

## The Third Day He Rose Again

Luke 24:1-27, 44

Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 45

*Studies in the Heidelberg Catechism #23*

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**W**HEN we read the Word, we hear the voice of God. And tonight he testifies to us about his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. In response, let's raise our voices in confession of our faith using the words of Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 44:

Q.45. How does Christ's resurrection benefit us?

**A. First, by his resurrection he has overcome death, so that he might make us share in the righteousness he obtained for us by his death. Second, by his power we too are already raised to a new life. Third, Christ's resurrection is a sure pledge to us of our blessed resurrection.**

I want you to imagine for a moment an arch made out of many individual pieces of stone. As it goes up and begins to arch in, what holds it all in place? The capstone does. This is the final stone placed at the top of an arch. Without it the arch cannot support weight. Without it the arch collapses. The Christian Faith is like an arch. There are many doctrines like individual stones. There is the Triune nature of God. There is in the birth of the Son of God in human flesh. There is the cross of Christ. And the list goes on. So what is the capstone that holds the arch of Christianity together? The

answer is Jesus' resurrection! Listen to the Jewish rabbi turned apostle of Christ, Paul: "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins" (1 Cor. 15:17).

Tonight as we continue to follow through in the Heidelberg Catechism's explanation and application of the Apostles' Creed, we transition from the Son of God's humiliation in his conception and birth, suffering, crucifixion, and burial to his exaltation in his resurrection, and we'll see, in his ascension, session at the right hand of God, and return.

### **Its Promise**

I want to begin with Jesus speaking to these two disciples in Luke 24. Why is it that his resurrection is the capstone of Christianity? Because here Jesus speaks of the *promise* of his resurrection throughout the various parts of the Old Testament: the law, the prophets, and the psalms. Think of it like this: if I asked you to show me from the Old Testament the virgin birth of the Son of God in human flesh, could you do so? You'd probably think of Isaiah 7 and the promise of Immanuel, God with us. Again, if I asked you to show me from the Old Testament the cross of Jesus, could you do so? You'd probably turn to Psalm 22, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" Or you'd turn to the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53. But can you demonstrate

from the Old Testament God's own promises about the resurrection? Let me show you.

First, think of *its promise in the law*. Let me have you turn to one passage, Genesis 22. Notice how in verses 1–3 God speaks to Abraham of his son, his only son, and the son whom you love. He's emphasizing this truth, Then there are verses 9–10 where Abraham is about to sacrifice his own son only to have the angels of the Lord stop him. What does this teach about Jesus' resurrection? Turn over to Hebrews 11:17–19 quickly. The author calls this story a *parabolē*, which is a hidden truth in the Old Testament that is now revealed in the New. It was a parable of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Second, think of *its promise in the prophets*. One text to turn to is Amos 9:11–12. Amos was raised up by God to be a prophet of doom and judgment to disobedient Israel. But at the end of his prophecy he gives the good news. “In that day” is a prophetic way of speaking of the New Covenant. In the days of the New Covenant God would raise up the “booth of David.” This was not the tabernacle but the separate tent that David erected where he as king worshipped. This was symbolic of the resurrection of the Davidic kingship, which God promised would last forever to David in 2

Samuel 7. Now turn over to Acts 15. How was the resurrection of the Davidic kingship fulfilled? In the resurrection of Jesus who now sends his gospel to the Gentiles.

Finally, think of *its promise in the psalms*. “Psalms” was shorthand for the section of the Old Testament known as the “writings,” but we’ll focus on just one Psalm here. Psalm 118 is the prophetic voice of Christ. In verses 10 and 12 he speaks of his coming cross. Then in verses 19–21 he speaks of his coming resurrection. And in verse 22 he says “the stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,” or capstone.

God promised his people a coming Savior. And all through the Old Testament this promise was of the Savior’s death but also resurrection. So when Paul says, “If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins,” he’s saying that if Jesus didn’t rise then nothing he said about himself was true; nothing he did amounted to anything for us. He had to rise!

### **Its Benefit**

And we know he did! And because he did we are forgiven and we are freed from our sins! And in Psalm 118 we read of it in these words: “it is marvelous in our eyes” (Ps. 118:23). What is so marvelous about the

resurrection of us? Note how our Catechism speaks of three benefits this promised resurrected Savior would bring to us.

There is the benefit of justification or declaring us righteous before God. Because he has been raised and **overcome death** by faith we now share **in the righteousness he obtained for us**. When Jesus went into the grave, all that he did for us went with him. But when he rose again, all that he did for us in living perfectly he took to the throne of God and said, “This is for my people!” Then he sent it back to us by his Holy Spirit when we receive him by faith. How certain can I be that I am righteous? Is the tomb empty? Did Jesus rise again?

There is also the benefit of sanctification or making us more and more like Jesus in our daily lives. Our Catechism says **by his power** [of resurrection] **we too are already raised to a new life**. Are you slogging along in the muck and mire of daily life, not feeling or looking very holy? The answer is to trust that Christ has already made you alive and go forth out of that life, following him wherever he calls you!

Finally there is the benefit of glorification that is, the final entrance into God’s heavenly and holy presence apart from sin in eternity. This seems

like such pie in the sky at times, doesn't it? I mean, I have bills to pay, kids to raise, food to prepare just to survive. But note how the Catechism speaks of assurance: **Christ's resurrection is a sure pledge to us of our blessed resurrection.** Because he rose, he will raise me; because he was glorified in God's presence, I will be too!

Without the resurrection, the weight of your sins would collapse the arch of the Christian faith. But with it, you and I are assured that all Christ did is declared to me ours in justification, applied in our sanctification, and will be experienced in our glorification. Amen!