

The Feast of the Resurrection

Lord, who ... was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell.” In this Confession Christ’s burial and descent to hell are distinguished as different articles.

We simply believe that the entire person (God and man) descended into hell after the burial, conquered the devil, destroyed hell’s power, and took from the devil all his might.

We should not, however, trouble ourselves with high and difficult thoughts about how this happened. With our reason and our five senses this article can be understood as little as the preceding one about how Christ is placed at the right hand of God’s almighty power and majesty. We are simply to believe it and cling to the Word. So we hold to the substance and consolation that neither hell nor the devil can take captive or injure us and all who believe in Christ.

In the article of the Resurrection Scripture testifies that precisely the substance of our flesh, but without sin, will rise again [1 Corinthians 15:42, 54–57]. In eternal life we shall have and keep precisely this soul, but without sin.

If there was no difference at all between our corrupt body and soul and original sin, one of the following would be true (contrary to this article of the Christian faith): our flesh will not rise again at the Last Day, and in eternal life we shall not have the present essence of our body and soul, but another substance (or another soul), because then we shall be without sin. Or at the Last Day sin will also rise again and will be and remain in the elect in eternal life....

In this way, too, the Holy Scriptures do not credit the human powers of the natural free will with conversion, faith in Christ, regeneration, renewal, and all that belongs to their effective beginning and end. They do not credit free will the whole way, half way, or in any way, even in the smallest or most trivial way. They credit conversion solely and completely to the Holy Spirit’s divine work, as also the Apology teaches.

Reason and free will are able to live an outwardly decent life to a certain extent. But only the Holy Spirit causes a person to be born anew [John 3:5] and to have inwardly another heart, mind, and natural desire. He opens the mind and heart to understand the Scriptures and to listen to the Word, as it is written in Luke 24:45, “Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.”

One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. (Acts 16:14)

For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. (Philippians 2:13)

God exalted Him at His right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. (Acts 5:31)

God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth. (2 Timothy 2:25)

For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in Him but also suffer for His sake. (Philippians 1:29)

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God. (Ephesians 2:8)

Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent." (John 6:29)

But to this day the LORD has not given you a heart to understand or eyes to see or ears to hear. (Deuteronomy 29:4; see also Matthew 13:15)

He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior. (Titus 3:5-6)

And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My rules and obey them. (Ezekiel 11:19-20; see also Deuteronomy 30:6; Psalm 51:10)

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:10)

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. (2 Corinthians 5:17; see also Galatians 6:15)

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above. (James 1:17)

No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him. (John 6:44)

No one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him. (Matthew 11:27)

No one can say "Jesus is Lord" except in the Holy Spirit. (1 Corinthians 12:3)

For apart from Me you can do nothing. (John 15:5)

Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God. (2 Corinthians 3:5)

What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it? (1 Corinthians 4:7)...

Even in the Ancient Christian teachers of the Church, as well as among some of our teachers, different explanations of the article about Christ's descent to hell are found. Therefore, we abide in the simplicity of our Christian faith. Dr. Luther has pointed us to this in a sermon about Christ's descent to hell, which he delivered in the castle at Torgau in the year 1533. In the Creed we confess, "I believe ... in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our