

Biblical Theology by Dr. Chuck Baynard

Lesson 19 (HCLD 17)¹

Preparation: Begin and end each study time with prayer. Pay particular attention to the background reading and pray over each passage asking God to reveal Himself to you.

Background Reading: Read all the Scripture verses in footnote # 1 & 2.

Vocabulary: Exalted, Resurrection

Question: How was Christ exalted in his resurrection?

Answer: 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),[a] and having the very same body in which he suffered, with the essential properties thereof [b] (but without mortality, and other common infirmities belonging to this life), really united to his soul,[c] he rose again from the dead the third day by his own power;[d] whereby he declared himself to be the Son of God,[e] to have satisfied divine justice,[f] to have vanquished death, and him that had the power of it,[g] and to be Lord of quick and dead:[h] all which he did as a public person,[i] the head of his church,[j] for their justification,[k] quickening in grace,[l] support against enemies,[m] and to assure them of their

¹ Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 17

Q45: What benefit do we receive from the "resurrection" of Christ?

A45: First, by His resurrection He has overcome death, that He might make us partakers of the righteousness which He has obtained for us by His death.[a] Second, by His power we are also now raised up to a new life.[b] Third, the resurrection of Christ is to us a sure pledge of our blessed resurrection.[c]

- a. I Cor. 15:15, 17, 54-55; Rom. 4:25; I Peter 1:3-4, 21
- b. Rom. 6:4; Col. 3:1-4; Eph. 2:5
- c. I Cor. 15:12, 20-21; Rom. 8:11

Q46: What do you understand by the words "He ascended into heaven"?

A46: That Christ, in the sight of His disciples, was taken up from the earth into heaven,[d] and continues there in our behalf [e] until He shall come again to judge the living and the dead.[f]

- d. Acts 1:9; Matt. 26:64; Mark 16:9; Luke 24:51
- e. Heb. 4:14; 7:24-25; 9:11; Rom. 8:34; Eph. 4:10
- f. Acts 1:11; 3:20-21; Matt. 24:30

Q47: But is not Christ with us even unto the end of the world,[g] as He has promised?

A47: Christ is true man and true God. According to His human nature He is now not on earth,[h] but according to His Godhead, majesty, grace, and Spirit, He is at no time absent from us.[i]

- g. Matt. 28:20
- h. Matt. 26:11; John 16:28; 17:11
- i. John 14:17-18; 16:13; Eph. 4:8; Matt. 18:20; Heb. 8:4

Q48: But are not, in this way, the two natures in Christ separated from one another, if the manhood is not wherever the Godhead is?

A48: Not at all, for since the Godhead is incomprehensible and everywhere present,[j] it must follow that it is indeed beyond the bounds of the manhood which it has assumed, but is yet nonetheless in the same also, and remains personally united to it.[k]

- i. Acts 7:49; Jer. 23:24
- j. Col. 2:9; John 1:48; 3:13; 11:15; Matt. 28:6

resurrection from the dead at the last day.[n]²

The Westminster Divines packed more into this answer backed with an abundance of references than can be treated in a short two page commentary as has been the attempt in this series of lessons. I think they attempted to still the voice of both the Church of Rome and England in this one statement, for they give us an almost complete christology in one paragraph as it has been understood in the reformed tradition from Calvin forward, and perhaps before.

“Christ was exalted in his resurrection” is a true statement, and in that resurrection having His work on earth vindicated, thus returning to the place and glory He had known with the Father from all eternity, we could say this was the fullness of His exaltation. However the Westminster Divines chose to include several other key truths as proof of His exaltation. As a systematic work, these truths would need to be dealt with.

“Not having seen corruption...” to me simply means that His body (flesh) did not decay, the rest of this sentence concerning His not being able to be held by it not having reference to decay, but death itself. This only stands as a logical truth, that the Lord of life would indeed hold sway over death and could not be held by it. This brings out one place I differ with the Westminster Divines, though they have better support from Scripture than I in what they proclaim. To wit: “to have vanquished death and him that had the power of it...” I find this out of sync with my own understanding of the sense of Scripture as a whole. This would allow that Satan at some point held the power of death in his hands. I don’t agree with this at all, but that life and death have always been in the hands of God. Consider Job, where Satan could not even afflict the just without the permission of God. Lest we are speaking of spiritual death here, death has not been vanquished, but we read that the one enemy left to be defeated on the return of our Lord is death (1 Cor. 15:25-27). Yet, saying this applies to the second death has the same problem, for this too has been a “past” event through faith for all mankind from the beginning. The events of Calvary are but the earthly manifestation of what has been divine truth from before the foundation of the earth. God in the fullness of time (His time) having revealed Himself in this more perfect and complete way. I make no attempt to refute the Assembly, just offer an alternative understanding which I do not think changes any of the reformed christology. Their proof text stands (Heb. 2:14) and I dare not declare the Holy Writ in error, but simply admit my frailty of reason to bring this verse captive to the logic of man. Yet I don’t think Satan rules in a kingdom of death having had the power of death to be held as a sovereign, for there is one Sovereign, God. I find nowhere that God has ever set aside this complete sovereignty at any time. The Westminster Divines rightly point to the truth that Christ lay down His life, and Christ took up His life (John 10:18). This is a point many miss saying He was

² a. Acts 2:24, 27

- b. Luke 14:39
- c. Rom. 6:9; Rev. 1:18
- d. John 10:18
- e. Rom. 1:4
- f. Rom. 8:34
- g. Heb. 2:14
- h. Rom. 14:9
- i. I Cor. 15:21-22
- j. Eph. 1:20, 22-23; Col. 1:18
- k. Rom. 4:25
- l. Eph. 2:1, 5-6; Col. 2:12
- m. I Cor. 15:25-27
- n. I Cor. 15:20

raised by the power of the Holy Spirit. Yet, this fits my position better than their own, in that prior to His death and resurrection Christ had the power over death, and thus His resurrection was but the manifestation of this power in the flesh, not the attainment of a new power as reward for His completed work, nor in exalting Him.

The Westminster Divines point out that all of His work, including the death and resurrection was done as a public person and thus as the representative of His people. This being a necessity for the doctrine of imputation (the so called federal theory) to stand. As the Son of God, part of the Godhead, Christ was the sovereign of the quick and the dead, and his death and resurrection were but the manifestation in the flesh (time or history) and again not a new power attained for His perfect obedience in His exaltation. I find most of the statement by the divines here to be of this nature, that is, a visible deed, performed in the flesh before man, firmly establishing the doctrine of Christ as the first fruit.

At this point one could ask when did Christ become the head of the church? It could be said that in the eternal counsel of God, He has always been so. Yet, in being pragmatic, we could rightly point out that the church as we know it didn't exist until after His ascension. I choose the sense of church here to mean that of the invisible church which would have included the Old Testament saints, as well as those present then and those who were to follow in the New Testament church born at Pentecost. I would have preferred the word elect, with this wider sense of whom the exaltation brought justification for.

One cannot pass here without comment on the body being the same and yet different. Definitely metaphysical and beyond our normal understanding of things pertaining to the body. Yet it was the same body with the scars of Calvary still upon it. This is important to the purpose of the resurrection and ascension being spread over some 40 days. Christ had need to appear to many in the same body (some 500 according to Paul) that this essential truth be well established with eye witnesses so that it could not be lightly refuted by the enemies of God among men. The miracle of the resurrection itself not being set aside, it had need to be different in that it had been dead, separated from the soul. The Scripture support here is by implication and the use of logic in its exposition. However, a position I have found myself contrary to many in is that the body in the tomb was but dead flesh, the soul having been parted there from. The Westminster Divines touch on this with these words "really united to his soul." How can it be reunited except it first be separated? How can he be declared dead while the soul yet still inhabits the body? this may seem trivial, I assure you it is not because every heresy attacks the orthodox christology, that is the person and divinity of Christ. It is essential for Christ to be fully man, actually dead, and raised from that condition or there is no atonement. He is the first-fruit, or He is nothing as far as our salvation goes.

We have talked before of Christ having the human nature united with the divine, both being one, yet both maintaining that which is proper to each. Here we find that the "physical" body too is united with Christ. Yet though the same scarred body that suffered for us, it differs in that it is also a spiritual body. There is much here we cannot grasp while still in this fleshly body. This ability to change is important to us even though we may not understand the how of it. Lest this be true, where is the hope for those where no mortal remains exist? I think we must point to the fact that the body of Christ was divinely protected even in death, and there was no need for the restoration of the body from corruption, for it saw none, and thus Christ appeared in the same body, scars and all. Yet this exact process will not apply to the bodies of those before or after Christ in that our bodies will see corruption, and they will be restored in spiritual perfection with no concern of the mode of death or that of burial or any other earthly concern. That we will rise in these bodies is Scriptural fact. If bearing the same marks of life and death what a fearful picture from the brush of

Dante heaven would be, when filled by the faithful martyrs who died in such grotesque ways. Thus while it was fit and necessary for the marks of death to be on the body of Christ, no such need will exist for the rest of us.

All that said, I find in the last words of the statement, the justification of all the elements of christology the Westminster Divines included in the first part of this statement; “. . . assure them of their resurrection from the dead at the last day.” These things, and particularly the resurrection and appearances in the same body (though changed physically) were proof to those first disciples that He was who He said He was, and that as God had raised Christ, so they too could be assured of their own resurrection. There were those in the Jewish church who did not believe in a resurrection and spiritual things (the Sadducees) as well as those who did believe in the resurrection (the Pharisees). Thus the “doctrine” of the resurrection was not new with Christ, though He did become the proof of it, and confirm to men they too could be raised from the dead on that great day of the Lord. John wrote his Gospel for the purpose that men might believe on the name of the Son of God. Christ’s exaltation in the events chosen by the Westminster Divines, served the same purpose, that having seen, man could believe.

Limited atonement clearly stands out from the verses chosen as proof text, as well as the words of the Assembly. Though they chose not to use the word election, “justification for the church” serves the same purpose. We also see the second petal rising from the pen of the Westminster Divines and Holy Scripture once more and grace stands tall, thus Unconditional Election remains true. Divine justice then having been satisfied, the fifth petal stands firm and we can rest in the truth of the Perseverance of the Saints.

Tremendous words of promise and hope in this question. One we could all stand to spend more time considering. Most of the errors to assail our faith have come from misunderstanding of these christological issues. Big words and deep thought, but by faith these truths can be understood and embraced by all of God’s children.

Suggested Sermon Outline

The Resurrection

What benefit do we receive from the Resurrection of Christ?

First, by His resurrection He has overcome death that He might make us share in the righteousness which He has obtained for us through His death. Second, we too are now raised by His power to a new life. Third, the resurrection of Christ is a sure pledge to us of our blessed resurrection.

I. The Resurrection Is a Fact

A. The Resurrection proves Jesus’ power over sin and death. But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, ***if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, no was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.*** (Romans 4:24-25)

1. Here is what Christians believe is possible because of the Resurrection. *That if*

thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, ***and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*** For with the ***heart*** man believeth unto righteousness; and with the ***mouth*** confession is made unto salvation. (Romans 10:9-10)

2. Grasp the Resurrection and everything else falls into place. The eyes of ***your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know*** what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding ***greatness of his power*** to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, ***Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,*** (Ephesians 1: 18-20)

B. The devil is powerless against the fact of the Resurrection. Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, ***he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death,*** that is, the devil; ***And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.*** (Hebrews 2:14-15)

1. Remove the physical Resurrection and everything else in Christianity goes with it. Now this I say, brethren, that ***flesh and blood cannot inherit*** the kingdom of God; ***neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.*** (I Corinthians 15:50)

2. The agony of the cross, the cold of the grave, and the joy of the Resurrection enable Jesus to understand humanity fully. For ***in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted.*** (Hebrews 2:18)

3. Jesus entirely understands our limits and ambitions. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was ***in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.*** (Hebrews 4:15)

4. The promise that the Messiah would defeat Satan and survive is part of the oldest gospel sermon preached. And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; ***it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*** (Genesis 3:15)

C. Because Jesus rose from the dead, believers expect great things from God. Blessed be the ***God*** and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy ***hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,*** (I Peter 1:3) Who by him do believe in ***God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God.*** (I Peter 1:21)

II. The Resurrection Is the Gospel

A. Because Jesus rose from the dead, believers know we too will be resurrected. Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore ***we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead*** by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:34)

1. The Resurrection shifts the Christian focus from the present struggle to ultimate reward. ***If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above,*** where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. ***Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.***

For ye are dead, and ***your life is hid with Christ in God.*** (Colossians 3:1-3)

2. We who were physical and tied to the present with only a small interest in the world to come become people of the other world with only a toehold in this world. That ye ***put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt*** according to the deceitful lusts; And ***be renewed in the spirit of your mind,*** And that ye ***put on the new man,*** which after God ***is created in righteousness and true holiness.*** (Ephesians 4:22-24)

B. Just as Christ demonstrated new life after the grave, believers demonstrate new life after salvation. If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. ***Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.*** When Christ, *who is our life,* shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. ***Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:*** (Colossians 3:1-5)

C. Because Jesus was raised to go on to heaven, believers can expect to go on to be with Him there. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, ***(by grace ye are saved,)*** And hath ***raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:*** (Ephesians 2:4-6)

III. The Resurrection Reassures Believers

A. Nothing in human history is quite so impressive as the risen Lord telling us we too will rise from the grave. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, ***he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit*** that dwelleth in you. (Romans 8:11)

B. Our spirits can only drop so far when we know what God has done to death for us in Jesus. For the ***hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth*** of the gospel; (Colossians 1:5)

C. Having believed, we now see the future with confidence. Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even ***our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope*** through grace, (2 Thessalonians 2:16)

Heidelberg Catechism
Lord's Day 017
Question 45
Dr. Edwin P. Elliott, Jr.