

THE APOSTLES' CREED: CHRIST'S EXALTATION

Mark 16:1–7

Next major section: “the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.”

WLC 51 refers to these events as Christ's exaltation: “What was the estate of Christ's exaltation? The estate of Christ's exaltation comprehendeth his resurrection, ascension, sitting at the right hand of the Father, and his coming again to judge the world.”

Christ's Resurrection

1. The fact of the resurrection

- a. The Bible presents the resurrection story as a historical event.
- b. Paul is willing to stake the integrity of Christianity on the historical resurrection:

“If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied” (1 Cor 15:13–19).

2. The nature of the resurrection

- a. The same body (WLC 52; Luke 24:39).
- b. But with one difference: “but without mortality, and other common infirmities belonging to this life” (WLC 52).

3. The significance of the resurrection

- a. Public declaration that Christ is the Son of God: “who through the Spirit of holiness was appointed the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom 1:4).
- b. Satisfies divine justice: “Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us” (Rom 8:34).
- c. Proof that he has vanquished death and the lord of death: “Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil” (Heb 2:14).
- d. Accomplishes our justification: “He was delivered over to death for [to take care of] our sins and was raised to life for [to take care of] our justification” (Rom 4:25).
- e. Provides our spiritual resurrection and new life: “As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins...But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions...And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:1, 5–6).
- f. Assures us of our own resurrection: “For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive” (1 Cor 15:21–22).

WLC 52: “How was Christ exalted in his resurrection? Christ was exalted in his resurrection, in that, not having seen corruption in death (of which it was not possible for him to be held), and having the very same body in which he suffered, with the essential properties thereof (but without mortality, and other common infirmities belonging to this life), really united to his soul, he rose again from the dead the third day by his own power; whereby he declared himself to be the Son of God, to have satisfied divine justice, to have vanquished death, and him that had power of it, and to be Lord of quick and dead: all which he did as a public person, the head of his church, for their justification, quickening in grace, support against enemies, and to assure them of their resurrection from the dead at the last day.