

The Ascension of Our Lord

THE APOSTLES' CREED – THE SECOND ARTICLE

To explain all these individual points does not belong to brief sermons for children. That belongs to fuller sermons that extend throughout the entire year, especially at those times that are appointed for the purpose of treating each article at length—for Christ's birth, sufferings, resurrection, ascension, and so on.

Yes, the entire Gospel that we preach is based on this point, that we properly understand this article as that upon which our salvation and all our happiness rests. It is so rich and complete that we can never learn it fully.

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY BAPTISM

In the first place, we must above all things know well the words on which Baptism is founded. Everything refers to these words that must be said on the subject. The Lord Christ says in Matthew 28:19:

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Likewise in St. Mark 16:16:

Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

In the first place, you must note in these words that here stand God's commandment and institution. Let us not doubt that Baptism is divine. It is not made up or invented by people. For as surely as I can say, "No one has spun the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer out of his head; they are revealed and given by God Himself." So also I can boast that Baptism is no human plaything, but it is instituted by God Himself. Furthermore, Baptism is most solemnly and strictly commanded so that we must be baptized or we cannot be saved. I note this lest anyone regard Baptism as a silly matter, like putting on a new red coat. For it is of the greatest importance that we value Baptism as excellent, glorious, and exalted. We contend and fight for Baptism chiefly because the world is now so full of sects

arguing that Baptism is an outward thing and that outward things are of no benefit. But let Baptism be a thoroughly outward thing. Here stand God's Word and command, which institute, establish, and confirm Baptism. What God institutes and commands cannot be an empty thing. It must be a most precious thing, even though it looked like it had less value than a straw. Up to now people could consider something great when the pope with his letters and bulls gave away indulgences and confirmed altars and churches, solely because of the letters and seals. So we ought to value Baptism much more highly and more precious, because God has commanded it. Besides, it is done in His name. For these are the words, "Go, baptize." However, do not baptize in your name, but in God's name.

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