

Of the Resurrection of Christ From the Dead.

by John Gill

Christ's resurrection is the confirmation of his divine Sonship and the fulfillment of Scripture prophecies and types.

Scripture: Philippians 2:6

Topics: "Resurrection", "Exaltation of Christ"

Description

John Gill emphasizes the significance of Christ's resurrection as the first step in His exaltation, linking it to the fulfillment of prophecies and types found in Scripture. He explains that the resurrection is a foundational truth of the Christian faith, confirming Christ's divine sonship and the power of God. Gill discusses the witnesses to the resurrection, including angels and the apostles, and highlights the transformative effects of this event on believers, such as justification and the promise of eternal life. He concludes that Christ's resurrection not only glorifies God but also assures believers of their own future resurrection.

Transcript

A Body of Doctrinal Divinity

Book 5--Chapter 6

OF THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST FROM THE DEAD

Having gone through Christ's state of humiliation, I pass on to his state of exaltation; which immediately took place on the ending of the former: these two are closely connected by the apostle (Phil. 2:6-10) for having fully described the humiliation of Christ; he adds, "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him", &c. (see Acts 2:33; 5:31). The several steps and instances of his exaltation are, his resurrection from the dead, ascension to heaven, session at the right hand of God, and his second coming to judge the world at the last day.

I shall begin with the first of these; for the first step of Christ's exaltation is, his resurrection from the dead; "God raised him from the dead and gave him glory" (1 Pet. 1:21). This is one of the principal articles of the Christian faith; a very important one, and on which the truth of the whole gospel depends (1 Cor. 15:4,14). 1. First, I shall consider the prophecies and types of Christ's resurrection from the dead, and how they have been fulfilled. 1a. First. Scripture prophecies; and the apostle Paul takes notice of several of them in

one discourse of his, in Acts 13:33-35. 1a1.

A passage in Psalm 2:7. "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee"; which was not said to David; nor could it be said to any other man, since it never was said to any of the angels (Heb 1:5), yet not so to be understood of Christ, as if his resurrection was the cause of his being, or of his being called the Son of God; since, before that, his divine Sonship was witnessed to by his Father, by angels, by men, good and bad, yea, owned by devils; and was the charge brought against him, for which the Jews said he ought to die (John 19:7).

But the sense is, that by his resurrection from the dead, he would be declared, as he was, to be the Son of God with power; and the truth of his divine Sonship confirmed thereby; and so this prophecy fulfilled; (see Rom. 1:4). 1a2. Another prophecy of Christ's resurrection is in Psalm 16:10 which is produced both by the apostle Peter, and by the apostle Paul, as foretelling the resurrection of Christ Acts 2:31 13:35-37 for as it is a proof that his dead body would be laid in a grave, and lie buried there for a time, as has been observed in the preceding chapter, so that it would not be left there, not so long as to be corrupted, but would be raised from thence. 1a3.

Another scripture quoted by the apostle Paul (Acts 13:34), as referring to the resurrection of Christ, and as a proof of it, is in Isa. 55:3 "I will give you the sure mercies of David"; by David is meant Christ, as he often is in prophecy (Jer. 30:9; Ezek. 34:23,24; 37:24,25; Hosea 3:5), and by his mercies, the blessings of the covenant of grace, which are with him; so called, because they flow from the grace and mercy of God; and which being put into his hands, are sure to all the elect through him; and particularly through his resurrection from the dead; for had he died, and not rose again from the dead, the blessings of the covenant would not have been ratified and confirmed; the impetration of them is owing to his death; but the application of them to his resurrection from the dead; which, therefore, was necessary to make them sure.

Besides these, 1a4. There is another passage, foretelling the resurrection of Christ, in Isaiah 26:19. "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise"; which is an answer to the complaint of the prophet, concerning the sad estate of his people (Isa. 26:14), &c. and are not spoken by him, but by the Messiah to him, the Lord Jehovah, in whom is everlasting strength, the desire of his people, the ordainer of peace for them, and the worker of their works in them; and who is acknowledged by them as being Lord of them (Isa. 26:4,8,9,12,13) and who assures the prophet, that whereas he should arise from the dead, others should rise with him, as a pledge of the resurrection of his people at the last day; and which was fulfilled at the resurrection of Christ, when the graves were opened, and many of the saints arose from the dead Matthew 27:52,53 or if the words are to be rendered, "As my dead body"; or, "as sure as my dead body shall they arise": either way they predict the resurrection of Christ, of Christ's dead body; which is both the exemplar, earnest, and pledge of the resurrection of the saints.

Once more. 1a5. Another prophecy of the resurrection of Christ, and of its being on the third day, is, as is generally understood, in Hosea 6:2 "after two days will he revive us", &c. which words are thought to be spoken of the Messiah, whose coming is prophesied of in the following verse; and though they are expressed in the plural number, this may be no objection to the application of them to Christ, and his resurrection; since he rose again, not as a single Person, but as a public Head, representing all his people, who are therefore said to be raised up together with him (Eph. 2:6; Col. 3:1). 1b.

Secondly, Scripture types; some of which are, 1b1. Types of the thing itself in general; or at least thought to be so; as the first Adam's awaking out of a deep sleep, when the woman was presented to him, formed of one of his ribs; the deliverance of Isaac, when his father received him in a figure as from the dead; the bush Moses saw burning with fire, and not consumed; the budding and blossoming of Aaron's dry rod; the living bird let fly, after it had been dipped in the blood of the slain bird, used in the purification of the leper; and the scapegoat, let go into the wilderness, when the other taken with it was slain. 1b2.

Others are types of the time of it in particular; as well as of the thing itself; as the rescue of Isaac from the jaws of death, on the third day, from the time Abraham had the order to sacrifice him, and from which time he was looked upon by him as a dead man; to which others add the preferment of Joseph in Pharaoh's court, on the third year from his being cast into prison by Potiphar; putting a year for a day, as sometimes a day is for a year; but the principal type of all, respecting this matter, is that of the deliverance of Jonah from the whale's belly when he had been three days in it, at least part of three natural days, and which our Lord himself makes mention of as such (Matthew 12:40). 2.

Secondly, As it was foretold that Christ should rise from it, and that on the third day; accordingly he did; of which there were many witnesses and full evidence. As, 2a. The testimony of angels. Matthew speaks of but one angel, that descended and rolled away the stone from the sepulchre; but Luke makes mention of two men in shining garments, that is, angels, who appeared in such a form; and John calls them angels, and represents them as sitting, the one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain; and who told the women that came to the sepulchre, that Christ was not there, but risen; and so as angels were the first that brought the tidings of Christ's incarnation and birth to the shepherds, they were the first that made the report of his resurrection to the women (Matthew 28:2,5,6; Luke 24:5,6; John 20:12).

Who, 2b. Were good and sufficient witnesses of what they saw and heard; they were present when the body of Christ was laid in the sepulchre; they saw where it was laid, and how it was laid; they went home to prepare spices, and when the sabbath was over, came with them to the sepulchre, to anoint the body with them; where, to their great surprise, they saw the stone was rolled away from it; they entered into it, and found the body was gone; they saw the angels, who assured them that Christ was risen; and as they were returning to the disciples with the news, Christ himself met them, whom they knew and worshipped, and held by the feet: so that they had all the evidence of his being risen they could well have, and of his being risen in a real body; which was not only visible to them, but palpable by them (Mark 16:4; Luke 24:2,3; Matthew 28:9). 2c.

Even the soldiers that guarded the sepulchre were witnesses of Christ's resurrection; they saw the angel roll away the stone, they were terrified with the sight, and with the earthquake they felt; they left their station, and went to the chief priests, and reported what was done, that Christ was risen from the dead; as appears by the method the priests took to stifle the matter, by bribing them with money, to contradict what they had said, and give out that the disciples came by night, and took the body away, while they slept; which is so far from invalidating their first report, that it serves but to corroborate it, that they spoke the truth at first, but a lie at last; since, if asleep, how could they know and attest the coming of the disciples to the grave, and taking the body from thence? (Matthew 28:4,11-15). 2d.

After this, Christ was seen of many men, even of many hundreds; first he was seen of Cephas, or Peter; then of the twelve disciples; after that of above five hundred brethren at once; next of James, then again of all the apostles; and, last of all, he was seen of the apostle Paul, both at his conversion, and afterwards in

the temple; (see 1 Cor. 15:5-8; Acts 26:16,19; 22:17,18). Now the apostles were witnesses chosen before of God for this purpose Acts 10:41 and are to be credited; for-- 2d1.

They were such who knew Christ full well, who had been some years his disciples and followers, had attended his ministry, had seen his miracles, and had been his constant companions in his lifetime; and after he was risen from the dead, had eat and drank with him; and had not only a glance or two of him; but he was seen by them at certain times for the space of forty days; and showed himself alive to them by infallible proofs (Acts 1:3 10:41). 2d2. They were men not over credulous, nay, slow of heart to believe, as our Lord upbraids them; and even with respect to this matter; though the women that had been at the sepulchre gave such a plain account of things, with such striking circumstances; yet "their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not"; nay, when Christ had appeared to all the disciples but one; and they were fully convinced of the truth and reality of his resurrection, and reported this to Thomas, who was not with them; yet so incredulous was he, and would not receive their united report, that he declared he would not believe that Christ was risen, unless he saw the print of the nails in his hands, and put his finger into it, and thrust his hand into his side; all which he was indulged with by Christ and then, and not before, declared his faith in it.

Now had they been a credulous sort of men, easy of belief, ready to receive anything that was told, their testimony might have been objected to; but they were all the reverse; (see Luke 24:11; John 20:25,27). 2d3. The disciples were men of holy lives and conversation, of strict probity, honesty, and integrity; never charged with any vice or immorality: it may be said of them what the apostle Paul says of himself, that "in simplicity and godly sincerity they had their conversation in the world": and the testimony of such persons merits regard in any affair. 2d4.

They could have no sinister end, or any worldly advantage in view, in contriving and telling such a story; they could expect no other but to be mocked and hated, reproached and persecuted, by all sorts of men, by Jews and Gentiles; as in fact they were (Acts 4:1-3; 17:18) nay, not only they risked their credit and reputation, but life itself; and exposed themselves to the severest sufferings, and most cruel death; (see 1 Cor. 15:30,32), nay, even risked the salvation of their immortal souls; for how could such men but expect the wrath of God, eternal damnation, that could frame and propagate such a falsehood, if it was one? 2e.

The resurrection of Christ is not only confirmed by the above witnesses, but the Holy Ghost himself is a witness of it, by the miracles which were wrought under his influence, in confirmation of it; the apostles, with great power, that is, with miracles, signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds, "gave witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ"; (see Acts 4:32; 5:30-32). 2f. It is as certain, and of it there is full evidence, that Christ rose again from the dead on the third day, according to scripture prophecies and types.

It was on the first day of the week Christ rose from the dead. All the evangelists agree that it was on that day the women came to the sepulchre with their spices, and found things as they were; which showed that Christ was risen (Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:1,2; Luke 24:1; John 20:1), which laid the foundation for the observation of that day to be kept by Christians in a religious manner (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1,2) and it was early in the morning on that day, about the break of it, towards sunrising; a fit time, very suitable to the Sun of righteousness, who arises on his people with healing in his wings; and this day was the third day from his death.

On the evening of the sixth day, on which he died, he was buried, and he rested in the grave on the seventh day, the Jewish sabbath; and fulfilled thereby that type of him, and put an end to it; which made way for the first day, as a day of religious worship, which immediately succeeded it, as none so proper as the next day: so that a time, or day of worship, was not in the least intermitted, nor ever since was one wanted; and on the first day, which was the third from his death, he rose from the dead, and so fulfilled the type of Jonah; who, it is reasonable to suppose, lay no longer in the belly of the whale than our Lord did in the earth; namely, one whole natural day, and parts of others; the Jews having no other name for a natural day than a night and a day; which the Greeks call a night day; and a part being put for the whole, both might be said to lie three days and three nights; that is, three natural days; the one in the whale's belly; the other in the heart of the earth: they lying there some part of two natural days, whether the night or day part of them, and one whole natural day (Matthew 12:40). 3.

Thirdly, The manner of Christ's rising from the dead comes next to be considered. 3a. It was in his body; not in his divine nature; which, as it was not capable of suffering and dying, so not the subject of the resurrection; nor his human soul; for that died not with the body; but went to heaven, to paradise, on its separation from it; but in his body: as he was put to death in the flesh, so he was raised from the dead in it; it was the body only that died, and that only was raised again: when Christ said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up", the evangelist observes, that "he spoke of the temple of his body" (John 2:19,21). 3b.

It was the same body that was raised that died, and was laid in the grave; it was a real body, consisting of flesh, blood, and bones; and was not only to be seen, but to be handled; and it was the same identical body, as appears from the print of the nails in his hands, and the mark in his side made by the spear (Luke 24:39,40; John 20:25,27). 3c. It was raised immortal, clear of all former infirmities, as weariness, hunger, thirst, &c. it was, before, mortal, as the event showed; Christ was crucified through weakness: but was raised powerful, immortal, and incorruptible, never to die more; nor shall death have any more dominion over him; he lives for evermore, and has the keys of hell and death, the government of the grave, and can open it at his pleasure, and let out the inhabitants of it free (Rom. 6:9; Rev. 1:18). 3d.

It was raised very glorious; of which his transfiguration upon the mountain, before his decease, was an emblem and pledge: and though he might not appear in so much glory immediately after his resurrection, and during his stay with his disciples, before his ascension, they not being able to bear the luster of his countenance, it really had; yet now, being crowned with glory and honour, his body is a "glorious" one, according to which the bodies of the saints will be fashioned, at the resurrection of the just (Phil. 3:21). 3e.

Yet it has the same essential parts and properties of a body it ever had; not only being flesh and blood, which a spirit has not, but circumscribed by space; not everywhere, but limited to some certain place; it is received up into heaven, and there it is retained, and will be retained, until the restitution of all things. 3f. And lastly, The resurrection of Christ was attended with wonderful events; as with an earthquake, which made it grand and solemn, and alarmed the watch to be attentive to it, and be witnesses of it; and was expressive of the mighty power of God, by which it was performed; and it was followed with a resurrection of many of the saints, showing the efficacy of it; and as a pledge, earnest, and confirmation of the future resurrection of all the righteous at the last day (Matthew 28:2; 27:52,53). 4.

Fourthly, The causes of the resurrection of Christ from the dead deserve notice; it is frequently ascribed to God, without any distinction of persons; it being a divine work, which none but God could do, and is a work of the exceeding greatness of his power (Eph. 1:19; Acts 2:24,32; 3:13,15; 4:10; 5:30), yet being a work

"ad extra", all the three divine persons were concerned in it. It is sometimes ascribed to God the Father, as in Ephesians 1:17-20 again in Acts 13:30,33 which words are said to the Son by God the Father, who raised him from the dead; (see also 1 Pet. 1:3).

At other times it is ascribed to the Son himself: he declared beforehand, that when the temple of his body was destroyed, he would raise it up again; and that, as he had power to lay down his life, he had power to take it up again, which he did; and was thereby declared to be the Son of God with power (John 2:19,21; 10:18; Rom. 1:4; see also 1 Pet. 3:18). The Spirit, the third Person, had also a concern in it; for the declaration of Christ's Sonship with power was "according to the Spirit of holiness", or the Holy Spirit, "by the resurrection from the dead"; that is, by raising Christ from the dead; and as God, by his Spirit, will raise the members of Christ at the last day, so by the same Spirit, he raised Christ, their, Head, on whose resurrection theirs depends, which is intimated by the apostle (Rom. 8:11). 5.

Fifthly, The effects of Christ's resurrection from the dead, or the ends which were to be, and have been, or will be, answered by it. 5a. First, With respect to God, the chief end of all, was his glory; for "Christ was raised from the dead by", some read it, to "the glory of the Father" (Rom. 6:4), that is, "to the glory of God the Father", as in Philippians 2:11 to the glory of his perfections; as particularly, his "truth" and "faithfulness", in fulfilling types, promises, and prophecies concerning this matter; for what the apostles and ministers of the New Testament say of it, is no other than what Moses and the prophets did say should come to pass; namely, "that Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead" (Acts 26:22,23), and since God spoke of it by them, the veracity of God required it should be done, and that is glorified by it.

Also the "power" of God; to raise one from the dead, is the work of almighty power; as is both the resurrection of Christ, and of the saints; "God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power": and the exceeding greatness of his power was exerted in a most glorious manner in the resurrection of Christ (1 Cor. 6:14; Eph. 1:19,20). Moreover, the "justice" of God is glorified in it; when Christ had done his work as a Surety, it was but just and equitable that he should be discharged, be loosed from the cords of death, and be detained no longer a prisoner in the grave; and that he should be honorably and legally acquitted; as he was when a messenger was dispatched from heaven to roll away the stone of the sepulchre, and set him free; and being thus raised from the dead, he was justified in the Spirit; and hereby the justice of God was glorified, as also his wisdom, grace, and goodness; which appeared in forming the scheme of salvation, and in the kind designs of God to his people; all which would have been defeated, if Christ had not been raised from the dead. 5b.

Secondly, With respect to Christ. 5b1. Hereby is given further proof of his proper Deity, and divine Sonship; by this it appears, that he is the Lord God Almighty, who could and did raise himself from the dead! this declares him to be the Son of God with power: shows that he is the Lord of all, both of the dead and of the living; that he has the keys of hell and death, and can and will unlock the graves of his people, and set them free, as he has himself (Rom. 1:4; 14:9; Rev. 1:18). 5b2.

By this it is a clear case, that Christ has done his work as the Surety of his people; that he has paid all their debts, finished transgression, made an end of sin, made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness; that he has fulfilled the law, satisfied justice, and obtained eternal redemption, having given a sufficient price for it; and, in short, has done everything he agreed to do, to the full satisfaction of his divine Father; and therefore he is raised from the dead, received into glory, and set down at the right hand of God, having answered all his suretyship engagements. 5b3.

This shows that he has got the victory over death and the grave; that he has not only destroyed him that had the power of death, the devil, but has abolished death itself, the last enemy, and has brought life and immortality to light; that he has done what he resolved to do; "O death, I will be thy plague! O grave, I will be thy destruction!" so that the believer, in a view of interest in a risen Saviour, who has conquered death and the grave, may triumph, and say, "O death, where is thy sting?

O grave, where is thy victory?" (2 Tim. 1:10; Hosea 13:14; 1 Cor. 15:55). 5b4. It was necessary that Christ should rise from the dead, in order to enter into the glory promised him, and he prayed for: the prophets not only spoke of the sufferings of Christ, but of the glory that should follow; which could not be enjoyed by him, unless after he had suffered death, he was raised again; wherefore God raised him from the dead, and gave him the promised glory (1 Pet. 1:11,21). 5c.

Thirdly, With respect to his people; the power of Christ's resurrection is great; the effects of it are many (Phil. 3:10). 5c1. The blessings of the covenant of grace in general are enjoyed by the saints in virtue of it; for though reconciliation, and other blessings of grace, are by the death of Christ; yet the application and enjoyment of them are through his interceding life, in consequence of his resurrection from the dead; to which life the whole of salvation is ascribed (Rom. 5:10; Heb. 7:25). 5c2.

Justification, in particular, is observed as one special end and effect of Christ's resurrection; "he was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification"; and the triumph of faith, in the view of that blessing of grace, is rather, and more principally founded on Christ's resurrection, than on his sufferings and death (Rom. 4:25; 8:33,34). 5c3. Regeneration is another effect of Christ's resurrection; as the elect of God were "quickenened with him", and in him, as their head and representative, when he was quickened and raised from the dead; hence said to be "raised up together" (Eph. 2:5,6), so they are quickened in regeneration, in consequence and virtue of his resurrection, to which it is ascribed (1 Pet. 1:3). 5c4.

The resurrection of the saints at the last day is the fruit and effect of Christ's resurrection, and which is ensured by it. Christ's glorious body is the exemplar, according to which the bodies of the saints will then be formed; and his resurrection is the earnest and pledge of theirs; he is "the firstfruits of them that slept", that is, of the dead: the firstfruits are the sample, and what ensure a following harvest; so the resurrection of Christ is the sample, and gives assurance of the resurrection of the saints in time to come: so that Christ's resurrection being certain, the resurrection of the saints is also (1 Cor. 15:20,23; 1 Thess. 4:14).

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