

**SUMMER SUNDAY SCHOOL**

*Apostles' Creed – Week 6*

*I believe in  
God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.  
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's 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 to the dead and on the third day he rose again;**  
he ascended into heaven, and he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.  
I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.*

The line that we will study today contains the most controversial concept of our belief (“...he descended to the dead (to hell)...”).

As a reminder from last week, it is important for us as believers to NOT turn our head away from the viciously beaten body of Jesus Christ.

- In the brutality of the cross, we see God’s seriousness about sin.
- If you ever doubt the seriousness of sin before a Holy God, you need only look at the devastating death on the cross and the realness of Hell to know that God hates ALL sin.

Believers must know that on the cross of Christ, He absorbed all of the sins of all those who would believe upon the name of Jesus throughout history.

- **Isa 53:4-5 (MSG)** - But the fact is, it was our pains he carried - *our* disfigurements, all the things wrong with us. We thought he brought it on himself, that God was punishing him for his own failures. But it was our sins that did that to him, that ripped and tore and crushed him—our sins! He took the punishment, and that made us whole. Through his bruises we get healed.
- **1Pe 2:24 (ESV)** - He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.
- **Ga 3:13 (MSG)** - Christ redeemed us from that self-defeating, cursed life by absorbing it completely into himself. Do you remember the Scripture that says, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”? That is what happened when Jesus was nailed to the Cross: He became a curse, and at the same time dissolved the curse.
- **2Co 5:21 (TPT)** - For God made the only one who did not know sin to become sin for us, so that we who did not know righteousness might become the righteousness of God through our union with him.
  - This one verse is perhaps the greatest verse in the New Testament to describe our salvation through the sinless Savior and his substitutionary death on the cross. A wonderful divine exchange took place at the cross. All of our sins were left there, our guilt was removed and forever gone, and we walked

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## REAL TALK FROM THE WORD

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away with all of God's righteousness. What bliss is ours! Every believer today possesses the perfect and complete righteousness of Christ. We are seen by the Father as righteous as his Son.

What is the “hell” Jesus is experiencing?

- Three different views:
  - **Literal Descent**
    - The traditional view, officially maintained by Roman Catholics and Lutherans, interprets the phrase literally. Christ actually visited the place of the dead (hades) for two reasons:
      - *To Liberate the Old Testament Faithful:*
        - In one literal view, believers who had lived and died before Christ’s advent (a partial list of whom appears in Heb 11) existed in a part of hades in a state of abeyance, in neither torment nor bliss, awaiting salvation.
        - After Christ had accomplished salvation on the cross, and in the interval between his death and resurrection, he visited (descended into) hades, liberated those souls, and led them to heaven.
        - **Ephesians 4:8–10 (NASB95)** —Therefore it says, “WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES, AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN.” (Now this expression, “He ascended,” *what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.*)
      - *To Preach the Gospel to the Impenitent Dead:*
        - Some have suggested a second view, that Christ descended into hades in order to bring a special message of salvation to the dead who were lost in their sins but who had no opportunity during their lifetime to hear the news of redemption.
        - **1 Peter 3:18–20 (NASB95)** – For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; *in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison, who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water.*
        - Many commentators argue that a preaching of the gospel after death, in order for people who did not accept salvation during their lifetime to do so after their death, seems contrary to Scripture’s emphasis on the necessity of acceptance now in the present life (Heb 3:7–15), as well as on a judgment based only on what was done on earth.
  - **Figurative Descent**
    - Instead of viewing “the descent” as an actual event, occurring chronologically between Christ’s death and resurrection, they see it as a reference to the intensity of Christ’s suffering.
    - “He was crucified, dead and buried” describes his physical suffering: “he descended into hell,” the depth of his spiritual suffering.
    - He endured the agony of hell as the substitute guilt-bearer for the human race.

## REAL TALK FROM THE WORD

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- Hell's worst feature is separation from God.
  - **Matthew 7:23 (NASB95)** - "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'"
  - **Matthew 25:41 (NASB95)** - "Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels...'"

The resurrection of Jesus was a bodily, physical resurrection.

- Some argue that His death was not a "complete" one and that He somehow crawled out of the grave after He was buried.
  - **1 Corinthians 15:4 (NASB95)** - ...and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures...
  - **John 21:9-13 (NASB95)** — So when they got out on the land, they saw a charcoal fire already laid and fish placed on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish which you have now caught." Simon Peter went up and drew the net to land, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples ventured to question Him, "Who are You?" knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and the fish likewise.
  - **John 20:27 (NASB95)** — Then He said to Thomas, "Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing."
  - **Acts 1:9 (NASB95)** — And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.
  - **1 Thessalonians 4:16 (NASB95)** — For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

Because Christ is not dead, our confidence is that all of our sins have been forgiven.

- **Ep 2:1-6 (NLTSE)** - Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins. You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil – the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God's anger, just like everyone else. But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!) For he raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus.
- **SYMMETRY (Balance):** Being sealed by the Holy Spirit of God invites you to into the freedom that's reserved for the children of God. That requires getting past your pride that you don't get everything right.
- **CLARITY:** Christ freely went to the cross; Christ knew what He was buying.
- **COMMUNITY:** The resurrected, bodily Jesus continues to extend the invitation. We live powerfully in the present with our hope on the glory of the future.
- **COUNSEL:** Don't fear the ongoing ethics of the Christian walk: confession, repentance, and honesty.