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New Horizon URC
June 13, 2021

The Messiah's Victory

Acts 2:14-39

Lord's Day 17

Dear Congregation,

To this point in the Heidelberg Catechism what has been spoken of regarding the mediator is the humiliation of the Lord Jesus. The catechism will at length unfold Jesus' birth, suffering, death on the cross, and descent into hell. Lord's day 17, the subject of our study this afternoon, we turn to Jesus' glorification. Please do not miss the note of joy that is ours between Lord's days 16 & 17, we go from the teaching of Jesus suffering unspeakable anguish, pain, and terror of soul on the cross to the glories of his resurrection! His humiliation (his incarnation) was not to continue forever. No, it was sufficient that he should suffer and die one time for all times.

There are two things that the catechism specifically wants to draw our attention to and that is the history and the benefits of the resurrection. We turn then to Peter's sermon after he and the church are filled with the Holy Ghost, and Peter makes an impassioned plea to those in Jerusalem gathered at the feast of Pentecost to *repent and believe* (v.38). Yet the greatest note of hope, the focal point of his Spirit empowered preaching, is that Jesus has overcome death, hell, and sin by his resurrection. And that there is hope for the faithful.

Lesson: *There is hope for the faithful in the Messiah's victory*

Headings:

1. The History of the Resurrection
2. The Benefits of the Resurrection

Point 1: The History of the Resurrection

At the beginning of the book of Acts Jesus promises to his Apostles that they will be baptized in the Holy Spirit, by which they will receive power to be his witnesses to the world (Acts 1:5-8). Then Jesus before their eyes ascends to heaven. And as a result the disciples would meet often to pray in anticipation of receiving this gift from Christ. On the day of Pentecost we are told that the anticipated promise has come and that they are filled with the Holy Spirit and begin to *speak in other tongues*.

What is important for us to know about the Holy Spirit is that he is the third member of the Trinity, who always points to and applies the work of Christ (HC. 53). So I believe it to be entirely reasonable to say that the *tongues* the disciples spoke were the message of Christ's

gospel in foreign languages. That is by the Spirit the disciples proclaimed the redemptive narrative of Christ to all the men in Judea. Here is what we need to take away, redemptive history testifies that Jesus rose from the dead.

1.1 - *The Story of Jesus' Resurrection*

The Bible is the word of life, our manna from heaven, but it is also a story. Beginning in the Garden of Eden and ending in the New Jerusalem we are told the story of creation, fall, redemption, and recreation. The entirety of this story is about the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said of these scriptures, *"These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me"* (Lk. 24:44). The whole Bible testified to this one man, the Lord Jesus Christ, it's his story. His incarnation was no accident, his life, his cross, and even his resurrection were according to the plan of God the Father.

We see this in Peter's quotation of the book of Joel that what they are witnessing is not the product of drunkenness at 9:00AM, but the outpouring of the Spirit of God. Now we won't spend much time on this because it is the subject of LD 18. But you must ask the question, why does Peter start with the prophecies of Joel 2 in a sermon principally based around the resurrection of Christ? You need only look at verse 28, *"And it shall come to pass in the **last days**, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit..."* Whereas the book of Joel actually says, *"And it shall come to pass **afterward** That I will pour out My Spirit..."* (Joel 2:28). Peter is making an important distinction, that we are no longer anticipating the last days, no we are *in the last days*. That by Jesus' death and resurrection the kingdom of God has been inaugurated on earth, and by his **resurrection** and ascension he is pouring out his Spirit on the church. By our being baptized we become partakers in the Spirit baptized church.

The outline of the story of Jesus would have been known to many of Peter's listeners; what they did not know is that Jesus rose from the dead (v.24). Peter ends his quotation from Joel with these words from the prophet, *"And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the Lord Shall be saved"* (v.21). But what is his name? Who's name shall I call upon? *"Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs"* (v.22). It was Christ, the God-man, who rose in the same body in which he died.

1.2 - *The Manner of Jesus' Resurrection*

We should also notice the manner of Jesus' resurrection, that is, how is it that Christ was raised from the dead? It's a remarkable thing to rise from the dead, only 8 people in the Bible are said to have been raised from the dead along with many holy people in Jerusalem (Matt. 27:52-52) when Jesus died. How is it that our saviour arose?

Peter tells us, *"Whom God raised up"* (v.24), That is, that he vanquished death, throwing it from himself, revitalized his dead body, reunited it with his soul, and restored to himself a

blessed, heavenly, and glorious life by his own divine virtue and power.¹ The man that lay in the tomb for three days was not only a good teacher, not only a holy man, but was very man and very God. For he is the author of life (Heb. 12:2), the one who has the power to take life up again (Jn. 10:18). For *it was not possible* in his divine being that he *should be held by death*. By the power that was his, he rose himself up from the dead. He stood in that grave as our risen and victorious king Jesus, **by his resurrection he has overcome death**.

Christ did truly rise bodily. “*For You will not leave my soul in Hades, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption*” (v.27). The same body that was mutilated by Pontious Pilate and the Roman soldiers, that was nailed to the cross, is the same body that Christ resurrected and now reigns within heaven. This quotation from Psalm 16 refers to God’s promise not to leave Jesus in the grave for so long that his human nature might decay. But on the third day, his son would rise from the dead, astonish the guards, roll away the stone from the barren tomb and begin his glorified eternal life (Jn. 2:19).

1.3 - *The Witnesses of Jesus’ Resurrection*

Peter also mentions that Jesus’ resurrection was not a private event but a public spectacle of divine power. David was a witness to this by the Spirit of the Lord who promised that his seed shall not rot in the grave (v.29,30). Jesus himself appeared to the disciples and many in Jerusalem (v.31).

We see then that God sovereignly ordained Jesus’ state of humiliation but also his destination of exultation and glory. Yes, Christ did die and experienced the lowest and most abject humiliation. The God-man betrayed and given over into the hands of sinful men. But it was the very body and soul of Christ that has been resurrected, restored, and liberated from death.

Application:

1. We too are witnesses of the resurrection. David by prophecy (v.30), the disciples by his appearing (v.32), and us by the Spirit bearing witness in our hearts by his Word (Rom. 8:16). Though death is the final enemy of all believers we need not fear, Christ - our forerunner - will bear us safely through. We can be comforted to know Jesus himself, experience the terror and the pains of death, but has overcome that dark hour that we might have hope.

Point 2: The Benefits of Jesus’ Resurrection

When the Lord Jesus died, Satan used all his power and resources to keep him in the bands and snares of death. Had Satan succeeded he would have vanquished our salvation. Had

¹Ursinus, 234.

the Lord Jesus remained in the grave, we would receive no benefits from his death, nor would he have the power to resurrect us. “*And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty*” (1 Cor. 15:14). However, Satan was unable to achieve his cursed plan, and Jesus our mighty victor crushed Satan and the power of death, regaining his life and now lives forever more with the keys of hell and death (Rev. 1:18).

2.1 - *The evidence of our Forgiveness*

He is now our prince of life. Having truly overcome death he “*was raised because of our justification*” (Rom. 4:25). Our catechism makes quite a remarkable statement, “**so that he might make us share in the righteousness he obtained for us by his death**”, that is that Jesus' resurrection was for us, it was for our good. Through Jesus' death and all of his sufferings he earns our justification. But this justification would mean nothing if he remained in the grave.

Jesus' resurrection proves that he completely and perfectly satisfied the justice of his Father as the surety of his people and presented to the Father the required ransom for all of our debts. Had the Lord Jesus been deficient in any point of making full satisfaction for the claims of God's justice, the Father and the Spirit could neither have raised him nor loosed him from the pains of death. For Jesus would have too been a sinner for failing in some point of the Law that Father by his own law would have kept him in the bondage of slavery and death.

However, as a righteous judge, and the Lord Jesus as the redeemer of his people fully suffered all things on behalf of his people and fully satisfied the justice of God. Thereby the Father declared he no longer could demand anything of him, but that through Christ he had fully cancelled our debts. He has been raised up, as *both Lord and Christ* (v.36).

The resurrection of Jesus serves as our public receipt of his complete satisfaction of divine justice for all the sins of his people. His resurrection is the evidence of our forgiveness.

2.2 - *The power of new life*

Just as Jesus needed new life as he lay in the tomb, so do we need new life. Every man and woman who has ever been born has been born a sinner. Born *dead in trespasses and sins*. Who among us has not grievously sinned against all God's commandments? No, we have never kept any of them and are inclined towards all evil. The instructor makes it very clear that we too must be raised from the dead, not only a physical resurrection at the end of our days but we must also partake in a spiritual resurrection. We need new life.

Notice that that climax of Peter's sermon is not the cross, it's not the body in the tomb, verse 33 “*Therefore being exalted*” the climax of our salvation, the climax of every sermon, is that our King Jesus has won the victory over death, and now stands in heaven exalted. He is humiliated no longer, but glorified.

The source and the power of our new life is in the living, exalted, and glorified Christ. Who by his death and resurrection seals and applies the salvation purchased at the cross, is exalted to the right hand of God, and pours out his Spirit on our hearts. The very same Spirit of

Christ who raised up his body, raises our souls from our spiritual decay. This is the second benefit, **By his power we too are already raised to a new life.**

The Apostle Paul said in Colossians 3:1, *“If then you were raised with Christ...”* Notice the tense in his words, he is speaking of something in the past. Paul says something has already happened to you. What does this mean? This means, if you are a Christian and if your life is in Christ, then on the third day when Jesus arose from the dead so did you also rise with him. When Jesus conquered death and stood in the grave as our resurrected saviour it was confirmation that the Father had accepted his sacrifice and that Jesus had won salvation for himself and all in him.

Therefore, by Jesus' resurrection, ascension, and coronation in heaven we are guaranteed the forgiveness of our sins and the purity of our souls. Right now - you don't have to wait for the return of Jesus - for you have already been raised with Christ. For if we have Christ, then we already have in us the life of the resurrection. We have the Spirit wrought power to resist sin, the flesh, and the devil.

For *“Death is swallowed up in victory.” “O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?”* (1 Cor. 15:54,55). The answer, for those in Christ death and hades have been defeated. Now by this new life we are given we can seek the Lord and respond to his word.

2.3 - *The pledge of life to come*

The final benefit of our saviour's resurrection is that it **“is a sure pledge to us of our blessed resurrection”**. We can be assured that just as surely as Christ rose again from the dead, we too shall arise. Those our eyes may close a final time in death, we will not be left in the grave, for we shall hear the trumpet sound, and with the shout of the archangel our Lord Jesus shall descend and we who are dead in Christ shall rise (2 Thess. 4).

We can be certain that Christ will come again and both believers and unbelievers will arise from the dead - but not in the same manner.

Believers shall rise “to everlasting life” and the ungodly “to shame and everlasting contempt”. The difference between those who will receive a reward at his soon coming and those who will receive judgement, is that believers have taken part in the “first resurrection” (Rev. 20:6). That is, that they have been born again. This is all ours if we repent and believe (v.38).

Application:

1. The Lord Jesus arose that he would fulfill his office of mediator. Our prophet, priest, and king. That he might reign over his people in both body and soul. Paul said, *“For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living”* (Rom. 14:9). Our bodies were created and redeemed to praise, serve, and magnify our saviour. You are not your own, you belong to God.
2. It was the Apostle Paul who said, I desire to *know Him and the power of His resurrection* (Phil. 3:10). We must endeavour to meditate on the work of Christ, not only his humiliation but also his glorification and how our saviour saves and continues to apply

our salvation by his work in heaven. May we be known as people who continue to give ourselves to the meditation of the person and work of Christ.

Conclusion:

We have seen that throughout redemptive history God has foreordained to send his son to earth, to live, to die, and to rise again for you, dear Christian. There is hope of eternal life, the forgiveness of sins, and the vanquishing of death for us in the resurrection of Christ. We conclude with these words from the Lord, *“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die”* (Jn. 11:25-26). May the Lord grant us the grace to believe. Amen.