

XIII. The Apostles' Creed in Biblical Perspective

"I Believe..."

"From There He Shall Come to Judge the Living and the Dead"

I Timothy 3:14–16, Hebrews 9:11–28, Revelation 20:11–15

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August 30, 2020 • Sunday Sermon

God's Word is the truth and we'll be looking at a number of passages in this study. We'll start by looking at I Timothy 3. Many speculate that there are two passages of Scripture in the Bible that were highly influential and framing for those who wrote the Apostles' Creed in the second and third century and this is one of them. The other one is Philippians 2 where the flow on the section from the Apostles' Creed on Jesus Christ seems to be following Philippians 2:5–11. Think of this as the Apostles' Creed with the apostrophe in front of the 's' for the way it currently is it shows that it wasn't writing by the Apostles but it was written by the disciples of the Apostles, who let you know what the Apostles wrote concerning New Testament Christianity fulfilling all the Old Testament. Yet this passage in I Timothy would put the apostrophe before the 's' because it is written by Paul which is a creed for a common confession at the church at Ephesus. It is smaller in words.

I Timothy 3:14–16 says [14] *I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, [15] if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth. [16] Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh (conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary), vindicated by the Spirit (the resurrection), seen by angels (the ascension), proclaimed among the nations (risen and filling all things), believed on in the world, taken up in glory.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, the Word of God abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

There are two question that come to me with some regularity and I want you to think about how you would answer these two questions. The first comes from something like this. The story is on the internet. There was a man who reported that he had seen Jesus, where Jesus appeared to him. The story really sounds convincing. It could be an unbeliever or a believer who then asks, 'Pastor, what do you think of this?' How would you answer them? Here is the second one. A person asks 'Where is Jesus right now and what's He doing?' How would you answer? You can see how question two effects question one, can't you?

We have a Savior who came into this world but before He came into this world 2000 years ago, God is a Spirit. Then He comes and takes upon Himself a true human body and true human soul, fully God and fully Man. Then He bears our sin on that cross and then that body is buried, experiences a true death where the body and soul are separated for three days in fulfillment of Psalm 16 and Acts 1, the body of Jesus goes to the tomb and His soul goes to hades.

The Apostles' Creed is as follows;

*I believe in God the Father Almighty, (first affirmation/1st Person of the Trinity)
maker of heaven and earth;*

*I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, (second affirmation/2nd Person of the Trinity)
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 hades. (the translation we use says 'hell' but the original uses 'hades')
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
is seated at the right hand of the Father Almighty,
and will come again to judge the living and the dead.*

*I believe in the Holy Spirit, (third affirmation/3rd Person of the Trinity)
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body
and the life everlasting. Amen.*

Hades has two dimensions – the place of torment/abyss for the unbeliever and the place of blessing/paradise/Abraham's bosom for the believer. This is an intermediate state until Christ returns which will then bring on the final state – the lake of fire for the unbeliever and the new heavens and new earth for the believer. Psalm 139 says 'if you make your bed in Sheol (hades) behold I am there' and Jesus goes there when He dies on the cross for He tells the thief on the cross 'this day you will be with Me in paradise.' So Jesus descends to all that sin brings, even a true atoning death with the separation of the soul and body, but He will not suffer His body to see corruption nor will He abandon His soul into Sheol. On the third day, His soul and body are resurrected and united. He teaches 40 days and ascends back into heaven. He who descended all the way to hades ascends back into heaven and in coronation, in celebration having won the victory, He now sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.

What does He do? He has ascended to give gifts to men. When you win the victory you have the spoils of victory so His spoils of His victory at the cross come through the gift of the Holy Spirit who comes and brings us from death unto life – you are born again. He sanctifies us – you're filled with the Spirit. He completes the Word of God – you have a whole Bible. He gives you assurance of your salvation – for it is the Spirit who bears witness with our spirit. He will bring you forth to glory as He will be with you in the valley of the shadow of death. He will be with you by His Spirit until the end of the age (Matthew 28:20). As He is giving these gifts to all men He is also filling all things. He is interceding for us at the right hand of the Father.

In other words, did you sin yesterday? Please don't say 'no.' When we sin the Bible calls us to confess our sins, own it. I John 1:9–10 says [9] ***If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*** [10] *If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.* Why is He faithful and just to forgive us of our sins? It is because of where He is. He is not only there to send forth the Spirit, He is there to hear our prayers and mediate for us and He appears there on our behalf. When you confess He brings it to the Father.

'Lord, here's Harry again on highway 280 confessing his sins. Let's give him another chance.' No, that's not what He does. 'Here is Your son confessing his sins, Father, forgive him, I paid for it.' He is faithful and just to forgive us. These wounds received at Calvary plead 'Forgive him O forgive they cry!' That's where He is seated at the right hand of the Father, not inactive but active. When He came into the world He came to accomplish our redemption. When He said 'It is finished' at the cross it was done, our sins had been taken away from us and His righteousness had been given to us. We were cleansed by His blood, clothed with His

righteousness – praise the Lord – forgiven and accepted in Jesus Christ. He did that work for us and now He ascends to the right hand of the Father and is now working on the redeemed. He is bring us from death, from sin to Himself by His Holy Spirit. He is cleansing us, growing us, perfecting us and training us in righteousness. He is working on us to prepare us when He comes again.

We are now at the last statement in the Apostles' Creed about Jesus. The first section of the creed was on God the Father. I exist because God has made me in His power. I have fallen into sin but God is gracious for He has given His Son and His Son has come into the world to save sinners. The following is the second section of the Apostles' Creed on the Son where we hear the humiliation He went through for us.

*I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, (second affirmation/2nd Person of the Trinity)
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 hades.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
is seated at the right hand of the Father Almighty,
and will come again to judge the living and the dead.*

Jesus is going to come again from where He is now, at the right hand of the Father. So there is the answer – the person said that Jesus appeared to him and wants to know what I think. I know what I think and that is that I'm going to pray for him but I don't believe he saw Him for three reasons. One, is that Jesus warned me in His Word (Matthew 24) that in the last days people would be claiming that He would be in various places and I heard His warning so I'm not going to believe it. Secondly, He tells me not to believe that because I know where He is. He in His glorified body and soul is at the right hand of the Father interceding for me. He is with me by His Holy Spirit and I want Him there at the Father's side to plead for me on my behalf. I need Him there.

Thirdly, the Bible is very clear about when He will leave there. His time there has an expiration date. When Jesus was asked what the sign of His coming would be and the close of the age in Matthew 24 He said there were two thing that had to happen. One was that this Gospel has to be preached to all the nations. Then Peter tells us in I Peter 3 that secondly all the elect have to be saved which Jesus meant when He said 'Father, all whom You have given Me I lose not one.' So we are waiting now because He has not finished His work there at the right hand of the Father, filling all things, extending His Kingdom, His praise throughout all the earth, drawing His people from every tribe and nation. So when those two things happen, then He stands up and comes again.

When Jesus comes again He has a final work to do and that final work is to judge the living and the dead. When the Apostles' Creed is being talked about you know there will be questions around one phrase and two words. The one phrase is 'He descended into hell.' One of the words is the word catholic in the third section of the creed where people tend to ask 'I didn't know we were Catholics??' The second word is 'quick' which in some versions of the creed the word 'quick' is used in place of the word 'living.' Some reading this may not be old enough to remember this example of when a woman is expecting a child and the first time she feels the

baby move women used to say ‘oh I had the quickening.’ It is not the moment life started but it is the moment when life was felt. Quick is an old English word that means alive.

When Jesus returns people are going to be living but a lot of people will have died and the land, sea and earth will give up the bodies of the dead. They will all be reconstituted with their soul that comes from hades. The next things that happens is they stand before God and there is the judgment of the living and the dead. When all things have been filled with the work of the Spirit to accomplish the Kingdom of God, then He will come again and that is consistent with Acts 1.

Acts 1:9–11 says *[9] And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. [10] And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, [11] and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”*

When will He come again? I don’t know the date but I do know when. It will be when all the elect from all the nations have been saved by the Gospel going to all the nations. Then He comes. Now let’s look at Hebrews 9.

Hebrews 9:11–22 says *[11] But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) [12] He entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of His own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. [13] For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, [14] how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.*

[15] Therefore He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant. [16] For where a will is involved, the death of the One who made it must be established. [17] For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the One who made it is alive. [18] Therefore not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood. [19] For when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, [20] saying, “This is the blood of the covenant that God commanded for you.” [21] And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship. [22] Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.

In Hebrews 9:11 we get the word epiphany from the word appeared and it means a bright shining. When I went to Covenant College I worked Friday and Saturday nights as a security guard. I tried to work out my rounds so that by the morning I could be out in the front. Covenant College faces east and to the west of it are the Cumberland Mountains and to the east are the Blue Ridge and the Smoky Mountains. All of a sudden it was like the sun burst out. It was just magnificent and heart thrilling to see that sun come up. That’s the picture here in this verse – the glory light shines and the darkness fades.

Another example from Covenant College was that there were 29 days when we never saw the sun. It was 29 days of being enveloped by clouds. We just were breathing what we saw during that whole time. It was depressing and I was just ready to shoot myself in the head. It

was overwhelming. I was despairing. I remember at 11am on the 29th day all of a sudden the clouds parted and the sun just filled up everything. I remember the dean called off classes that day and told every to go out front and everyone just stood in that sun that had dispelled the darkness and the gloom that was coming over us. That is the epiphany that Christ has come. The One who is the tabernacle has come, from the eternal priesthood. The temple and the tabernacle were there to teach us who, what and how God could save sinners and still be holy. These were the copies of the heavenly things but the who and the what couldn't do it and that's why they had to come back every single year. Christ is the Scape goat who takes away our sin and the Lamb of God who now satisfies the payment for us. He is the Priest who brings His own Sacrifice. He went to Calvary once and for all and the sacrifice has been made by our great High Priest Jesus Christ. He saved all of His people from all of their sins for all of eternity. That is what He did when He appeared!

Hebrews 9:23–28 says [23] *Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.* [24] *For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to **appear in the presence of God on our behalf.*** [25] *Nor was it to offer Himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own,* [26] *for then He would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, **He has appeared once for all** at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.* [27] *And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment,* [28] *so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, **will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for Him.***

The temple was purified with the sprinkling of the blood – baptism of blood and water – but now we are sanctified by Jesus. So Jesus *will come* (His return) from the right hand of the Father to judge the living and the dead. So Jesus appears to save us. How many times does He appear? One would say two times. No, He appears here two times but to save you He has to appear three times. He appears here – past tense for the Incarnation to go to the cross to redeem us from the power, penalty, persuasion and position of sin – from the power of sin that you might be born again – from the penalty of sin that you might be justified – from the persuasion of sin that you might be called from sin to Christ – and from the position of sin for now you're in the family of God with God as your Father. Now He appears, not here, but there on your behalf to save you from the practice and consequences of sin. Then He will appear to save you from the presence of sin to bring you to Himself and take you into eternity and He will also be coming to judge the living and the dead, why?

Hebrews 9:27 says [27] *And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment.* I have a calendar and there are things on my calendar that I'm not aware of but there are two women in my life that fill my calendar. As I get up each day I look to see what is on the calendar. My confession is that there are some things I see on my calendar that I dread. Then there are some things on my calendar where I have nothing but anticipation about. There are two appointments on your calendar that you don't put in. There is coming a day that you get up, leave the bedroom and you're not coming back.

Young people I know you feel like nothing can penetrate you but you need to listen to me. No man knows his time. For the believer that appointment is not a dread. It's unknown but it's not a dread. He will be with me in valley of the shadow of death and the next stop is Him. So according to Hebrews 9:27 we all will die and then we'll face the judgment and I have no dread there either. I want to show you why in Revelation 20.

Revelation 20:11–15 says [11] *Then I saw a great white throne and Him who was seated on it. From His presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. [12] And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. [13] And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. [14] Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. [15] And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*

Right now Jesus is at the right hand of the Father but when He comes again He will sit at a judgment throne next. Jesus has appeared once for the work of redemption. He is appearing in the heavens on your behalf to work on the redeemed. Then He is coming again to bring His work to consummation, to bring His people to Himself through the judgment seat and to bring the judgment on all who don't know Him for all eternity. That moment is described for you here in this Revelation 20 text. Everyone will appear before the judgement seat. It is universal.

II Corinthians 5:10 says [10] *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.* The difference is you don't stand in the same places and you're not there for the same reason for there are two sets of books. According to Revelation 20 there are the books of deeds and the book of life. So if your name is in the books of deeds God's judgment is rightly upon you in the eternal judgment of torment called Gehenna, the lake of fire. But if your name is in the book of life your deeds have already been judged. Jesus did it for you for what was due to you He took on the cross therefore you're not in the books of deeds but in the book of life, because He bore the penalty for your deeds – sins of omission, commission, thought, word and deed. Romans 8:1 says [1] *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.* And nothing can separate you from the love of God in Christ (Romans 8:35–39).

I'm not asking you if you are going to die because you will if Jesus doesn't come back first and then you will be before the judgment seat. I love you too much not to tell you that. So those are two appointments that have been written for you that you will keep, but if you are in the book of life they are not appointments of dread. If you are not in the book of life you need to dread it. Hebrews 10:31 says [31] *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God,* having rejected His love for you and the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ. It is a terrifying thing! I plead with you to come to Him who appeared for you at the cross and now before the Father and one day He'll come for you to bring you to Himself. Why would you die not knowing Him?

Here's your takeaway. Christ is our Redeemer and makes three appearances on our behalf to save us from our sins. Appearance number one is done. You can call that past grace. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit, crucified, buried and raised to save you from the power, penalty, position and the persuasion of sin. Appearance number two is He now appears for you on your behalf to save you from the practice and consequences of sin. His third appearance is yet to happen.

We have now gone through the entire second section of the Apostles' Creed, affirming Christ and what He has done and the last two statements in this section have been interesting. All that we have talked about concerning Jesus in the creed is done except sits at the right hand of the Father for that is what He is doing now and He is coming from there to judge the living and the dead. Just as sure as those others have been done so will these be done so the question is, are you in the book of life – know Him – is He yours and are you His?

Christ has appeared here to save you from your sins. Christ now appears to intercede for you to bring you from your sins to Himself. Christ will yet appear to bring you to Himself and to bring judgement. The first time He appeared, He appeared to bear our judgment. The next time He appears He will come to bring judgment. The first time He appeared He defeated sin, death, hell and the grave. The next time He appears He will destroy sin, death, hell and the grave. He has two appearances here and one appearance there, but it's one Christ who appears for you. He is coming.

I have Good News for you! He is not only coming to judge the living and the dead but He has already come so that you can be written in the book of life. Will anything else happen at the judgement? Yes, we'll have a stewardship judgment which is why you want to pay close attention to my study on stewardship. Our stewardship judgment will determine our calling and resources to worship God in the new heavens and the new earth. That is called the rewards as walking as stewards in the Lord, but we don't appear to determine whether our deeds get us into the new heavens and the new earth or send us to hell for that's been taken care of if you're in Christ and Christ is in you for you are in the book of life. None in the book of life end up in Gehenna. None who are not in the book of life will enter the new heavens and the new earth. So there is an appointment I long for you to anticipate with joy as you know Christ who appeared for you.

Do you ever get invitations for benefits? When I get them I try to imagine if I want to attend this benefit or not for you know what is going to happen. Many times to determine the worthiness of the benefit to which you have been invited, you will find out who is going to make their appearance at the benefit. Here's what I want you to know today. If you're in Christ, Christ is now making His appearance for your benefit in heaven, right now and He has made you worthy. The One who now intercedes for you will come again to bring you to Himself and to establish the judgment. Be in the book of life on that Day. May your name be there because He is your life. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Holy Spirit speak to their heart. I don't know anything else to tell you other than the Good News that there is a book of life and Christ has appeared and done the work so your name can be written in it. Christ now appears before the Father for those whom He saved at the cross and have put their trust in Him alone. It is a trustworthy statement – Christ came into the world to save sinners and has finished that work. Now He is working on saved sinners and when He is finished bringing all His people to Himself from all the nations He will come again. Then comes the judgment. My dear friend, I invite you to Him who appeared on your benefit at the cross. He appeared (past tense) for you sinners to be saved at the cross. He appears now in the heavens to plead your salvation because of what He did at the cross, for your benefit and He will come again. I have only one question – have you acknowledged you're a sinner, fled to Him who came to appear for you, who does and will appear for you if you come to Him? I don't know when He is coming again or if you have come to Him. If you do know Him, join me as I pray this closing prayer that God would send us, looking for His appearance, yet looking for the lost who are yet to be brought to Him for we wait for Him but seek the lost that when He comes they will be found in the book of life. Parents, what about your children? There are so many things we are concerned about but where is their name written – books of deeds or the book of life? Father, thank You so much for being here today with us and in this Word. Thank You for the clarity of the writers of this Apostles' Creed who give us the majesty of the Christ who appeared

to save us, who appears to intercede for us and from there shall come again. Father, may Christ be there life for I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Power Point

“From There He Shall Come to Judge the Living and the Dead”

From There...

He shall Come...

To Judge the Living and the Dead...

Risen – Reigning – Returning

Life Takeaway

Christ, as our Redeemer, makes three appearances on our behalf to save us from our sins.