

# Christian Doctrine

#1 - To the casual observer who had seen the life of Jesus Christ, it may have appeared that Jesus was either humanity's finest product or that he was just another of many human beings who had made claims of greatness only to have his life come to an inglorious end. Most life histories do end with a death, perhaps not such a violent death as the one Christ endured, but a death just the same. Had his life ended when his dead body was placed in Joseph's family tomb, Jesus' claims of being humanity's only Rescuer would have died along with him. But the life history of the Son of God did not end with his burial on Good Friday. Having humbled himself to live perfectly in our place and to die for our sins, God the Father demonstrated to all people that this Jesus was indeed the Son of God and Savior of the world. Events which transpired during the forty days after Jesus' death supply all the proof in the world that Jesus was exactly who he said he was – humanity's only Savior.

*[Christ Jesus] made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross (Philippians 2:7-8)!*

#2 - Jesus' humiliation: He humbled himself to redeem us.

#3 - Because Jesus humbled himself, God exalted him.

*Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:9-11).*

While six statements from the Creed summarize how the Son of God lowered himself, those six statements are followed by five more which prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that the mission Christ carried out on earth was not at all a defeat or a failure but a smashing success.

- He descended into hell.
- The third day he rose again from the dead.
- He ascended into heaven
- He is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.
- From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

#4 - Jesus descended into hell

The last words Jesus spoke from the cross had been, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." With that, our Savior offered up his life in payment for the sins of the world. His dead body remained on the cross but his soul went to be with God the Father in heaven. Once laid in the grave, the dead body of our Savior miraculously experienced no physical decay (Psalm 16:9-10; Acts 2:22-31).

#5 - Early on the morning of what we now call Easter Sunday, Jesus soul returned to his body and he physically came to life again. Before leaving the grave and appearing to people, he descended into hell.

*For Christ also died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit; in which he went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark (1 Peter 3:18-20 RSV).*

#6 - Jesus made a public spectacle of his enemies.

*When you were dead in your sins ... God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross (Colossians 2:13-15).*

#7 - Jesus descended into hell...

- not to fight the devil (Colossians passages above).
- not to offer the damned a second chance to repent.

*Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment (Hebrews 9:27)...*

- not to suffer.

*When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished" (John 19:30).*

...to proclaim his victory. What Jesus proclaimed to the spirits (the devil and all those who had died in unbelief) in prison (hell) was his victory, an announcement he made on the enemy's own turf, similar to a victorious general parading triumphantly through the capital city of a country he just conquered.

Jesus' descent into hell was proof that his victory over the devil was complete. Recall our study of Genesis 3:15 where God promised the devil that a descendant of Eve would come to rescue the human race. The devil had struck Jesus' heel when Jesus died on the cross. But by living perfectly, dying as the payment for all sins and coming to life again, Jesus crushed the devil's head. Rendered completely ineffective are Satan's powers to terrify human beings with guilt, the fear of death, and the prospect of eternal punishment in hell. Jesus utterly and completely defeated the devil. The first thing he did upon rising to life again was to make that truth crystal clear to Satan in Satan's own camp. For us Jesus' descent into hell is the assurance that his victory over the devil is our victory over the devil.

#8 - The third day he rose again from the dead. An angel announced to the women that Jesus had risen from the dead. Jesus first appeared to Mary Magdalene.

#9 – Later he appeared to two disciples who were walking to the city of Emmaus. Easter Sunday evening he appeared to ten of the disciples, and a week later to eleven, including Thomas.

#10 - The account of the resurrection

*Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!" So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen. Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed (John 20:1-8).*

Concerning the resurrection, Werner Franzmann writes:

*Bear in mind that the linen strips were not folded and laid in a neat pile. They were simply "lying there." If some man had revived in the tomb, he would have had to unwind the bands or cut them. Then he could have arranged them neatly or folded them up in a pile. But the linen bands were "lying there" – as though someone had slipped out of them and left them looking as though he had "evaporated" out of them. And that is exactly what Jesus had done. He had risen out of the funeral wrappings and left them looking collapsed in upon themselves, with the spices wrapped in them by Joseph and Nicodemus still between the folds.*

After his descent (body and soul) into hell, Jesus left the grave unnoticed, with the large stone still in place, his glorified body no longer restricted by mere earthen walls. An angel came and rolled back the stone, not to let Jesus out but as a service to the early morning visitors to the tomb, so that they could see that he indeed was not there but had risen to life. During the next forty days, Jesus showed himself alive to several women who had come to finish embalming his body (Matthew 28:8-10), to Mary Magdalene the same morning (John 20:10-17), to two disciples that afternoon on a road to nearby Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35), to the ten disciples that evening without Judas or Thomas (John 20:19-23), a week later to the eleven disciples, including Thomas (John 20:24-29), to seven of the disciples by the Sea

of Galilee (John 21), to Peter and James individually as well as to a group of more than 500 believers at the same time (1 Corinthians 15:5-7), and to the eleven disciples on a mountain in Galilee (Matthew 28:16-20). The physical resurrection of Jesus is a well-attested fact. After all, how much good would a dead Savior be?

*...who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 1:4).*

*He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification (Romans 4:25).*

*Jesus said to her [Martha], “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” (John 11:25-26)?*

*Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live (John 14:19).*

The resurrection of Christ is the foundation of the Christian faith. Without it the teachings of the Christian faith fall like dominoes. With it the teachings of the Christian faith stand firmly as the truth.

*If it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? 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 to be pitied more than all men. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep (1 Corinthians 15:12-20).*

Jesus' resurrection proves a number of things:

- He is truly God.
- God accepted his sacrifice as full payment for all sins.
- We, too, will be raised to life.
- All scripture is true.

#11 - He ascended into heaven. Humanly speaking, Jesus could not have remained on this earth in physical form. How could he possibly be with us always and everywhere if his physical presence were limited to one place, as it was during his days on earth when he did not make use of his omnipresence? Nor could he have returned to heaven by simply vanishing, leaving people to wonder if in fact he had ever truly risen. So that people could plainly see that he had returned to heaven, Jesus visibly, gradually ascended into heaven.

#12 - He ascended into heaven.

*After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven” (Acts 1:9-11).*

*Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, “Does this offend you? What if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before” (John 6:61,62)!*

Jesus had promised, “Surely, I will be with you always, to the very end of the age.” To keep this promise to believers of all ages, Jesus ascended into heaven, making himself invisible, but at the same time reassuming the use of his omnipresence. Jesus did not abandon us. He is now everywhere at once.

*But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says: “When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men.” (What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) (Ephesians 4:7-10)*

Jesus is now everywhere, including heaven. There he prepares a place for all those who trust in him for salvation. Like the stories of wedding celebrations in Jesus' day where the groom went off to prepare a home for his bride, returning later to celebrate the wedding by taking her to their new home, so Jesus has pledged himself to us in a spiritual marriage and has gone off to prepare our heavenly home. We await his return, to take us to be with him in our heavenly home.

*“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am” (John 14:1-3).*

From what the angels told Jesus' disciples upon his ascension into heaven (Acts 1 above), Jesus' return on the last day will be identical to the way the disciples saw him go into heaven. (Christ's return at Judgment Day will be fully treated in Lesson 14.)

Jesus' ascension proves...

- He has returned to the place from which he came.
- He is again present everywhere.
- He is preparing a place for us.
- He will return in the same way that he departed.

#13 - He is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.

Jesus is not perched on his Father's right hand. Technically, God doesn't have a right hand – he's a spirit. Yet the Bible often describes God in human terms so we can better comprehend him. The right hand of God is not a place but a position, a position of power. Since still today Jesus, the Son of God, is fully human, we can say that a man is running the universe, a man who has made us his brothers and sisters. History, then, is certainly not one fool thing after another.

#14 - God's right hand is a way of talking about his power.

*So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand (Isaiah 41:10).*

With his divine power, our Brother and Friend is controlling all things in the universe for the good of those who trust in him.

*That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way (Ephesians 1:19-23).*

*Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (Matthew 28:18).*

Jesus Christ now rules over everything in the universe. And, as Paul said, he rules over everything for the church, in the interest of the believers. It's quite comforting to know that, despite many appearances of godlessness and despite how wicked people seem in many cases to be in control of local and world governments and businesses, etc., the Savior who knows us by name and knows the number of hairs on our heads is fully in charge of everything that happens – no exceptions.

In the ancient near east, a victorious king often had the faces/figures of his enemies carved or woven into his footstool. The visual message as he rested his feet on his footstool was obvious. Whenever Satan, sin or the influences of unbelieving people in the world around us trouble us and challenge our faith, our eyes can look heavenward. There we see a Savior who has defeated and is now in complete control of our enemies. He is also praying for us. If we could hear Jesus praying for us in the next room, we wouldn't fear a million enemies. Yet the distance makes no difference; he is praying for us.

*Who is he that condemns? 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 (Romans 8:34).*

*My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense – Jesus Christ, the Righteous One (1 John 2:2).*

Jesus’ session proves...

- He again and forever controls all things.
- He uses his almighty power for the welfare of the Church.
- He is interceding for us.

#15 - He will come to judge the living and the dead. That Jesus Christ has been appointed to serve on the last day as the judge of all humanity only reinforces the truths of this lesson. He has been exalted to and has now fully reassumed his position of divine glory and honor. On the last day he will exercise his divine authority and all people will recognize that he is who he said he was. He will give to all people his permanent verdict of either innocent (to those who put their trust in him as Savior) or guilty (to those who rejected him as Savior). Those who are pronounced permanently innocent through their faith in him will live with him forever in heaven. Those who are pronounced permanently guilty by virtue of an absence of faith in him will suffer forever with the devil in hell. As noted above, Lesson 14 will provide a detailed study of Eschatology, those things which have to do with Judgment Day.

*He [Jesus] commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead” (Acts 10:42).*

#16 - Jesus’ humiliation: He humbled himself to redeem us.

#17 - Jesus’ exaltation: God exalted him to prove we are redeemed.

#18 - Gospel God’s law might easily be considered bad news. Realizing our innumerable sins and the punishment which God promises for them can only serve to make life miserable and future prospects terrifying. God, however, has another message for us which is definitely good news. It is the gospel, which literally means “good news.”

*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned (John 3:16-18).*

#19 - Sola Fide Evangelical Lutheran Church & School (emphasis on Evangelical)

The proper names of our Lutheran congregations carry the name “Evangelical,” a word taken from the Greek word which means gospel, good news. Our church has good news to share.

The Bible teaches both bad news and good news. All people need to hear both.

THE LAW	THE GOSPEL
#20 - tells us what God wants us to do and not to do.	tells us nothing but what God has done and will do for us.
#21 - pronounces a curse on everyone who breaks the commandments.	announces that Christ took our curse onto himself.
#22 - tells us we deserve to be condemned to hell.	tells us God gives the gift of eternal life.
#23 - is both natural (in the heart; conscience) and revealed (in scripture).	is unnatural, a truth revealed only by God through his word.
#24 - leaves people feeling that they have to fulfill certain requirements in order to earn their own salvation.	gives us grateful hearts which want to obey God, not to earn salvation but to thank God for the gift of salvation.

#25 - Terms used for salvation

**Justification** Justification is a courtroom term which refers to a judge declaring a person “not guilty.” God has declared all people not guilty based on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

**Redemption** To “redeem” means to “buy back” or to “ransom.” God has redeemed us from the slavery of sin. We are freed from the bondage of sin: guilt, greed, lust, pride, addiction, ambition, unforgiving attitudes, etc. God has also redeemed us from the power of sin, promising us strength through his Word to live as his redeemed children. When you see this word in its many appearances in scripture, think of a redemption store. God took us off Satan’s store shelf, out of hock, and bought us back, to forever be his own. We belong to the Lord.

**Reconciliation** Our status has been changed. While we were born as enemies of God because of our sinful condition, through Jesus God has made us his friends. When you see this word in its many appearances in scripture, think of what it means when spouses, bitter toward each other, are reconciled. God has reconciled us to himself.

**Righteousness** It’s a burning concern for every human being to think and feel himself to be right about anything and everything. Trying to be right on our own leads only to endless excuse-making, rationalizing and comparisons to others. Incredibly, God has given us the righteousness which he demands of us. Jesus is our righteousness. When you see this word in its many appearances in scripture, just shorten it and think of the word “right.” God has made us right with himself by giving us the untarnished rightness of Jesus as our own.

#26 -

*THE SECOND ARTICLE (Redemption)*

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

*What does this mean?*

I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the virgin Mary, is my Lord.

He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with his holy, precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death.

All this he did that I should be his own, and live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness, just as he has risen from death and lives and rules eternally.

This is most certainly true.