***ON THE THIRD DAY HE ROSE AGAIN***

**The Apostles’ Creed – Week 6**

**By Andy Manning**

1. **INTRODUCTION**
   1. The purpose of the church is to make disciples (Mt 28:19-20). To help people become fully-devoted followers of Jesus Christ. How do you do that? Theologian J.I. Packer says that the best way is to teach people the three most important pieces of Christian literature: The Ten Commandments, the Lord’s Prayer, and the Apostles’ Creed. The Ten Commandments teach people how to act; the Lord’s Prayer teaches people how to pray; and the Apostles’ Creed teaches people what to believe. So, right now at Church Acadiana we are studying the Apostles’ Creed to learn the most important Christian doctrines.
   2. The Apostles’ Creed goes back to the second century A.D. It is the oldest creed (summary of Christian doctrine), and it is affirmed by Christians of all denominations. Ever since the second century Christians have been using the Apostles’ Creed as a syllabus or outline to teach the essential beliefs of Christianity.
   3. Remember that the Apostles’ Creed is not Scripture. The Bible is our only authority. Just as the moon has no light of its own, but only reflects the light of the sun, the Apostles’ Creed has no authority, and is only helpful and useful because it reflects the light of Scripture.
   4. Let’s begin by reciting the Creed. (This version of the Apostles’ Creed comes from the website of the Episcopal Church).
      1. I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth; I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.
   5. This morning we are going to focus on the words, “On the third day he rose again.”
   6. The resurrection of Jesus Christ just might be the most important doctrine of the Christian faith.
   7. **William Barclay** “It is either the greatest single fact in history, or, if it is not true, it is the greatest deception in history.”
   8. This morning I want us to look at the resurrection from three angles: The event, the evidence, and the explanation.
2. **THE EVENT**
   1. The Bible is very clear that Jesus rose from the dead.
   2. Jesus predicted it multiple times.
   3. **Mark 8:31** Then he began to teach them that it was necessary for the Son of Man to suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, be killed, and rise after three days.
   4. All four gospels tell the story of the resurrection (Mt 28; Mk 16; Lk 24; Jn 20).
   5. In the book of Acts, just about every sermon by the apostles proclaims the resurrection.
      1. Peter’s first sermon…
         1. **Acts 2:24** God raised him up, ending the pains of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by death.
         2. **Acts 2:32** God has raised this Jesus; we are all witnesses of this.
      2. Peter’s sermon in the temple:
         1. **Acts 3:15** You killed the source of life, whom God raised from the dead; we are witnesses of this.
      3. Paul’s sermon in Antioch of Pisidia:
         1. **Acts 13:30-31** 30 But God raised him from the dead, 31 and he appeared for many days to those who came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses to the people.
   6. The resurrection is proclaimed in the New Testament epistles:
      1. **1 Corinthians 15:3-4** 3 For I passed on to you as most important what I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.
   7. The Bible proclaims that Jesus rose from the dead. But how did it happen? For that we can go to any of the four gospels, but today we are going to go to the gospel of Luke.
   8. **Luke 24:1-12**

*1 On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came to the tomb, bringing the spices they had prepared. 2 They found the stone rolled away from the tomb. 3 They went in but did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. 4 While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men stood by them in dazzling clothes. 5 So the women were terrified and bowed down to the ground.*

*“Why are you looking for the living among the dead?” asked the men. 6 “He is not here, but he has risen! Remember how he spoke to you when he was still in Galilee, 7 saying, ‘It is necessary that the Son of Man be betrayed into the hands of sinful men, be crucified, and rise on the third day’?” 8 And they remembered his words. 9 Returning from the tomb, they reported all these things to the Eleven and to all the rest. 10 Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them were telling the apostles these things. 11 But these words seemed like nonsense to them, and they did not believe the women. 12 Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. When he stooped to look in, he saw only the linen cloths., So he went away, amazed at what had happened.*

* 1. The resurrection occurred on the first day of the week, or Sunday.
     1. This is why Christians meet on Sundays. The first Christians were Jews, and Jews meet for worship on the Sabbath, or Saturday. But since Christ rose from the grave, the early Christians called Sunday “The Lord’s Day,” and they moved their day of worship from Saturday to Sunday.
  2. Very early in the morning the women went to the tomb.
     1. Mark says they went at sunrise (16:2). Matthew says they went as the day was dawning (Mt 28:1).
  3. Who were these women?
     1. Verse 10 says Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women. Mark says one of these women was Salome (Mk 16:1).
  4. Why did they go to the tomb?
     1. They were going to anoint Jesus’ body with spices.
     2. Jesus was buried by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. Joseph provided the tomb, and Nicodemus provided 75 pounds of myrrh and aloes.
     3. They would wrap the body in linen, like a mummy, and in the folds of the linen they would pour these powdered spices. But because Jesus was buried just a few hours before the Sabbath (which began Friday at 6 PM), He didn’t get the full anointing that was required according to Jewish traditions. These women watched as Jesus was buried on Friday, and then they went back early Sunday morning to finish the job (Lk 23:55-56).
  5. When they arrived, the stone was rolled away.
     1. Jesus was buried in a tomb that was cut out of the side of a mountain in the rock. Inside the tomb, the would carve out beds in the sides of the walls for the deceased. The entrance of the tomb was covered with a large stone, about the size of a wagon cartwheel. When the women arrived, the stone was rolled away.
     2. Matthew tells us how this happened (Mt 28:2-3). Before the women arrived, there was a violent earthquake. An angel descended from heaven, rolled back the stone, and sat on it. The guards who were watching the tomb fainted.
  6. Then the women went in the tomb and found it to be empty.
  7. Suddenly, two angels appeared and asked, “Whey are you looking for the living among the dead (v. 5)?”
     1. Al Mohler says this is one of the most shocking questions found in the entire Bible.
  8. The angel went on (v. 6). “He is not here, but he has risen!”
  9. Then the angel remined the women that Jesus had predicted His resurrection (v. 6-7).
  10. Then the women went and reported this to the Eleven disciples and others.
  11. Interestingly, it says that the disciples didn’t believe the women (v. 11). It wasn’t until later that they would believe.
  12. Then Peter goes to the tomb to see for himself. The book of John says that Peter and John ran together, but because John was younger he arrived first. John looked inside and saw the empty tomb, but he didn’t enter. But when Peter made he went in and saw that the body was gone (Jn 20:3-10).

1. **THE EVIDENCE**
   1. Now let’s talk about the evidence for the resurrection. There are three reasons to believe in the resurrection.[[1]](#footnote-1)
   2. First, Jesus’ body was gone.
      1. Not long after Jesus died on the cross, Jesus’ followers began to preach that He had risen from the grave. Now there was a simple way to find out if this was true. Anybody could have walked over the tomb where Jesus was buried and looked around. But the tomb was empty, and nobody disputed this – not the Romans, not the Jewish leaders, and none of Jesus’ followers. It was an established fact – the tomb was empty and Jesus’ body was missing. Now the question is what happened to the body. Did Jesus really rise from the dead, or is there some other explanation?
      2. Three Man-Made Theories: Over the years skeptics have offered several theories to explain the empty tomb.
      3. First, some suggest that the women went to the wrong tomb.
         1. The first people who saw the empty tomb were women like Mary Magdalene. Some suggest that they went to the wrong tomb, and that’s why it was empty.
         2. However, the Bible says that the women watched as Joseph and Nicodemus buried Jesus. They knew the location of the tomb.
         3. Also, if they had gone to the wrong tomb, then the Roman and Jewish authorities could easily have said, “You went to the wrong tomb. This is the location of the correct tomb. And you can see for yourself that it is not empty.” But they didn’t do that.
      4. Second, some skeptics suggest the swoon theory. To swoon is to faint or pass out, and that’s what some skeptics claim happened. Jesus didn’t actually die on the cross, they say. He just fainted, and then later He woke up in the tomb, walked out, and appeared to His followers. But this is just silly. William Barclay gives four arguments against the swoon theory. First, it is difficult to believe that Jesus survived the crucifixion. Second, it is difficult to believe that those who handled his body and prepared it for burial would not have noticed some signs of life. Third, It is difficult to believe how Jesus in such a weakened state could have freed himself from the bandages. Fourth, it is difficult to see how Jesus in such a weakened state could have rolled away the stone.
      5. Third, some skeptics suggest that the body was missing because Jesus’ disciples stole the body. But this is not possible for at least two reasons. First, the tomb was closely guarded by soldiers. Second, even if the disciples did steal Jesus’ body, then that means they were willing to suffer and die for a story that they knew wasn’t true. Within forty years of the resurrection almost all of the apostles were killed for preaching the resurrection. Some people are willing die for a story if they believe it is true; but nobody is willing to die for a story that they know is a lie.
      6. The tomb was empty. There is no question about that. The question is what happened to the body? All the man-made attempts to explain the empty tomb don’t hold any water, because the truth is that Jesus rose from the grave.
   3. Second, Jesus was seen alive.
      1. The second piece of evidence for the resurrection was that Jesus was seen alive, by many people. At least twelve appearances are mentioned. The apostle Paul lists some of the post-resurrection appearances.
      2. **1 Corinthians 15:3-8** 3 For I passed on to you as most important what I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

5 and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve. 6 Then He appeared to over 500 brothers at one time; most of them are still alive, but some have fallen asleep. 7 Then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles. 8 Last of all, as to one abnormally born, He also appeared to me.

* + 1. Now how do you explain all of these eyewitness testimonies of the risen Christ? Well, one suggestion is that they were hallucinating. A hallucination is the “apparent perception of an external object when no such object is present.” It’s when you think you saw something but that something wasn’t there to see. Hallucinations are associated with people who have mental disorders. When you look at the disciples, though, you can’t conclude that they were crazy; that they had mental disorders.
    2. Not only that, but hallucinations are not experienced by groups; only individuals. In that way they are kind of like dreams. Has anybody ever said to you, “Hey, that was a great dream we had last night, right?” Of course not, because dreams only happen to individuals, and it is the same with hallucinations. And that’s why the hallucination theory doesn’t work. Jesus didn’t just appear to one person on one occasion. He was seen by more than 500 people on more than 12 different occasions over a period of forty days. And the people weren’t seeing a ghost because on six of the twelve appearances Jesus was touched or He ate real food.
    3. But let’s just say that over 500 people did have the same hallucination – which has never happened before. All the Jewish and Roman authorities had to do was to take Jesus’ dead body and parade it around town to prove to everyone that He was dead. But they didn’t do that because, if you remember, the tomb was empty, and Jesus’ body was gone.
    4. Do you know how many eyewitnesses it takes to convict someone of murder in a court of law? None. Many people are found guilty of murder by a jury of their peers without eye-witnesses. But in the case of Jesus, we have over 500 eye-witnesses. Let’s look at one more piece of evidence.
  1. Third, the disciples were changed.
     1. This might be the most convincing piece of evidence for the resurrection. The disciples were radically changed into different people after Jesus rose from the grave. Let me give you a couple of examples.
     2. First, let’s look at the apostle Peter. On the night that Jesus was arrested, Peter denied Christ three times. He was scared. He was a coward. He denied that He knew Christ at all. Then, when Jesus is dead, Peter is found huddling together with the other disciples, hiding behind locked doors, afraid that the Jews might find them and kill them. But then just turn a few pages in your Bible and you find a completely different man. In Acts 2 Peter is standing outside and street preaching to a crowd of thousands of people in Jerusalem that Jesus is alive and He is the Messiah. Then a few chapters later, the Jewish authorities have Peter arrested. And so Peter boldly preaches about Jesus to the very authorities that he was hiding from just a few days earlier. And then they tell him to stop preaching about Jesus, and listen to how Peter responds in Acts 4.
     3. **Acts 4:19-20** “Whether it’s right in the sight of God for us to listen to you rather than to God, you decide; 20 for we are unable to stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.”
     4. So the Jewish authorities threatened them and released them, but Peter just kept on preaching about Jesus in public. In fact, Peter is so bold that he continues to preach about Jesus until he is finally arrested and killed for his faith. So why the difference? First you have a coward, and then you have a bold leader willing to suffer and die for Christ? What happened? Peter witnessed the resurrection. He saw Jesus alive.
     5. Another example is James, the brother of Jesus. Throughout Jesus’ ministry James didn’t believe in Jesus.
     6. **John 7:5**“For not even His brothers believed in Him.”
     7. But when you read the first chapter of Acts, James is mentioned in a list of Christ-followers. And later on, James became the pastor of the Christian church in Jerusalem, and one of the primary leaders of Christianity in the world along with Peter and Paul. So what happened? What would it take to convince you that your brother is God? Well, in 1 Corinthians 15:7, when Paul is listing off the people who saw the risen Christ, he mentions James. James was radically different because he saw Jesus alive.
     8. So, three reasons to believe in the resurrection of Jesus. The next time someone says that they don’t believe that Jesus rose from the grave, ask them three questions.
        1. How do you explain the missing body?
        2. How do explain the hundreds of eyewitnesses?
        3. How do you explain the changed lives of the disciples?

1. **THE EXPLANATION**
   1. Finally, let’s talk about the explanation of the resurrection. What is the significance of the resurrection?
   2. **Romans 1:3-4** 3 concerning his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who was a descendant of David, according to the flesh 4 and was appointed to be the powerful Son of God according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection of the dead.
   3. That word “appointed” is kind of confusing. It sounds like Jesus wasn’t the Son of God before the resurrection, but then after the resurrection God made Him the Son of God. But that’s not true. Christ called Himself the Son of God before His resurrection. Some translations (ESV, KJV) use the word “declared.” He was declared to be the Son of God when He rose from the grave. The NLT uses the word “shown.” He was shown to be the Son of God by the resurrection. In other words, the resurrection proves the deity of Christ.
   4. Jesus made all kinds of amazing statements. He claimed to be greater than the temple (Mt 12:6), greater than the prophet Jonah (Mt 12:41), and greater than King Solomon (Mt 12:42). He claimed to be the Lord of the Sabbath (Mt 12:8). He claimed He could forgive sins (Mt 9:2). He claimed to be the way, the truth, and the life, and no one can have a relationship with God except through Him (Jn 14:6). He said that if you want eternal life, you must believe in Him (Jn 3:16). Then He demanded that people love Him more than their own family, and that they be willing to die for Him (Mt 10:37-38). Most astonishingly, Jesus claimed to be God. He said, “I and the Father are one (Jn 10:30),” and “The one who has seen me has seen the Father (Jn 14:9).”
   5. Why should we believe Him? Either He is a liar, a lunatic, or Lord. How can we know? Because Jesus predicted His resurrection and then rose from the grave. When He rose from the grave, He proved His deity. The resurrection proved that He is indeed the divine Son of God, worthy of all our worship.
   6. Historical theologian **Jaroslav Pelikan** said on his deathbed, “If Christ is risen, nothing else matters. And if Christ is not risen—nothing else matters.”
   7. If Christ rose from the grave, then He is God. And that means there is a God. And that means that everything that Jesus said is true.
2. **CONCLUSION**
   1. One of my favorite stories about the resurrection is the story of Lee Strobel. Lee Strobel was an journalist for the Chicago Tribune. And he was an atheist. His wife got saved, so Lee decided that he was going to use his skills as an investigative journalist to find out of there is any credibility to Christianity. For two years he devoured books by atheists and Christians, interviewed scientists and theologians, studied archeology, ancient history, and world religions. But he said that the pivotal turning point for him was when he really dug into the evidence for the resurrection. He wrote this: “One by one, the facts built a convincing and compelling case… So on November 8, 1981, I took a step of faith in the same direction that the evidence was pointing – which is utterly rational to do – and became a follower of Jesus.”
   2. I believe. “I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again.”
   3. What about you? Do you believe?

1. Following John Stott’s book *Basic Christianity*. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)