

08: WE BELIEVE | THE NICENE CREED

I | RESURRECTION

and the third day he **rose again** according to the Scriptures,
and **ascended** into heaven, and is **seated** at the right hand of the Father;
and he shall **come again**, with glory, to **judge** both the living and the dead;
whose kingdom shall have no end

- The good news of the gospel is not only that Jesus was crucified and died for our sins, but that he was raised on the third day. That's what the Nicene Creed confesses.
- How important is this teaching about Christ resurrection?
- **1 Corinthians 15:17**, if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you're still in your sins.
- In other words, if Christ's resurrection never happened, your faith is worthless. If there's no resurrection, then his crucifixion and death didn't accomplish anything.
- "but in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead." (1 Cor. 15:20)
- The Nicene creed confesses the Church's trust in this fact on which eternity hangs.
- Jesus Christ rose from the dead. The incarnate Son of God was dead and then became alive again and walked out of his tomb.
- That is the apostolic testimony, that is the testimony of the Christian church, that is the teaching of the Bible. That is the faith that is confessed in the Nicene creed.
- The Christian gospel announces to this world: Jesus Christ rose in the flesh.
- And lots of people saw him. Paul states there were more than 500 eyewitnesses, many of whom were still alive when Paul wrote his letter to the Corinthians.
- These facts are the foundation of the Christian faith.
- It's a real, historical event that we must believe.

BODILY RESURRECTION

- After the resurrection, Jesus made people face the fact that he was really flesh and blood. The women at the tomb clutched his feet. He ate with his disciples. He came to a group of his disciples and told them to touch him and to look at his hands and feet.
- Jesus appeared to Thomas, one of his disciples who was skeptical, and said to him, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe." (John 20:27).
- The resurrected Christ showed himself to people. He told them to look at him, to touch him, to eat with him. They heard his audible voice.
- It's the incarnate Son of God, raised in the flesh, that makes God's salvation real for us.
 - If Christ is risen, then our sins were truly paid for on the cross.
 - If Christ is risen, then human flesh is now in heaven, glorified in God's presence.
 - If Christ is risen, then He is alive and ruling all things.
 - If Christ is risen, then we too will rise again and live forever.

- Paul closely linked Christ's resurrection with ours. If he didn't rise from the dead, we won't either.
- But in fact, Paul said, "Christ has been raised from the dead. He's the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep." (1 Cor. 15:20)
- Christ rose from the dead first, but he won't be alone.
- Christians who have died will also rise again.
- And what kind of body will those who are raised have?
 - Paul answered by saying the resurrection body will be different. Our bodies will be glorious, powerful, spiritual, imperishable. (1 Cor. 15:42-49)
- Our belief in Christ's resurrection is inseparable from this hope.
- Because Christ is risen, we will rise also.

II | ASCENSION

- But the core of the gospel doesn't end with the resurrection.
- After Christ rose from the dead, he ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father.
- This is not a theological afterthought, it's essential to our faith.
- Jesus told his disciples and those who loved him most, that he wasn't going to stay with them after his resurrection.
 - It was necessary for him to go so that the promised Spirit could come after he departed. (John 16:7-8)
 - Mary Magdalene saw him outside his empty tomb and he said to her, "Don't cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father." (John 20:17)
- His apostles were eyewitnesses not only of his resurrection, but also his ascension.
- **Acts 1:9**, And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.
- After he ascended, he gave his witnesses the promise of the Father, the Holy Spirit.
- The Holy Spirit has been key to all of Christ's work all along. All of God's works involve all three persons of the Trinity.
- But now, because Christ ascended to heaven, the Spirit is sent and poured out on his people.
- It is through the Spirit, that Christ formed his church and gave her power to make disciples of all nations.
- It is through the Holy Spirit, that Jesus Christ remains with his church today and he rules, strengthens, guides, guards, and purifies her as he prepares her for his return.

SEATED AT THE FATHER'S RIGHT HAND

- Jesus's exaltation to the right hand of the Father means he now rules over everything as true God and true man. "He is seated at the right hand of the Father."
- He is the promised Messiah, the Davidic King Israel had waited for, whose throne is established forever.
- However, he's not enthroned in Jerusalem, but in heaven.
- Jesus is the King of kings. Because of his humiliation, he is now highly exalted, and his name is above every name.

- As the King, Christ rules his church in a distinct way, as the head of his body. (Col. 1:18)
- As the exalted God-man, he is also our great High Priest. Through the offering of himself, he is the once-for-all sacrifice for our sin. (Heb. 7:27)
- In heaven, he is before the presence of the Father as our Mediator, interceding for us. (Heb. 9:24; Rom. 8:34)
- As God's people, trusting in Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we must live in obedience to the living, exalted, and reigning Christ.
- **Colossians 3:1-3** If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. 3 For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

III | RETURN AND JUDGMENT

- As Christians, we look to the past, remembering that Christ saved us through his death and resurrection.
- We also focus on the present, as through the Spirit who lives in us, we are being sanctified, strengthened, and sustained as we walk by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.
- But it's not only the past that is key to our faith, the future is also, as the Nicene Creed shows us.

HIS RETURN

- We believe that Jesus will come again.
- When he comes, our bodies will be resurrected and suffering and evil will be no more.
- Christ's everlasting kingdom will become visible and fill all things.
- And at that time every knee will bow to Jesus, "in heaven and on earth and under the earth." (Phil. 2:10)
- It is what the angel said to the apostles after the ascension, as they gazed up into the heavens, "this Jesus, who was taking up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him going to heaven." (Acts 1:11)
- **1 Thessalonians 4:16-18** For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore encourage one another with these words.
- We need to encourage another with the hope of his return.

HIS JUDGMENT

- At his return, he will judge the living and dead, rendering just and righteous judgement.
- **John 5:25-29** "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. 26 For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. 27 And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the

Son of Man. 28 Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice 29 and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.

- **2 Corinthians 5:10** For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

HIS EVERLASTING KINGDOM

- Christ's kingdom, which already exists on earth in the church, is forever.
- At his return, his kingdom will be fully consummated and manifested in its all its glory.
- And we, as his children, will possess that kingdom forever (Dan.7:18).
- At his glorious return, the heavens and the earth will be recreated.
- And his righteous kingdom, will endure, forever, and ever.

PERSONAL APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

- How does believing in the bodily resurrection of Jesus affect your confidence in God's promises and your hope in the future?
- How might your daily priorities, decisions, and anxieties change if you truly lived as if Christ is reigning right now, sovereign over all things, and interceding for you in heaven?
- When you think about Christ's promised return and His righteous judgment, what emotions or thoughts come to mind? How can this truth shape how you live today?
- How can you live each day more like someone who belongs to Jesus' everlasting kingdom instead of the temporary kingdoms of this world?