



Provided by the Church of the Lutheran Confession - Board of Missions

**A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics)**  
**Lesson 6.6.2.2 – The Doctrine of Jesus, Son of God, Messiah (Christology)**

**Jesus' Resurrection from the Dead**

We come now to a very central teaching of Scripture. The apostle Paul tells us that if Jesus did not rise from the dead, there is no salvation or eternal life for anyone. In fact, the whole Christian teaching would be a fraud and a lie if Jesus did not rise from the dead. This is his testimony: **"If Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up – if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable"** (1 Corinthians 15:14-19).

It may seem strange that the *Apostles' Creed* puts Jesus' descent into hell before His resurrection from the dead. The Bible clearly teaches that Jesus descended into hell after He had been made alive again in the tomb. It seems that the resurrection was placed after His descent into hell because Jesus was not seen alive on earth as the risen Lord until after He descended into hell.

All three Persons of the Triune God were involved in Jesus' resurrection. We find many passages that speak of God or the Father raising Jesus from the dead. In his Pentecost address Peter attributed the raising of Jesus to God, saying: **"Him (Christ) ...you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up"** (Acts 2:23-24). Addressing the Jews again after he and John had healed a crippled beggar in Jesus' name, Peter said similar words: **"You...killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses"** (Acts 3:14-15). When Peter and John were brought before the authorities, Peter repeated the same testimony: **"Let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole"** (Acts 4:10). A short time later Peter and the other apostles repeated this same testimony: **"The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree"** (Acts 5:30). When Peter was invited to the home of the Roman centurion Cornelius, he said the same thing: **"We are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they killed by hanging on a tree. Him God raised up on the third day"** (Acts 10:39-40). Although the apostle Paul was not with the other apostles when Jesus first showed Himself alive, Paul's testimony was the same as Peter's. In the synagogue of Antioch in Pisidia Paul said: **"They took Him (Jesus) down from the tree and laid Him in a tomb. But God raised Him from the dead"** (Acts 13:29-30). Paul began his letter to the Galatian Christians with a similar testimony: **"Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead), and all the brethren who are with me"** (Galatians 1:1). In his letter to the Ephesians Paul spoke of **"the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory"** and said that **"He raised Him (Christ) from the dead and seated Him at His right hand"** (Ephesians 1:17, 20). The letter to the Hebrews also speaks of **"the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead"** (Hebrews 13:20).

Jesus, the Son of God, declared more than once that He raised Himself from the dead. Early in His ministry He challenged the Jewish leaders: **"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up"** (John 2:19). Speaking of Himself as the Good Shepherd, Jesus said: **"Therefore My Father loves Me,**

**because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again”** (John 10:17-18).

The Holy Spirit was also involved. Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome that Jesus was **“declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead”** (Romans 1:4). Later in the same letter Paul wrote: **“But if the Spirit of Him who raised Christ from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you”** (Romans 8:11).

In the Old Testament, David had foretold that the dead body of Jesus would not undergo any decomposition or physical decay: **“Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption”** (Psalm 16:10). Both Peter and Paul in their preaching called attention to Psalm 16 and its fulfillment in Jesus (Acts 2:31 and Acts 13:37). This was Paul’s testimony: **“David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption; but He whom God raised up saw no corruption”** (Acts 13:36-37).

After His resurrection Jesus had the same body as before, but now it was a glorious or glorified body in form. In order to prove to His disciples that He was the same Jesus who had been crucified and buried, the risen Christ **“showed them His hands and His feet”** (Luke 24:40). They also **“gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb. And He took it and ate in their presence”** (Luke 24:42-43). The evangelist John informs us that Jesus **“showed them His hands and His side”** (John 20:20). Even though He was the same Jesus, He did things in His physical body that He had not done or rarely done before. He came to His disciples on two Sundays **“when the doors were shut”** (John 20:19, 26). He was with two disciples on their walk to Emmaus and suddenly **“He vanished from their sight”** (Luke 24:31). In His new body Jesus was no longer subject to death as man’s Substitute. **“Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him”** (Romans 6:9). As Jesus’ disciples, we are given this promise: **“The Lord Jesus Christ...will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to himself”** (Philippians 3:20-21).

Regarding Jesus’ death and resurrection, the Bible often refers to three days and three nights. This has confused some people. Jesus Himself said: **“As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth”** (Matthew 12:40). But when we read of Jesus’ resurrection, it is clear that Jesus died and was buried on a Friday afternoon, and that He rose on Sunday morning. This does not amount to three days and three nights. The problem is solved when we realize that the Jews spoke of three days and three nights even when the period only included a portion of three separate days. If the period included even a portion of a day, that day was counted as a separate day. This was their idiom – their way of speaking – as can be seen from what is written about Esther in Esther 4:16 and Esther 5:1. This way of speaking may be strange to us, but it was the way they expressed themselves in those days.

Since the entire Christian teaching stands or falls with the absolute certainty of Jesus’ bodily resurrection from the dead, the devil has been striving ever since that first Easter to convince both unbelievers and believers as well that Jesus did not really rise from the dead with a glorified body. One of the first attempts to raise doubt concerning the resurrection is reported by Matthew in his Gospel. In order to prevent Jesus’ disciples from stealing Jesus’ dead body from the tomb and telling others that he had risen from the dead, Jesus’ enemies asked Pontius Pilate for permission to guard the tomb of Jesus. **“So they went and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone and setting the guard”** (Matthew 27:66). But when Jesus decided to rise from the dead, the stone and the seal and the guard proved to be futile. For we are told that **“an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men”** (Matthew 28:2-4). But now they had to come up with some kind of story to explain why the tomb they

had been guarding was empty and the body of Jesus was nowhere to be seen. We read: **“Some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all the things that had happened. When they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, saying, ‘Tell them, ‘His disciples came at night and stole Him away while we slept.’ And if this comes to the governor’s ears, we will appease him and make you secure.’ So they took the money and did as they were instructed; and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day”** (Matthew 28:11-15).

This explanation is full of holes. If they knew who stole the body, why did they not try to get it back? If they were sleeping, how did they know who took the body? If they had been sleeping on the job, would they not have been punished instead of being given extra pay?

There have been many other lies told since that time, trying to explain away Jesus’ resurrection. The wise philosophers in Athens could not accept Jesus’ resurrection. When Paul brought this message to them, **“some mocked, while others said, ‘We will hear you again on this matter.’ So Paul departed from among them”** (Acts 17:32-33). There were not many converts in Athens. The wise of the world do not want to accept any tale that is so incredible.

But the fact is that the bodily or physical resurrection of Jesus from the dead is one of the best authenticated events in all of history. God does not want us to have any doubts about the resurrection of Christ, for everything depends on whether it really happened or not. Satan’s attempts to overthrow this doctrine have succeeded in deceiving countless numbers of people, but the evidence is clear and powerful. Jesus’ resurrection took place exactly as it is recorded in the Scriptures. Each evangelist relates what happened from a different point of view; they include different details of what happened, but their accounts all fit together very well when we are willing to believe that the Bible is the Word of God and therefore without error.

The first report of Jesus’ resurrection was given to some women who arrived on early Easter Sunday morning to anoint Jesus’ dead body. They had not been able to finish everything they had wanted to do on Friday, because the Sabbath began at sunset on Friday, and they could do no work on the Sabbath. These women were greeted at Jesus’ tomb by an angel who said to them: **“Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead”** (Matthew 28:5-7). Mark’s account is almost identical (Mark 16:6). In Mark’s account the speaking angel is described as **“a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side”** (Mark 16:5). When we read Luke’s account, we learn that the angel mentioned by Matthew and Mark was not alone. There were two angels, who appears as **“two men...in shining garments”** (Luke 24:4). Their message was the same: **“Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, saying, ‘The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again’”** (Luke 24:5-7). The evangelist John wrote his Gospel much later than the other three, and supplied additional details that had not been mentioned by them. There is no real contradiction between the various accounts.

## Questions

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1. Why is the resurrection of Jesus from the dead so important to Christians?
2. Which Person of the Triune God raised Jesus from the dead?
3. What had Psalm 16 foretold concerning Jesus' death?
4. How did Jesus prove to His disciples that He was the same Jesus who had been crucified?
5. What kind of body did Jesus have after His resurrection?
6. What did Jesus do in His risen body that He had not done before?
7. What is meant by the Jewish idiom of three days and three nights?
8. What was the first lie that was told about Jesus' resurrection?
9. What proves that this lie is truly a lie and cannot be true?
10. Why is it so hard for people to believe that Jesus rose from the dead?
11. Compare the four Gospels in their accounts of Jesus' resurrection.