

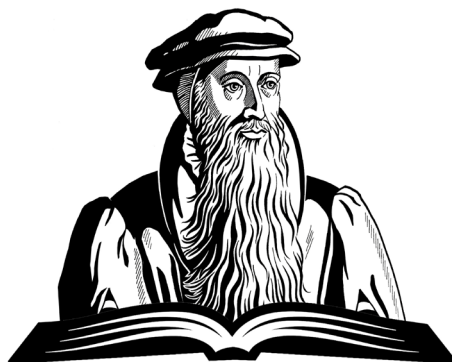
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# VIDEO LECTURE MODULE: THE APOSTLES' CREED

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## *LECTURE 6* ARTICLE 5: THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

Lecturer Presenter: Rev. Cornelis Harinck



**The John Knox Institute**  
of Higher Education

*Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide*

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## *Module*

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# THE APOSTLES' CREED

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Lecturer Presenter: Rev. Cornelis Harinck

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# THE APOSTLES' CREED

Rev. Cornelis Harinck

## *Transcript—Lecture 6*

### **Article 5: The Resurrection of Christ**

We continue this series of lectures about the Apostles' Creed, by addressing Article 5. This article confesses the following regarding Jesus: "The third day he rose again from the dead."

In the world of the pious Jew, the learned Greek, and the proud Roman, the Christian church confessed that Jesus, their Lord and Savior, had risen from the dead. We read, in Acts 4, verse 33: "And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus." The apostles gave witness, that is, they spoke of what they had seen and heard.

The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead was the dominant theme of their testimony. They spoke as men who had personally met the resurrected Jesus. Peter testified, on the day of Pentecost, "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses"—Acts 2, verse 32. The apostles had reassured that, in speaking of Jesus' words and deeds, they were not proclaiming a message fabricated by men, rather, they were talking about matters of which they had been witnesses. The apostle Peter wrote, "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty"—2 Peter 1, verse 16. Before the tribunal of this world, they testified that God had raised Jesus Christ from the dead.

The resurrection of Jesus from the dead was not merely one of the many truths they proclaimed regarding Jesus, rather, it was the cardinal point of their message. In the resurrection chapter, 1 Corinthians 15, the Apostle Paul makes it clear that everything stands or falls with the authenticity of Jesus' resurrection from the dead. He argues that, if Jesus did not rise from the dead, everything Jesus did would be rendered null and void. Someone might counter by saying, "We would still have Christmas and Good Friday," however, these events would be of no redeeming and saving significance, apart from the resurrection. Without the resurrection of Jesus, the entire edifice of truth would totter. Easter, the resurrection of Jesus, proves that he is indeed more than a martyr, or someone who died for his ideals. The resurrection powerfully affirms the deity of Jesus, for thereby he was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead"—Romans 1, verse 4.

The resurrection of Jesus is God's "amen" upon the sacrifice of Good Friday. If Jesus had remained in the grave, we would not know whether God had accepted the sacrifice of Good Friday, and whether the punishment upon sin had been fully borne. However, the Apostle can glory in saying, "But now is Christ risen from the dead"—1 Corinthians 15, verse 20. Although everything seemed lost on Good Friday, Easter morning affirmed that a complete victory had been secured! The resurrection of Christ proclaims to us the message that Jesus' sacrifice has been accepted, and that sin's guilt has been atoned. Death has been conquered, and Satan's head has been crushed.

Death could not retain its hold on Jesus. After all, he had finished his work! The devil had to let him go, for his power had been broken. Thus, by his death and resurrection, Jesus destroyed "him that had the power of death, that is, the devil"—Hebrews 2, verse 14. Death has been conquered, Satan defeated and eternal life acquired. The best news a lost world ever heard came from a graveyard. The stone has been rolled away. The grave of Jesus is open. Now Jesus has gone out, we may go into the empty grave, to see what happened. The tomb is empty! Jesus has risen indeed! Death has been conquered and salvation secured.

The Apostle now dares to challenge all the enemies and accusers of the children of God, and writes, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that

condemns? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again”—Romans 8, verses 33 and 34. The work is done, the fight is fought, the battle is won. God has raised his Son. To save us, Jesus died; to justify us, he arose. In Romans 4, verse 25, the Apostle says that Jesus “was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.” The resurrection of Christ is our receipted bill.

Christ’s resurrection is, therefore, of crucial importance! It is the most important Article of our faith. But for the resurrection of Jesus from the grave, all would be in vain. As the Apostle says, “And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, . . . and your faith is also vain” (1 Corinthians 15:14–17). Jesus’ resurrection from the dead is the most important article of our Christian faith.

And at the same time it is the most questioned and ridiculed article of the Christian faith. When Paul stood before the Roman governor, Festus, and testified of the resurrection of Jesus, this governor said, “Paul, you are beside yourself; much learning does make you mad”—Acts 26, verse 24. In other words, You are rambling, you are allowing yourself to be carried away by your great learning. That is how Festus thought about the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. It is no different today. Twenty-first-century man deems the message, that Jesus Christ has risen from the dead, to belong to the realm of fables. People who still believe in the resurrection are mentally deranged. They are out of their minds. After all, such things could not possibly have happened. Dead is dead—dead people do not become alive again.

Throughout the ages, the message of Jesus’ resurrection from the dead has been denied, rendered suspect, and ridiculed. Many have attempted to distort both the truth and the historicity of Jesus’ physical resurrection by recasting its meaning. In the Quran, Islam acknowledges Jesus to be God’s ambassador and witness. In spite of the fact that the Islam maintains that Jesus is inferior to Mohammed, they nevertheless deem him to be one of God’s witnesses. But they refuse to acknowledge that he rose from the dead. They give another explanation to his being alive after his crucifixion. According to the Quran, Jesus was indeed crucified, but he was not killed. He only appeared to be dead, and Allah elevated him into his presence. But he has never been risen from the dead. Modern theology posits that the disciples and women have merely imagined Jesus to have appeared in their midst. They were mentally so fixated on Jesus that they thought they saw him—just like seeing the image of your mother again, following her death. Others posit that it was not Jesus’ person, but rather Jesus’ doctrine that arose and lived on. Jesus was buried, but his teachings lived on. Thus, there are many denials of the actual and physical resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

However, the Bible explicitly refers to the physical resurrection of Jesus as a fact—a proven, historical event. God has surrounded the resurrection of Jesus with a multitude of proofs that can only be explained, as evidence of the actual resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. How strange it may sound, but the fact that the followers of Jesus did not expect Jesus to rise from the dead, is one of the strongest evidences of the reality of Jesus’ resurrection. Neither the disciples nor the women expected Jesus to rise from the dead. Jesus had told them repeatedly that he not only would suffer and die, but also would rise again from the dead after three days. Matthew tells us, “From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day” (Matthew 16:21). His disciples, however, did not understand this message. The Bible declares several times, “But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him”—Mark 9, verse 32. Peter even rebuked Jesus for speaking of his suffering and dying, and said, “Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee” (Matthew 16:22).

When the women went to Jesus’ tomb on Easter morning, they did not expect a resurrection. They were astonished that the stone that closed the opening of the grave had been rolled away. When they went into the grave and found it to be empty, they still did not think about resurrection. The angels then told them that Jesus was alive and had risen, and that, therefore, the tomb was empty. When they returned to Jerusalem and told this to the grieving followers of Jesus, they did not believe them. Luke tells us, “And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not”—Luke 24, verse 11. Even when Jesus stood in their midst on that day, they did not believe it was Jesus. They thought they saw a ghost. Only after Jesus had showed them his pierced hands and feet, and ate a piece of fish and bread before their eyes, they did believe it was he. Jesus proved by many appearances that he was alive and had risen from the dead.

After having visited Jesus' grave, Mary Magdalene, the women, and Peter came to the followers of Jesus, who were gathered in the upper room in Jerusalem, with the message that they had seen the risen Jesus. When the men of Emmaus also arrived that evening, to tell that they too had met the risen Jesus, they were welcomed with the joyful message, "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon" (Luke 24:34). It began to dawn among the small group of women and disciples of Jesus that Jesus really had risen. Paul even speaks of more than five hundred brethren, who saw and met Jesus after his death on the cross. He had appeared to them on the mount in Galilee, as he had promised. We read about this promise of Jesus to his many disciples in Galilee, in Matthew 26, verse 32: "But after I am risen again, I will go before you unto Galilee."

Most of these witnesses were still alive when Paul wrote about this to the Christians at Corinth. He could say, "of whom the greater part remain unto this present"—1 Corinthians 15, verse 6. They could still be asked personally about how and when they had met the risen Jesus. Finally, Paul presents himself as a witness to the veracity of Jesus' bodily resurrection from the dead, and writes, "And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time"—1 Corinthians 15, verse 8. The risen Jesus met him on the road to Damascus. He transformed a persecutor into a preacher of the Gospel. The change in the life of Paul cannot be understood without the resurrection of Jesus. There is but one explanation for all these appearances: "The Lord is risen indeed" (Luke 24:34).

The Scriptures refer to these people as eyewitnesses. These eyewitnesses yield the most compelling evidence for the resurrection of Jesus. Rather than militantly arguing their case, they would simply testify, "We have seen and met Jesus after his resurrection." Each of them could say what John witnessed, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you"—1 John 1, verse 3. We may safely assume that all Christians who met Jesus, either before or after his resurrection, were a source of essential information for subsequent Christians. They are referred to as witnesses. They could say, "And we are witnesses of all things which he did"—Acts 10, verse 39. What sort of evidence would a court deem to be sufficient and conclusive? It would be the word of the witnesses, who were present at the crime scene, and who have thus witnessed the crime. The proof that they have indeed witnessed the crime is particularly evident from details that can only be known by someone who has been there and has witnessed all that happened and was said.

Legal experts have investigated the resurrection of Jesus on these grounds. They have come to the following conclusion: There is a plethora of explicit details that could only be known by someone who has met Jesus. For example:

- The followers of Jesus did not expect Jesus to rise from the dead.
- The women were surprised that the stone had been removed.
- They were astonished that the grave was empty.
- The soldiers charged with guarding the grave had fled.
- There was no evidence of the grave having been violated.
- Mary Magdalene was initially inconsolable.
- The clothes in which Jesus' body had been wrapped lay as neatly folded, as if someone had folded up his night garment upon arising.
- At least, Jesus also showed his followers the scars of the crucifixion in his hands and his feet before their eyes.
- He ate a piece of bread and a honeycomb.
- He spoke to them and also appeared to them several times.

Legal experts have thus concluded that such an account of events can only come from people who have both seen and met the risen Jesus. The German historian, Von Campenhausen, therefore concludes, "A dramatic change had occurred in the followers of Jesus. Their circumstances before and after Easter differ significantly. The crucifixion of Jesus had stripped them of all hope. Being very fearful of the Jews, they had gathered in the upper room. They were disappointed; they were confused and full of riddles. However, everything changed after Easter. They no longer deemed the cause of Jesus to have been a terminal failure. On the contrary! They spoke of him as the living Lord. They testified with power of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead." Von Campenhausen, although a researcher critical of Christianity, concluded that something must have happened that



brought about such a change. This change cannot be explained apart from the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

Granted, our faith in the veracity of Jesus' resurrection is not contingent on the judgment of historians. However, it can and does affirm our faith. The faith of the Christian rests upon the testimony of all the men and women to whom Jesus appeared after his resurrection. They exclaim to us, "The Lord is risen indeed!" Had the resurrection of Jesus from the dead not occurred, the disciples would have gone back to their nets, or to their former occupations. They would never have gone into the world to proclaim the Gospel of the risen Savior. Without the resurrection of Jesus, there would have been no Christianity. Paul's conversion would have been unthinkable, apart from his encounter with the risen Christ. Everything testifies that the Lord is risen indeed!

Finally, every true Christian is a living proof of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The Apostle affirms this truth by saying, "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins"—Ephesians 2, verse 1. The Christians at Ephesus had been raised up together with Christ. A radical change, a spiritual resurrection, had taken place in the lives of the Christians at Ephesus. They were brought from death to life. They were transformed into becoming a new people. Christianity's glory is that people are transformed into becoming new people by the resurrection power of Jesus.

The blessings from Jesus' resurrection from the dead are many. Jesus, first of all, conquered death by his resurrection from the dead. In 2 Timothy 1, verse 10, the Apostle says, regarding the risen Christ, "who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." What an amazing victory! Death has been abolished and obliterated! Although Alexander the Great, Napoleon, and Gengis Khan achieved great victories, they could not overcome death. Jesus has conquered death! Many may mock with death, hate death, and be fearful of death, but they cannot overcome death. Neither money and power, nor fame and honor will avail here. Everyone must yield to death. Scripture says, "What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death?"—Psalm 89, verse 48. Death is a powerful enemy indeed! Death derives its power from sin: "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin"—Romans 5, verse 12. There was no death before man had sinned against God. For where there is no sin, death cannot come. However, when sin is present, death must follow. God had pronounced the threat, "In the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die"—Genesis 2, verse 17. When Adam and Eve violated this commandment of God, death followed.

However, Jesus conquered death. And how? He robbed death of its power to inflict death. The Apostle says, "The sting of death is sin"—1 Corinthians 15, verse 56. The sting of the sword with which death kills us, is sin. Jesus has robbed death of its deadly sword. He stripped death of its sting, by making satisfaction for the sins of his people. Jesus' atoning death on the cross has rendered death powerless. And by his resurrection, he has broken the chains of death. He can now say to sinners fearful of death, "Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and I have the keys of hell and of death"—Revelation 1, verses 17 and 18.

Jesus is alive. His work, therefore, did not end with his death on the cross.

He continues his work. There is a link between Good Friday and Easter. How clearly was this seen on the day of Pentecost. People who had cried on the day of Good Friday, "Let him be crucified," were pricked in their hearts and cried, "What shall we do?" They were baptized in the name of the selfsame Jesus they had crucified. Jesus proved to be alive, for Peter attributed everything that happened on the day of Pentecost to the Jesus who had risen. He said, "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he has shed forth this, which you now see and hear"—Acts 2, verse 33. The blessings Jesus had merited on Good Friday, he bestows after Easter. A dead Jesus would be incapable of doing that. However, Jesus lives, and is engaged on earth by the Holy Spirit! He works from heaven. By his Spirit and Word, he gathers unto himself a church from all languages and nations. He fulfills his own words, "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd"—John 10, verse 16.

He applies the salvation acquired by him to all his own. We express this truth, in theological terms, by saying that Jesus is not only a Mediator of procurement, but also of application. It means

that Jesus not only merited salvation, but he also makes his people partakers of this salvation, by the Holy Spirit. The salvation acquired by Jesus is not safely stored in a safe, or displayed only in a locked up display case. It does not uselessly remain stored in a warehouse. Jesus has arisen to distribute his gifts. He makes lost sinners partakers of his salvation, doing so from heaven, by the Holy Spirit and the preached Word.

He commanded his disciples, and in them, his church, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned”—Mark 16, verses 15 and 16. By the foolishness of the preaching, he saves all who believe. By the ministry of the Word, and the operation of the Holy Spirit, Christ gathers unto himself a people chosen unto eternal life.

Beloved listener, this is an essential component of Jesus’ offer as a Savior. How indispensable it is for each of us personally to become partakers of the salvation Jesus has merited! What benefit do we derive from merely knowing that Jesus has merited salvation, if we are not partakers of it? Although the dinner table may be filled with delicious food, only eating this food will satisfy our hunger. It is not enough to know that there is water. Only by drinking will our thirst be quenched. So it is with the salvation merited by Christ. We must appropriate the salvation Jesus has merited.

The question is, are we capable of making ourselves partakers of that salvation, or do we need therefore the risen Jesus, to apply that salvation to us by means of the Holy Spirit? Many there are who say, “God has done his part by sending his Son into the world to save sinners. Jesus has done his part as well, by giving his soul as a ransom for many. He has conquered death, the devil and his whole dominion. Now we must do our part. We have to do the rest ourselves.” According to this theology, the application of salvation is not God’s work, but our work. It all depends on the willingness of man to accept this salvation or not. The decision is in our hands. The adherents of this view assume, saying, “Man has a free will and can decide whether he will believe in Jesus or not, accept Jesus as his personal Savior, or reject him. It is all in man’s own hands and power.” Now it is indeed biblical to posit that the salvation merited by Jesus must be received by faith. Without believing in Christ, no one can be saved. Jesus commissioned to preach, “He that believes not shall be damned”—Mark 16, verse 16. It is also biblical to say, “God commands that we believe in the only Son of God, in order that we may have life.” The hearer of the Gospel remains responsible for the Gospel he or she hears. The fault of unbelief lies at our own door. Unbelief originates in our refusal to have Christ reign over us. Unbelief is sin, even the greatest sin, and the rejection of an offered pardon.

However, faith is a gift from God, and not a human achievement. It is a grace to believe. God is always the first. If you have any desire for God, and hunger and thirst after the righteousness of Christ, it is God himself who put it there. Believing in, and receiving of Jesus, is not a matter that lies within our power. Many proclaim that salvation is contingent on man’s willingness to believe. They speak as if God’s hands are tied, and that he can do nothing without our cooperation. The Bible teaches that, if the efficacy of Jesus’ suffering and death depended on the cooperation and goodwill of man, all his suffering and death would have been in vain. Jesus was compelled to say about man, “Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life”—John 5, verse 40. Fallen men do not want to believe in Christ. They desire, at best, a Jesus that will bring them to heaven, but not a Jesus to rule over them as King. If man had to take the first step in God’s direction, God would forever wait in vain.

How precarious an enterprise salvation would be, if the fruit of Jesus’ coming into the world depended on the willingness of man to accept this! Jesus would then have to wait and see how much fruit his sacrifice rendered on the cross would bear. This is, however, not how the Messiah is presented to us in Scripture. In the prophet Isaiah, we read the following of the suffering Messiah: “When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed”—Isaiah 53, verse 10. Jesus knew that his labor would bear fruit, and that this fruitfulness does not depend on the so-called free will of man. God would see to that. When many left him, Jesus comforted himself with the knowledge that “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me”—John 6, verse 37.

Jesus lives and works! He not only made atonement for sin on the cross, but he also rose from the dead to work repentance and faith in people’s hearts, through his Spirit and Word. Peter says, of the risen Jesus, “Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to



give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins”—Acts 5, verse 31. He makes sinners partakers of the salvation he has merited, demonstrating his resurrection power, by raising them to a new life, and breaking the bonds of sin and Satan. He works in them a heartfelt sorrow over sin, as well as faith in his name. He fulfills what he once said, “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me”—John 12, verse 32.