



# St. Andrew Academy

## *What Christians Believe and Why It Matters*

### Week 5

“The third day he rose from the dead”

“He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead”

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## *The Meaning of the Cross*

- ❖ The symbol of God’s victory
  - The climax of the story! The climax of the covenant!
  - God’s victory is achieved through Jesus’ suffering and death.
- ❖ The NT concentrates on **what** Jesus’ suffering and death has accomplished.
  - We are reconciled to God; justified; put into a right relationship with God; declared innocent; returned from exile; sins forgiven; etc . . .
- ❖ The NT does **not** give us a single theory of **how** this was accomplished.
  - We use various images (the eight) and words – sacrifice, blood, lamb, redemption, ransom, substitution, covering of our sins
  - These are called theories of the “atonement” – at-one-ment



## *The Empty Tomb (Luke 24:1-12)*

- ❖ We've met these women before. Here, they are the discoverers of the empty tomb.
  - The men don't believe the women. Who'd really believe anyone who claimed such a thing?! Everybody knows that the dead stay dead. There was NO Jewish expectation of the resurrection of one person.
- ❖ The two angels mildly scold the women and remind them of Jesus' words regarding his death and resurrection.
  - Much of our faith is about remembering and understanding. Even in Luke's time, believers were 'remembering Jesus.'
- ❖ In verse 12, Peter heads home perplexed. The TNIV has it, "wondering what happened."
- ❖ What is our picture so far??
  - Fear, confusion, disturbance, and doubt.

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## *The resurrection appearances*

- ❖ Jesus appears to two on the way to Emmaus (Mark & Luke)
- ❖ On the evening of his resurrection, Jesus appears to his own disciples (without Thomas) (Luke & John)
- ❖ A week later, Jesus appears to the disciples and Thomas (John)
- ❖ Jesus appears to the eleven at a table (Mark)
- ❖ Jesus appears to the eleven on a mountaintop (Matthew)
- ❖ Jesus appears at the seashore (John)
- ❖ Paul says that witnesses include James, Peter, the rest of the 12, 500 others, and Paul himself. (1 Corinthians 15)

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### *Four established facts (from William Lane Craig)*

- ❖ There are four facts that the vast majority (90% or so) of NT scholars and historians accept – but they do not all reach the same conclusion as to what they mean!
  - Jesus was buried in a tomb belonging to Joseph of Arimethea.
  - Women discovered an empty tomb.
  - On different occasions, at multiple times, people experienced appearances of Jesus alive from the dead.
  - The original disciples believed that Jesus had risen from the dead – despite having every reason not to!

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### *Does the claim of resurrection even matter?*

- ❖ The earliest Christians saw that Jesus' resurrection was absolutely central to the faith.
- ❖ I Corinthians 15
  - For Paul, the resurrection helps us to understand the significance of the cross. Without the resurrection, Jesus would have been just another dead would-be Messiah.
  - For Paul, if Jesus was not resurrected, then Christians are to be pitied more than any, for we would have believed a lie! . . . trusted in a lie!
- ❖ Acts 17
  - Jesus' resurrection is the proof that Paul's claims about God and the very nature of reality are true!
- ❖ The resurrection is the beginning and guarantee of the whole new creation promised by the prophets. Jesus is the "first fruits." The world *had* entered a new age, in which Jesus is Lord. The waiting was over.

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## *Jewish Expectations of the End*

**THE PRESENT AGE**

**THE COMING AGE  
(= THE KINGDOM OF GOD)**

Satan's time  
*sin*  
*sickness*  
*death*  
*no Spirit*

God's time  
*righteousness*  
*wholeness*  
*resurrection*  
*the Spirit*

from *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God*, by Gordon Fee, 1996

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## *Christians' New Perspective ("already/not yet")*

**THE END**

BEGUN

CONSUMMATED

*The Present Age*

The time of "the flesh"

**BETWEEN THE TIMES**

*The Coming Age*

The time of the Spirit

from *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God*, by Gordon Fee, 1996

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## *Reflections on the Resurrection*

- ❖ The Christian proclamation stands or falls on the truthfulness of the resurrection. It is an historical claim. It either happened or it didn't.
  - We shouldn't be surprised at people's perplexity at such a claim. Even Jesus' disciples were perplexed until their eyes and minds were opened.
- ❖ It is the resurrection that validates all that came before. The cross is the climax of the story; the resurrection is the proof, the lynchpin. We proclaim Christ crucified and resurrected.
- ❖ Don't get hung up on the nature of Jesus' body in the resurrection accounts. He has flesh and bones. He can be touched. He walks. He eats. Yet he seems to simply materialize and disappear. Luke and the other gospel writers are just telling you what they saw and were told. They don't try to explain it all. If you want a word to describe it, try "transphysical."
- ❖ The resurrection points us to the full consummation of God's kingdom, but so that we can understand our work now. There can be no waiting, only working. See 1 Corinthians 15:48. After Paul's long discussion of the resurrection, what comes after his "therefore"?

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## *"... he ascended into heaven ..."*

- ❖ Before Jesus' ascension he promises that the disciples will be baptized with the Spirit (see Acts 1). See also Luke 24:50-53.
  - Those who are "in Christ" are "in the Spirit."
- ❖ Still, Jesus is shaping their understanding of God's Kingdom. They are the ones who will take God's kingdom to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth.
  - The disciples are not to occupy themselves with the timing of the full consummation of the kingdom.
  - This will be about the *doing*. Disciples must *do*.
- ❖ Jesus will return in the same way as he left.
  - What do we mean by "ascension?" How would we experience it?
  - *Resurrection* is about God's victory over death. *Ascension* is about Jesus' empowerment and exaltation. Yes, Jesus is Lord!!
- ❖ What is the disciples' response to all this? Constant prayer!! (see Acts 1:14)

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## *The Lordship of Jesus*

- ❖ Proclaiming Jesus as Lord is *not* synonymous with proclaiming his Trinitarian divinity. When Paul speaks of Jesus as Lord it is specifically his **exalted** status. But Paul does speak of Jesus as he speaks of God.
  - This is the Son of Man at the right hand of God in Daniel 7.
  - I Corinthians 8:6
    - “. . . yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.”
  - Romans 9:5
    - “. . . and from them, according to the flesh, comes the Messiah, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.”
- ❖ The theopolitical dimension is inescapable: If Jesus is Lord, then Caesar is not.
- ❖ As Lord, Jesus shares in the honor that is God’s and he is to be obeyed as God is to be obeyed.

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## *Reflections on the ascension*

- ❖ The ascension is part of the glorification of Christ
  - crucifixion => resurrection => ascension
  - When Jesus meets Mary in the garden after the resurrection, he says “I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God” (John 20:17, TNIV).
- ❖ The ascension marks the transition from Jesus’ public ministry to the ministry of the Spirit, from Act 4 of our five-act play to act 5.
- ❖ The ascension helps us to understand that Jesus is our High Priest, guiding all persons into the presence of God.
- ❖ Like the resurrection, Jesus’ ascensions helps us to see the full picture of our own destiny.

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*“ . . . and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty . . . ”*

- ❖ Two key OT texts. Both used by Jesus in his trial before Caiaphas to claim that he was more than a claimant to David’s house.
  - Psalm 110:1 & Daniel 7:13-14
  - See also Acts 2:33 & 7:56 (note that Stephen sees Jesus standing) for two of the many NT references to Jesus’ exaltation at the right hand of God.
- ❖ This is obviously not literal. It is a way of affirming that Jesus has taken his place as King of Kings and Lord of Lords – master and judge.

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*“ . . . from thence he shall come to judge the quick (living) and the dead . . . ”*

- ❖ A few things to keep in mind
  - God’s judging and saving go hand in hand. See Psalm 98:8-9 for example.
  - All people are sinners. We are foolish to think otherwise. The Sermon on the Mount drives this point home.
  - Christ has borne the judgment that is ours.
  - Jesus is also the judge on the last day – and our advocate.
  - We are called to holy lives so that we might be “pure and blameless for the day of Christ” (Philippians 1:10).
  - God’s judging (his peering inside our hearts) is both future AND present.

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## *God is a loving and righteous judge*

- ❖ Several ideas are bound up in the notion of “righteousness”
  - Doing what is right; doing what is just; being vindicated or found innocent or being “justified” (legal sense)
  - Being faithful, as in God’s covenant faithfulness (relational sense)
- ❖ Righteousness is an expression of God’s character (Isaiah 5:16; Psalms 89:14-18)
  - What is right? What is just? Look to God.
  - God’s law is an expression of what is righteous.
- ❖ Righteousness is God’s standard for God’s people (Deuteronomy 6:24-25)
  - The Law is an expression of what a holy and righteous people will be.

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## *Obedience*

- ❖ What has God always wanted?
  - An obedience that arises out of our faith in God. Trust AND Obey!
- ❖ When the Jews got it right, they understood that God saved them (the Exodus) as an act of grace. The OT law showed them how to live in relationship with God.
  - Grace precedes the Law!
- ❖ Jesus did not abolish the Law (Matt 5:17-18). He called his disciples to a deeper and true understanding of the law and the Kingdom of God.
  - Jesus called his disciples to obedience. Paul constantly fought against those who said that God’s grace meant that “anything goes.” We are called to be holy – to live in right relationship with God, which is true peace.

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## *Holy God as Righteous Judge*

- ❖ God is the lawmaker and the one who judges whether people conform their lives to God's moral law.
- ❖ God is the righteous judge – who applies justice fairly, across the board.
- ❖ Jesus as judge and advocate
  - The Jews expected the Messiah to be a righteous judge (Jeremiah 33:15-16). Thus, Jesus says the Father gave him authority to judge (John 5:22-23,27,30). In Revelation, it is Jesus who judges (19:11).
  - But Jesus is also our Advocate and Counselor – our lawyer! (1 John 2:1)
- ❖ In this portrait, salvation means being declared innocent in the law-courts of God. The wages of sin is death and Jesus paid the penalty.