for his faith. Jesus appeared to hundreds of people, according to 1 Corinthians chapter 15.

[26 : 41] And Paul writes, many of them are still alive. He invites the Corinthians to go talk to them. They'll tell you what they saw. Many people who had previously rejected him as Christ were radically transformed into people who were willing to give their lives for him.

Now, before moving on, I want us to consider what difference it makes that Jesus Christ really died and rose again. I want to leave the question of what was he doing when he died for another time? Part of our affirmation of faith has a whole section on salvation. Because Jesus accomplished several important things in his death. And we would need at least another sermon to unpack, probably several.

And just in passing, the word atonement. You may have heard that word thrown around in church sometimes. What that word means is that just describes, hey, what did God intend to accomplish in the death of Jesus Christ in order to save us?

And the word atonement is like this tent that includes all the things that God was intending to do in the death of Christ to save us. But for now, I think we would do well to consider this question.

[27 : 51] Why does it matter whether Jesus rose from the dead? Why does it matter? Well, first, it matters because Jesus' resurrection demonstrates the supreme power of God.

First, it demonstrates the supreme power of God. If God has the kind of power to raise Jesus of Nazareth from the dead, that should fill us with trembling.

And that should fill us with hope. Trembling. Because this omnipotent God has empowered his Son to rise again and to judge the world.

In a speech in Acts chapter 17, here's what the apostle Paul says. He says this about God, that he has fixed a day on which he, Christ, will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed.

And of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead. You know who will be judging the world one day? Including all the secret things, whether good or evil? Jesus Christ.

[29 : 05] God has raised him to life. And his resurrection power has demonstrated that Jesus Christ is the one who will be the judge. He who was once our Savior will come back as a judge.

But this power also alongside of that fills us with hope. Because the same power is active and it is available to every person who believes.

As Paul wrote in Ephesians chapter 1, Paul wants us to know what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe. According to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead.

And seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places. Which we'll get to in a moment. Jesus' resurrection demonstrates the supreme power of God.

Raise your hands if you have raised anyone from the dead. Raise your hands if you know any other human being who has raised someone from the dead. What can man do to me when I have this kind of God?

[30 : 18] Second, Jesus Christ's resurrection affirms the righteousness of God and his son. It affirms the righteousness of God and his son.

We read a little earlier in Philippians chapter 2 that Jesus himself, he chose to walk a path down into suffering, shame, and death on a cross.

He was condemned as a criminal. Condemned as a blasphemer. Condemned as an insurrectionist. Condemned as the lowest of the low. That's exactly what his enemies wanted.

Their purpose in having him crucified rather than quietly killed and disposed of is they needed to drag his name through the mud. They needed to ruin him forever and ever. And then God raised him up to resurrection life.

Silencing anyone who would want to ruin him. By raising him from the dead, God the Father demonstrated and vindicated his son.

[31 : 26] He demonstrated that his son had indeed obeyed him perfectly without sin by walking the pathway that he had walked. That's why Jesus says in John chapter 10, he says, For this reason the Father loves me because I lay down my life that I may take it up again.

No one takes it from me. But I lay it down of my own accord. In other words, he's saying, I'm choosing to die. I wasn't forced into this.

I'm choosing it. I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I received from my Father. On the cross, Jesus entrusted himself to his Father by praying, Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.

And the resurrection is the Father's answer to his prayer. People who were standing around the cross were mocking Jesus saying, Let God deliver him. And guess what?

He did. He affirmed the righteousness of his son, Jesus Christ, by raising him to life. And in that one single stroke, not only was the Father affirmed as righteous, but so was the Son as well.

[32 : 50] In fact, the beauty of being united with Christ by faith is that this resurrection affirms that you are accepted as righteous too.

In Romans chapter 4, the Apostle Paul writes that our faith in Christ is counted to us as righteousness. And he says, A lot of times we associate being justified, being counted righteous before God.

We associate that with the death of Christ. But here Paul is associating with the resurrection. Why? Because the resurrection gives the proof that we are justified.

We are counted righteous by faith. That we are, just like Jesus, we are affirmed to be righteous by God. If Christ is affirmed as righteous by his resurrection, then so is everyone who is united by faith in him.

When the Roman centurion looked at Jesus on the cross and said, Certainly this man was innocent. He says it of you too. Third and finally, in his resurrection, Jesus Christ is the pioneer who leads the way to a new creation.

[34 : 16] He is the pioneer who leads the way to a new creation. In Colossians chapter 1, last week, we saw that Jesus is called the firstborn from the dead. The firstborn from the dead.

He is the one who is first to inherit a new and glorious body. He leads the way, the forerunner, the pioneer to new resurrection life.

If you are united to Christ by faith, that means that you are created new as well. Consider what God has done already to make that happen. You get a sneak preview of the life to come even now.

In 1 Peter chapter 1, we read, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

He has caused us to be born again. You are born anew. New life has begun. You've already been raised with Christ or born again.

[35 : 27] Because of God's power, you are no longer under the dominion of sin. You are now able to do the work of his ministry, which beforehand you were not able and empowered to do.

And now that you have been given this new identity, this new power, God urges you, embrace it. Take hold of what I have given you. Take hold of the new identity I have given you.

Take hold of this new covenant relationship. Take hold of the power that is at work within you to make you like my son Jesus Christ. And to do what I have called you to do.

Become what you are. As Paul wrote in Philippians chapter 2, have this mind among yourselves. The one that's yours in Christ Jesus.

Adopt the mindset of Jesus Christ. Because that belongs to you now. Or as he says in Colossians chapter 3, If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above where Christ is,

seated at the right hand of God.

[36 : 34] There's that phrase again, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. So since you've been raised with Christ, you belong where Christ is.

Where Christ is, is that's where your heart is. That's where your home is. Seek those things. Live for those things. And beyond this present opportunity, all these opportunities we have even now to enjoy a taste of the resurrection life to come.

We have hope for the future. Because friends, there is more to come and it is far better. We look forward to being raised with a resurrection body that is like Jesus Christ's.

You know, sometimes people carry this funny idea that when we die, we just sort of float up to heaven and we drift among the clouds. You know, in this bodiless, disembodied existence, nothing could be further from the truth.

In fact, we will be living in the new heavens and the new earth, resurrected with bodies forever. And this means that in this life, your labor is not in vain.

[37 : 50] You'll be richly rewarded. There is a future yet to come. One of my favorite authors has, you know, has this quote that I just always feel encouraged when I'm reminded of it, where he says, someday you will be strong and healthy forever.

Sometimes people grieve because they say, I prayed for someone to be healed, but then instead they died. Well, if you're a Christian, what that means is the answer to prayer is not no, it's not just yet.

Someday it is coming. Someday you will be glorious forever. In the new heavens and the new earth, in your resurrected body, when our King returns.

As Paul says in Philippians chapter three, our citizenship is in heaven. That's our home. And from it, we await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

We'll be talking about that power in a moment because where Christ is, he now has power and authority.

[39 : 13] So the risen Christ has saved us in the past by raising us to new spiritual life. He will save us in the future by raising our bodies again in a new and glorious state.

What about the present? What work is the risen Christ doing now to save us? What work is Jesus Christ presently doing? Many people seem to have this idea that Jesus Christ was active during his earthly ministry and then he rose again and ascended to heaven and now he's just, I don't know what, sitting around waiting, like he's at the DMV or something.

He's just sitting around waiting for things to happen and then he'll return and set things right one day. Again, nothing could be further from the truth. What work is Jesus Christ presently doing?

Well, to answer that question, we first have to answer another question. Where is he now? Where is Jesus Christ now? You may have noticed he's not just kind of wandering around on the earth. In Acts chapter 1, verses 9 through 11, Jesus gives us that answer because he's risen from the dead and in his final appearance to his disciples, Jesus speaks with them and then we read this.

When he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes and said, men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven?

[40 : 40] This Jesus who has taken up from you into heaven will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven. So this event is known as the ascension because Jesus ascended into heaven.

This was an event in space and time. The ascension took place 40 days following his resurrection, likely in the year 33 AD. In this event, Jesus' human body didn't vanish.

Notice, it doesn't say he just disappeared from their sight. It says he moved up into heavens. His body changed location from earth into some sort of heavenly realm.

Jesus is no longer physically present on earth with us, but he still exists in bodily form like you and me.

This ascension is significant because it meant that his redemptive work on earth is complete. It means that now he has returned returned to the visible public glory that he had as the son of God before the angels in heaven.

[41 : 53] His glory is no longer veiled and shrouded the way it was during his earthly ministry. As we read in Philippians chapter 2, it means that God exalted him to the highest place.

Jesus Christ has been given authority as Lord over all creation. Now, he already had that as God. He never stopped having that as God.

But now, he has that as man as well. He has become what Adam failed to be, the ruler and Lord of creation.

He has received glory. As one author puts it, he is the first resurrected man to enter heaven. He is the forerunner of all believers who will follow.

So, once he ascended into heaven, now his new work of ministry began. Have you ever thought about that question?

[42 : 51] What exactly is Jesus doing? What's he doing right now? Well, last week, we read in Hebrews chapter 1, verse 3, that once Jesus ascended, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high.

Now, we've heard that phrase several times already in these scriptural passages, as well as in our church's affirmation of faith. This is called, the word to describe this is called his session.

The word session means a sitting down. One theologian describes his session in heaven as the sitting down of Christ at God's right hand after his ascension, indicating that his work of redemption was complete and that he received authority over the universe.

To be seated at the right hand of the ruler means that you share his power as his right hand man. Right? And from this place, Christ reigns as head of the church, his people.

From this place, he is our authority and our source of life. From this place, Christ has now received the power and the authority to pour out the Holy Spirit on his church and empower us all for holy and effective living.

[44 : 14] That was something he gained, as man, he gained the authority to do. That's why Peter says in Acts chapter 2, verse 33, being therefore exalted at the right hand of God and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.

And since our own flesh and blood is now affirmed as king, this means that we too belong in the heavenly throne room with him. In Ephesians chapter 1, Paul talks about how Jesus Christ was raised up in power and seated at the right hand of God.

And then in the very next chapter, in chapter 2, he talks about how God has saved us too. And then he says, he has raised us up with him, with Christ, and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus so that in the coming ages, he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace and kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

We belong in the throne room of God, a place no human being could ever enter on their own merits, a place no one is worthy of. Unless Jesus Christ looks at you and says, you're mine.

You belong to me and I to you. Come, enter. And even as we receive the Holy Spirit from him, even so, we receive our status in heaven from him.

[45 : 53] And there, he continues to serve as our high priest. In the Old Testament, the high priest over Israel served as this mediator who could represent the people before God, who could enter into the holy places and represent the people before God.

As high priest, Jesus serves as the mediator between God and man and he is the only one who can do it. He is the only one perfect enough and the only one who is God and man and can properly represent both parties.

In Hebrews chapter 10, we read how Jesus entered heaven as our high priest. It captures this moment. It says, every priest, he's talking about these Old Testament priests, every priest stands daily at his service offering repeatedly the same sacrifices which can never take away sins.

He didn't have that power in them. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet.

For by a single offering, he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified, those who are being made holy. As high priest, Jesus has inaugurated this new covenant, this new relationship that we have with God in which both Jew and Gentile can be reconciled to God, their sins forgiven, and we can receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

[47 : 36] We can receive God himself. As high priest, Jesus appears in the presence of God and there he is our advocate and there he is our intercessor.

He speaks on our behalf. Imagine what it would be like if Jesus were sitting in this room off in the corner and from your side of the room you all of a sudden heard him praying for you by name. How would you feel? You have something even better than that. In Hebrews chapter 7 we're told 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.

He always lives. Jesus Christ is in heaven interceding for you right now. Praying for you. In fact, God his Father appointed him to do this very thing.

He's not, by the way, speaking to a God who is begrudgingly showing kindness towards you. He's speaking to a God who has appointed him to that very role because he wants to show kindness to you. And he does it eagerly and willingly speaking on your behalf.

[49 : 02] And so you know that God understands your plight and he hears all your prayers and that Christ will save you to the uttermost. I love that.

He'll save you to the uttermost. By the way, I see this a lot in counseling. We want to be saved from our problems, from the challenges of our lives.

What I find over and over when I'm counseling people is oftentimes God wants to save us from so much more than we want to be saved from. God's ideas for your salvation are so much bigger than yours.

And that's what Jesus is praying for and that's what he is working for. To save you to the uttermost. Every, to save you in every way. Even in the ways that right now you don't even know you need to be saved.

Finally, as high priest, Christ is the head of a nation of priests. That means you and me. In 1 Peter 2, verse 5, we are told, you yourselves, like living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

[50 : 16] And so many of the things Jesus does as high priest, we do as well in imitation of him. We intercede for one another in prayer. You get to be a priest to one another in God.

That is something the role every Christian has. We speak to God for one another. We speak on God's behalf to one another. We worship God with words of praise we do good works that are done in his name.

And thanks to Christ, our high priest, we are authorized because no priest can do these things unless they're authorized. But God has authorized us through Christ to serve as priests of him whose rightful place is in heaven in the courts of the Lord with our ascended and reigning Savior, Jesus Christ.

Christ. The story is not over yet. There is work that Jesus Christ has yet to do when he returns to earth again.

There's a work of judgment and salvation. A work of making a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness and only righteousness dwells.

[51 : 30] Perhaps that will be a good subject for a future sermon based on our affirmation of faith when we talk about last things. But for now, perhaps we should close with one of the creeds of the early church that tells this story, that tells the truth about Jesus Christ, who he is, what he came to do.

So this is known as the Nicene Creed. So last week, we saw one of the most important documents that came out of the early church, the Chalcedonian definition.

When you pair it with the Nicene Creed, you get the foundation for almost everything that is recognized as Christianity today. So this was first developed at the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD and then revised at a later council.

And so actually, I'm going to invite everyone who believes in Christ to speak this creed, to recite it together with me in a moment. But if you know me, you know that I'm a big believer in not just saying empty words, but understanding the words that we're saying.

And most of it is very straightforward. But it's good to clarify a few lines first because sometimes people get a little bit confused about these. There's a line about Jesus Christ as begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father.

[52 : 44] Now the good news is if you were here last Sunday, you're like, ah, I know what that means. Right? You might remember why that's important because it's saying that Christ, the Son, he has the same substance as God the Father.

That means he is fully God, just as the Father is. When we're saying he's begotten, not made, that means that there wasn't a time when the Son didn't exist and then God created him. That never happened. In eternity, God the Son exists. By the same time, in eternity, he is generated by the Father. His being flows out from the Father. I've seen some theologians describe it as like the way that the Son, the Son's rays eternally come out of the Son. It's a little hard to understand, and the truth is we actually don't really understand it, but we know it's true. There's a phrase in there about the quick and the dead that's maybe a common expression, but I think a lot of people don't really realize. The word quick just means living. So this is referring to people who are living and people who are dead. And then there's a line about one holy, Catholic, and apostolic church. Now, usually we use the word Catholic, sometimes referred to Roman Catholicism, but the word Catholic simply means universal.

[53 : 52] So what this is saying is it's simply saying there's one universal church founded by the apostles. And so, let's tell the story of Jesus Christ and hear one another remind each other of these words together.

So if you're a believer in Christ, I invite you to recite with me the Nicene Creed, and we're going to have it up here on the screen. So this is the Creed. So let's all say this together. I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things, visible and invisible, and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, light of light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made, who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary and was made man and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate.

He suffered and was buried, and the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures and ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of the Father, and he shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead, whose kingdom shall have no end.

And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spake by the prophets. And in one holy Catholic and apostolic church, I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins, and I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.

[56 : 02] Amen. Our Father, we thank you that we have this blessing. We have these words that have been passed down one generation after another, has been passing these down, wrestling with the truth, recognizing and affirming all the things that you have said about Jesus Christ, our Lord.

We thank you that we can know him, and through him, we can know you. If it weren't for you, if it weren't for your Son, Jesus Christ, we would not know you.

We would not know you fully and know what you were like. We would not know your heart to save us. We would not see and experience and understand who you are in your gracious and loving heart.

We would not understand how firmly and fiercely you value justice and how much you long for a world rid of sin. a world that you can hand over to your Son that he can rule over and which he in turn can deliver over to you.

We here confess that this world is all about you. It is all about Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in that eternal relationship. We have that part to play, and you've invited us, welcomed us into that relationship as brothers of Jesus Christ, united with him by faith, those whom God's Spirit dwells in, those who belong in the courts of heaven.

[57 : 40] This is not something we have earned, not something we can pay you back for, but we can only receive as a gift. Lord, we confess that receiving grace is the hardest thing to do.

So God, we come to you. May the eyes of our hearts be enlightened, open our eyes to see who you are, to see your Son, to recognize that he has risen from the dead, ascended into glory, and seated at the right hand of God.

We honor him as Lord, and we say, come Lord Jesus, make all things new. Amen. We're just coming back from the COVID schedule, and one thing we're still adjusting to is taking up offering. So, we're going to still pull that off today. Dave, you may be seated. And, so, this is mainly for our, this is for our members and regular attenders, typically.

However, it is an act of worship, so, even if you are not a regular attender, feel free, if that is an act of worship to the Lord, of course, that does not save any of us or any such thing, but those of us

who are followers of him, it is an act of worship to give, and so we eagerly do so.

[59 : 07] Of course, I think most of us know a way of doing that in a regular way. The information for that is available on the welcome desk. You can set that up via automatic payments and such.

But in the meantime, we also offer this as an opportunity, just passing around the bags and calling forward all the ushers and I'll pray for that.

Lord, thank you for this opportunity to worship you in yet another way. Thank you for Dave's sermon, thank you for the music, and now thank you for this opportunity to give as you direct us to do through your word.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.