



# GRACE

Reformed Baptist Church

Soli † Deo † Gloria

## RESURRECTION SUNDAY

*The Forgotten Resurrection and a Biblical Worldview*

April 4, 2010

“<sup>19</sup>For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. <sup>20</sup>For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup>that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. <sup>22</sup>For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. <sup>23</sup>And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.” Romans 8:19-23

- ❖ In his 2006 book, *Loving Monday: Succeeding in Business Without Selling Your Soul*, successful businessman John D. Beckett describes a dilemma he faced when he began in business nearly forty years ago:

“How should I relate my faith to my work? As I looked about, I saw very little evidence that people of faith were carrying their faith into their work. Their two worlds were disconnected. To be honest, I had to admit I was no different. Sundays were Sundays, with the rest of the week largely detached, operating by a different set of rules. *Can these two worlds that seem so separate ever merge?* I wondered. As much as my conversion had begun a process of transformation in my mind and spirit, I realized there was a wide gulf in my thinking between this new dimension of faith and how it applied to my work. True, I saw that certain Scriptures could bring guidance or comfort to work-related situations. But, by and large I found myself in two separate worlds. Significant growth was taking place in both (in my *mind* and *spirit*) – but largely unrelated.”

- ❖ This dilemma is something that is all-too-common among Christians today. We so often struggle with how to relate our **sacred** lives to our **secular** ones (as if such a distinction actually exists). How do we relate our faith in Christ to the “daily business” of life? Or, to put it as John Beckett does, how do we relate *Sundays* with *the rest of the week* in a manner that is meaningful?

- ❖ However, this problem, this dilemma, is nothing new.
  - ❖ According to the Augsburg Confession (written in the 16<sup>th</sup> century), prior to the Protestant Reformation, “Christianity was thought to consist wholly in the observance of certain holy-days, rites, fasts, and vestures. These observances had won for themselves the exalted title of being the spiritual life and the perfect life.”
    - The Roman Catholic Church’s views on the sacraments and priesthood made it nearly impossible to view life outside of a monastery as anything other than second-class. This led to a deep **secular / sacred** divide where certain aspects of life were considered secular and without true significance, while other activities related directly to the Church (i.e., the practice of the sacraments) were viewed as **sacred**.
    - As German Reformer Philip Melancthon wrote, “This error greatly tormented devout consciences, which grieved that they were held in an imperfect state of life, as in marriage [or] in the office of magistrate... They admired the monks and such like, and falsely imagined that the observances of such men were more acceptable to God.”
  - ❖ Yet, the Reformers, while seeking to reestablish the centrality of Scripture in the life of the church and the lives of individual believers, also sought to eliminate the **sacred / secular divide** in the lives of the “average churchmen.”
  - ❖ According to British theologian Allister McGrath, it was John Calvin “taught that the individual believer has a vocation to serve God in the world – in every sphere of human existence – lending a new dignity and meaning to ordinary work.”
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- ❖ Unfortunately, it seems that in the church today, though, we are back to where we were prior to the Reformation with respect to our view of the relationship between the secular and sacred. As John Beckett stated, “**Sundays were Sundays, with the rest of the week largely detached...**”
  - ❖ **As Christians today, we live compartmentalized lives, often wondering why we are so ineffective in engaging a culture that is rarely interested in spiritual matters. In fact, if we were honest with ourselves, we would struggle greatly defending the dignity of the work of, say, an accountant versus that of a pastor or missionary. We are stuck in a secular / sacred chasm.**
  - ❖ The question then is, “Why?” Why do we live such divided and ineffective lives? Secondly, how to we correct it in a manner that is biblical and meaningful?
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- ❖ It seems that we live compartmentalized lives because we do not see the world through the lens of an **integrated worldview**.
- ❖ Certainly in recent years within Western Christendom, it has become en vogue or fashionable to speak of developing and exercising a Christian Worldview.
- ❖ Yet, what is a Christian or biblical worldview? Unfortunately, like so many things in our lives, we like to speak of a biblical worldview, but when pressed to explain and defend it, I would submit very few could.

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❖ However, in what is perhaps one of the most significant Christian books written in the last twenty years, author Nancy Pearcey (in *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from its Cultural Captivity*) describes the three primary aspects of a Christian worldview: an understanding of (1) **Creation**; (2) **Fall**; and (3) **Redemption**.

- ❖ Every religion and belief-system can be explained in terms of these three categories. Whether it is the New Age Movement, Islam, Darwinianism, or Marxism, each one has an answer for the greatest questions of life:
  - What is the ultimate reality and the origin of all things?
  - What is the source of evil and suffering, and why are things so bad in the world?
  - What is the solution?

“A Christian worldview involves three fundamental dimensions: the original good creation, the perversion of that creation through sin, and the restoration of that creation in Christ.”  
 Albert Wolters

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- ❖ Central to an understanding of a biblical worldview is a doctrine that has become essentially neglected in the modern church: the doctrine of the **bodily resurrection**. As we will see, without this historical reality, our lives in the “secular” world are essentially meaningless.
  - ❖ But, as it is, **Christ is risen, and not just spiritually, but bodily as well**. Therefore, as John Calvin expressed so many years ago, we are called to glorify God “in every sphere of human existence.”

I.	<b>CREATION</b>
II.	<b>FALL</b>
III.	<b>REDEMPTION</b>

## I. CREATION

- ❑ One of the most important doctrines of biblical Christianity is the doctrine of *Creatio ex nihilo*, or **Creation out of nothing**.
- ❑ Unlike the Greeks, the Scriptures teach that before Creation, God, and only God existed. Consequently, when God chose to create, He did so *out of nothing*. He did not take pre-existing matter and fashion it. Rather, He spoke all things into being.

### **Genesis 1:1-3**

‘In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light.’

### **Psalms 33:6,9**

By the word of the LORD the heavens were made,  
And by the breath of His mouth all their host...  
For He spoke, and it was done;  
He commanded, and it stood fast.

### **John 1:3**

All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

### **Colossians 1:16**

For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things have been created through Him and for Him.

### **Hebrews 11:3**

By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.

- ❑ This truth preserves the reality that **only God is eternal**.
- ❑ Furthermore, since God created **all things, whether visible or invisible, spiritual or physical**, then **all things are good**.
- ❑ God said this before the Fall (Genesis 1:4, 10, 12), and after it. The Apostle Paul writes in 1 Timothy 4:4, “Everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving.”
- ❑ Therefore, since God created all things, **nothing is inherently or intrinsically evil**.

- Furthermore, as God’s representatives, the only creatures created in His image, we should see ourselves as stewards of His *good* Creation.
- “But,” the astute Christian may say, “what about the Fall?”

<b>II. FALL</b>
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- The Scriptures emphasize that God created EVERYTHING; therefore, nothing is intrinsically bad or evil.
- However, when Adam and Eve fell, the effects of the Fall also extended to EVERYTHING...That is, ALL of Creation fell with them.
- The reason for the extent of the Fall was because Adam and Eve were created in God’s image, as His representatives. They were to exercise dominion over all creation, therefore, when they fell, so did everything they were to rule over. It is no different that the leader of an organization falling...so does the organization.
- **Genesis 3:17-19** states:

“<sup>17</sup>And to Adam he said,

‘Because you have listened to the voice of your wife  
and have eaten of the tree  
of which I commanded you,

‘You shall not eat of it,’  
cursed is the ground because of you;  
in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;  
<sup>18</sup>thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;  
and you shall eat the plants of the field.

<sup>19</sup>By the sweat of your face  
you shall eat bread,  
till you return to the ground,  
for out of it you were taken;  
for you are dust,  
and to dust you shall return.”

- We read in the above passage that the ground was cursed. The “cursing” of the ground does not mean that the physical earth is in some way morally evil or sinful; rather, it means that the ground, after the Fall, resists the efforts of man to work and keep the ground as the LORD had originally designed (Genesis 2:15: “The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.”)

“Man’s natural relationship to the ground, to rule over it, is reversed; instead of submitting to him, it resists and eventually swallows him. The earth, frustrated by the Creator’s assignment to disharmony, longs for restoration (Romans 8:20-22).”

The Reformation Study Bible

- The truth of the Fall, and its effect on all of Creation, gives understanding to the problems of this world, such as natural disasters. Yet, we also see that all of Creation longs for redemption.

“<sup>19</sup>For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. <sup>20</sup>For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup>that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. <sup>22</sup>For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.” Romans 8:19-22

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- Yet, not only was the physical Creation affected by the Fall, so was every aspect of life. Thus, aspects of life like work, sexuality, relationships, beauty, natural wonders all fell in such a way that they could be used in a manner that was sinful and idolatrous.
  - In *Total Truth*, Nancy Pearcey writes, “In every area of life, we need to distinguish between the way God originally created the world, and the way it has been deformed and defaced by sin. Reformed thinkers label this *structure* and *direction*. **Structure** refers to the character of the world, which is still good even after the Fall – music, art, science, sexuality, work, the state...**Direction** refers to the way we “direct” those structures to serve either God or idols. In every enterprise in which we are engaged, we need to ask: (1) What is the original structure that God created, and (2) how is it being distorted and directed to sinful purposes?”
  - Thus, with a biblical worldview and proper view of Creation and the Fall, we begin to understand that although no part of Creation is inherently evil (for God’s *structure* is good), the way we use it, or its *direction* can be sinful.

### III. REDEMPTION

- Lastly, just as God created EVERYTHING, and EVERYTHING fell with Adam and Eve, so God will redeem EVERYTHING through the Person and Work of Jesus Christ.
- However, central to the truth of God’s future redemption is the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ.

- Unfortunately, the Church today has seemed to overlook the importance of the **bodily resurrection**. It is not that the Church has *denied* this truth, it is simply that we have neglected it.
  - There are several reasons for this. For example, our society as a whole has become – it seems – increasingly more *spiritual*, but less *biblical*.
  - We have emphasized **spirituality** and the **spiritual disciplines**, such as prayer, Bible study, and evangelism. However, this has only seemed to lead to a deeper division in our lives, with respect to the secular / sacred divide. Certainly these activities are important, yet we are also called to cultivate the earth.

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- Secondly, it seems we have neglected the resurrection because of our (rightful) emphasis on the crucifixion.
  - Theologian and Professor Richard Gaffin explains, “As a generalization...Christ’s resurrection has been relatively eclipsed. In Eastern Orthodoxy...the emphasis has been on his incarnation...In Western Christianity...attention has been focused heavily and at times almost exclusively on Christ’s death and its significance. The overriding concern, especially since the Reformation, has been to keep clear that the Cross is not simply an ennobling and challenging example but a real atonement...In short, the salvation accomplished by Christ and the atonement have been virtually synonymous.”
  - The emphasis on the crucifixion and its doctrinal significance is vital; however, we must not forget that the *cross is meaningless apart from the resurrection*.

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- Finally, because of this misunderstanding of the **doctrine of the bodily resurrection**, our understanding of heaven and future glory is even slightly distorted.
  - I believe that many – if not most – Christians, when they think of heaven, think of a purely spiritual existence. I would submit that if many Christians were asked to describe the “body” of believers in heaven, they would describe **disembodied spirits “floating” around in a blissful existence**. Yet, this was the type of afterlife taught by the Greeks, such as Plato – **not** the heaven of the Scriptures.

- Yet, this is why the doctrine of resurrection is so crucial. In yards all over our community today are crosses that declare: **He is risen!** Yet, what does that mean? I think most Christians would say, “It means that He is alive.” And while that is true, it does not fully encapsulate what the resurrection is all about. In fact, if by “death” we mean that Christ is some way *ceased to exist*, then, of course, He was never dead. We cannot forget that when He breathed His last on the cross, His spirit was immediately in the presence of the Father. So, even after the crucifixion and before the resurrection, Christ was alive spiritually in heaven.
  - One of the keys to understanding this truth, is realizing that after Christ’s death, He placed His spirit into the hands of the Father [Luke 23:46]. He was in Paradise, just as He told the thief on the cross [Luke 23:43].
  - Then, on the third day, on the Feast of Firstfruits, the Son was raised bodily from the dead [1 Corinthians 15:20].
  - As the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep, we know that our resurrection bodies will be like His: 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Philippians 3:21; 1 Corinthians 15:49; 1 John 3:2.

“But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.” **1 Corinthians 15:20**

- Also, just as the spirit of Christ went to the Father after His physical death, followed by His bodily resurrection, so, after we die physically, our spirits are immediately with Christ in heaven [2 Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:23; Luke 23:43; Hebrews 12:23]. Then, at His Second Coming, our spirit/soul and body will be rejoined [resurrected] and glorified.

- So, why is the **doctrine of the bodily resurrection** so crucial to how the Christian lives today?

**1. The Bodily Resurrection declares that the present Creation is good.**

“If death is the dissolution of this body, never to be reassembled, then death has succeeded in saying present creation is bad and is going to be abandoned. But resurrection says, ‘No.’ Present creation is good. It is corruptible and transient, not least because of sin, but God, having dealt with sin in the cross of Jesus Christ, will deal with corruption. And the result therefore must be the reaffirmation of the good creation, including the reaffirmation of human bodies.” N.T. Wright



## **2. Because the spiritual and physical Creation is good, every aspect of our lives is important!**

- ❑ It is not just our spiritual lives that are important to God, but that which we do with our physical bodies is as well.
- ❑ In fact, it is in large part because of the bodily resurrection that Paul can declare that our bodies are temples, for through the resurrection, God declares that our physical bodies are important.
- ❑ Also, the bodily resurrection actually gives meaning and purpose to the more “secular” or “physical” aspects of our lives.

## **3. The Bodily resurrection declares that Christ came to REDEEM us in this world, not save us from it.**

- ❑ It seems that many Christians believe that this world is **a sinking ship and that we are simply waiting for our Savior to come and rescue us out of it before we perish with it.**
- ❑ However, the bodily resurrection declares that this is NOT the case.
- ❑ Christ came to redeem us in this world, and also redeem the world itself.
- ❑ Furthermore, this gives meaning to our work, for **Christ did not come to save us from our work; rather, He came to redeem the dignity of our work.**
- ❑ We must, then, be very careful when we say that we are “saved” for it begs the question, “Saved from what?” And the truth is that we are saved from the wrath of God that is due our sins, we are NOT saved from this world that God will one day abandon (for He will not abandon His Creation).

## **4. Christ is coming again not to annihilate this present Creation, but to transform it and make it forever new!**

- ❑ After the Fall, God did not decide that He would simply abandoned this present Creation.
- ❑ So often when we as fallen and imperfect people sit down to create something, we rarely “get it right” the first time. In fact, imagine sitting down to write a paper or paint a picture. We start, look at what we’ve done, decide we don’t like it, trash it, and start over. We continue this process until we produce something we are at least somewhat pleased with. **Yet God is not like this.**
- ❑ **He created once, and He will one day redeem His fallen Creation.**

- As N.T. Wright states so eloquently:

The message of the resurrection is that this world matters! That the injustices and pains of this present world must now be addressed with the news that healing, justice, and love have won...If Easter means Jesus Christ is only raised in a spiritual sense – [then] it is only about me, and finding a new dimension in my life. But if Jesus Christ is truly risen from the dead, Christianity becomes good news for the whole world – news which warms our hearts precisely because it isn't just about warming hearts. Easter means that a world where injustice, violence and degradation are endemic, God is not prepared to tolerate such things – an that we will world and plan, with all the energy of God, to implement victory over them all. Take away Easter and Karl Marx was probably right to accuse Christianity of ignoring problems of the material world. Take it away and Freud was probably right to say Christianity is wish-fulfillment. Take it away and Nietzsche probably was right to say it was for wimps.

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- **Finally, the message of the bodily resurrection is that through the redemptive work of Christ, this decaying, old, and worn out world will be made new again.**
  - **There certainly nothing like things that are NEW: the wonder of a newborn baby, the smell of a new car, the feel of new clothes, the look of a new home, the excitement of a child with a new toy.**
  - **Yet, the Resurrection declares that Christ will come and make all things NEW!**

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- Notice the “Newness” of the Resurrection.

○ **New Tomb**

Matthew 27:59-60: “And Joseph [of Arimathea] took the body [of Jesus] and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud and laid it in his own new tomb...”

- This truth is significant because Christ’s death and subsequent resurrection would usher in a new hope whereby the grave no longer had the power over death.

○ **New Day**

Matthew 28:1: “Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week...”

- ❑ The bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ certainly ushered in a “New Day” so to speak.
- ❑ In fact, after the resurrection and Pentecost, believers would no longer worship on the old Sabbath (Saturday, or the last day of the week), but would worship on Sunday, the **Lord’s Day**, the first day of the week.

○ <b>New Week</b>
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Luke 24:1: “But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared.”

- ❑ This truth is significant, as it points back to the Creation account, for in six days God created and on the seventh day He rested.

○ <b>New Creation</b>
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- ❑ Because Christ rose on the first day of the week, He is the Head of the New Creation – the Second Adam through whom the Old Creation will be redeemed.

○ <b>New Heaven and New Earth</b>
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- ❑ As we have seen, there will be a new heaven and a new earth. Christ will not come to destroy this present creation and start over. He will not destroy this creation only for us to live spiritual lives in eternity. Rather, He will come to transform this creation and our bodies in order to live in the New Heavens and New Earth for all eternity.
- ❑ And, the glory of the New Heaven and New Earth is that everything will be new; however, nothing will get old. Everything is always new.
- ❑ Christ will accomplish this finally at His Second Coming:

Revelation 21:1-5: “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.’ And He who sits on the throne said, ‘Behold, I am making all things new.’ And He said, ‘Write, for these words are faithful and true.’”

- And so, when we begin to view the world through a biblical understanding of **Creation, Fall and Redemption**, we are set free to live lives of purpose now!
- Consider once more the story of John Beckett. He writes that when he discovered the importance of this perspective, he began to view his work “as having great worth to God.” As “a business person, I was no longer a second-class citizen, nor did I need to leave my Christian convictions and biblical values outside the office entrance when I headed into work on Monday morning.”
- And so it is with us, because of the **Redemptive Work of Jesus Christ**, all of our lives have meaning, even that which is “secular.”
- Therefore, because of the Bodily Resurrection of Christ, we can declare with the Apostle Paul that “**Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God to the Father through him.**” (Colossians 3:17).