

# **Dr. Robert A. Peterson, Christ's Saving Work, Session 11, Saving Events, Part 3, Core Events, Jesus' Death and Resurrection**

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This is Dr. Robert Peterson in his teaching on Christ's Saving Works. This is session 11, Saving Events, Part 3, Core Events, Jesus's Death and Resurrection.

We are studying Christ's Saving Work.

We have examined the two essential prerequisites, namely our Lord's Incarnation and Sinless Life. We now move to the core events in His Saving Accomplishment, that is, His Death and Resurrection. Christ's Death, I begin with a quote from Jim Packer, who recently went to be with his Lord.

God's love to sinners was expressed by the gift of His Son to be their Savior. The measure of love is how much is given, it gives. And the measure of the love of God is the gift of His only Son to be made man, and to die for sins, and so to become the one mediator who can bring us to God.

No wonder Paul speaks of God's love as great and passing knowledge. Ephesians 2, 4, 3, 19. Were there ever such costly munificence? Paul argues that this supreme gift is itself the guarantee of every other.

Quote, he that spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Romans 8:32. The New Testament writers constantly point to the cross of Christ as the crowning proof of the reality of God's boundless love. J. I. Packer's words ring true.

When the Gospels record the event of Christ's death, they primarily cite two Old Testament passages, Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53. I just mentioned that in passing, and I move to thinking about the redemptive significance of Christ's saving death. I like to anticipate six pictures of Christ's saving accomplishment, six pictures of Christ's saving accomplishment, which we'll deal with tomorrow, Lord willing.

One more picture. I'll just introduce the pictures now and give one passage for each of the pictures. Oh, I'm sorry.

Huh, I gave you that slide. And there we go. We'll go through these in much more detail, but I thought it was good now, thinking about our Lord's atonement, to introduce those pictures.

Christ is our legal substitute. We were condemned by the law before a righteous God. Christ on the cross suffers the penalty of the law in our place that we might be justified.

Isaiah 53:11, Romans 3:25-26, Galatians 3:13, Colossians 2:14, 1 Peter 3:18, 1 John 2:2 and 4:10. As a matter of fact, I won't open up any of the passages yet. We will do that in the future. I'll just introduce the themes and cite the passages.

Christ is our victor. We were opposed by Satan and his demons, foes far more powerful than we. Christ becomes one of us to defeat these enemies in his death and resurrection.

Isaiah 52:13, 53:12, John 12:31, Colossians 2:15, Hebrews 2:14 and 15. Christ is our redeemer. We were opposed by Satan and his demons.

Sorry, I already did that one. Christ is our redeemer. We were enslaved to sin, but Christ, by paying the ransom price in his death, delivers us from bondage unto the liberty, from bondage to sin, and delivers us to the liberty of the sons and daughters of God.

Mark 10:45, Luke 9:31, Acts 20:28, Ephesians 1:7. Christ is our reconciler. We were alienated from God due to our sins. Christ dies to make peace between God and us and to bring us back into fellowship with God.

Romans 5:10. Christ is our second Adam. In the fall of our first father Adam, we lost honor and dominion and became subject to death and condemnation. In the incarnation, the Son of God becomes the second man, the last Adam, who by his obedience unto death and his resurrection restores the creational benefits and justifies us.

Romans 5:18.19, Hebrews 2:9. Christ is our sacrifice. We were defiled by sin and unable to approach God. Christ, our great high priest, offers himself as a unique sacrifice to God, cleansing us of sin and enabling us to come into God's presence with reverence and boldness.

Isaiah 52:15, 53:10, John 1:29, John 1:36, John 17:19, Ephesians 5:2. The sacrificial theme is all over the place. Hebrews 1:3, 2:17, and many more in chapters 9 and 10 as well. 1 Peter 1:2, 1 Peter 1:18-19, 1 Peter 2:24, 1 John 1:7, Revelation 1:5, 5:6, 7:12, 12:11, 13:8. Six major pictures of Christ's saving accomplishment.

There are more than six, but there are six major ones. And lest we get confused, I would like to say the six pictures really say the same thing. The six say we were lost in sin, and Christ saved us.

They don't say anything different than that, but they say that. As a matter of fact, the Bible even says we were lost in sin, and Christ saved us sometimes. But it also paints these pictures to describe the same reality.

People are lost in sin, and God saves them through Christ's death and resurrection. My question is, why is there such a multiplicity of pictures? Why not just say every time Jesus saved these sinners by dying in their place and rising again? Again, sometimes scripture says that, but often it paints these pictures. The verses that I cited show the many occurrences of these various themes. Why the multiplicity of pictures of Christ's saving work? A few answers.

Number one, because of the multiplicity of the pictures of sin, we were condemned and needed a legal substitute. We were oppressed by spiritual forces far greater than us and needed a champion. We were bound in sin, slaves to sin, and needed a redeemer.

We were alienated from God due to our sins, and we needed a peacemaker, a reconciler. We were subject to death and condemnation because of Adam's sin. We needed the second Adam to restore what the first Adam lost.

We were defiled before a holy God. To use the language of leprosy, we were unclean. And Christ, our great high priest, and sacrifice, offered himself up to God to cleanse us, to purify us.

So, the multiplicity of pictures of the atonement corresponds to the multiplicity of the pictures of sin. That is, God presents sin in technicolor, not just black and white, and he presents the atonement in the same technicolor as well. Secondly, the multiplicity of pictures of Christ's saving work underscores the grandeur of that saving work.

It deserves to be viewed from different perspectives that God might get a small portion of the praise, glory, and devotion that he deserves from his people. Also, the fact that there are multiple pictures of the cross and empty tomb is God's provision to minister to those in need because sometimes one of those pictures is more helpful to somebody, either lost as an unsaved person or as a struggling Christian who needs God's help. I'll give an example.

I used to give an assignment when I was a seminary professor. Pick one of Jesus' events or one of his pictures of his saving work and tell how it would help you in your current ministerial situation in a previous one or, Lord willing, in a future one. I had a student ministering in inner city St. Louis with kids from diverse backgrounds, and he chose Jesus' sinless life and the picture of Christ as the second Adam.

He said all these kids in my Sunday school class or in his youth group, whatever it was, all believed Jesus was God, and they were afraid of him. They could not relate to him. He said, but when we studied the fact that Jesus was tempted and suffered during temptation but never yielded to the temptation, they gained a new respect for Jesus, and they felt closer to him, able to relate to him, because they said he can relate to us.

He really did become one of us. And he was able to present the gospel to them in that second Adam new creation imagery. Even as Jesus died and arose, they needed to trust in him as the one who died and arose, and they knew him as their Lord and Savior.

He saw real fruitfulness. Ironically, he didn't expect this at all. He didn't have to argue for the deity of Christ.

They believed Jesus was God, and because of that, they felt far away from him. He was unapproachable, but they felt he was near to them as they thought about his humanity and his being tempted. With his result in sinlessness, it pointed them to his cross as the unique source of salvation, not only of the world but of their own salvation, as these young boys turned to Christ, the second and last Adam and Redeemer of the world.

We will deal much more with the work of Christ because that is exactly the death of Christ as the epitome of his saving work, never to be separated from the empty tomb when we talk about the pictures of how he saved us. So, I won't dwell more now on the death of Christ, but we'll consider it in the context of those six pictures. The picture of law, victory, redemption, reconciliation, second Adam, and the priestly sacrificial picture as well.

So, we move to Christ's resurrection, with which we are not as familiar in terms of answering the question, how does this aspect of his work save us? Howard Marshall, the famous British New Testament scholar, wrote these words. It is a remarkable fact that there are many monographs on the theology of the death of Christ, but very few by comparison on the theology of his resurrection. Within the latter group of writings, attention has mostly been devoted to the historicity of the resurrection of Christ and to its significance in relation to the future resurrection of believers.

Interest also centers on the role of the resurrection in relation to the present new life of believers, but how it is a saving event is neglected. Indeed, isn't a saving event. His words ring true.

I could count over 50 books in my own personal library dealing with the atonement that is the cross of Christ, and very few, perhaps books I could count on one hand,

that deal with the saving significance of his resurrection. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ saves. The very heart of his saving work is his death and resurrection.

When Paul summarizes the gospel in 1 Corinthians 15, he includes both, quote, for I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the that he was buried and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures. 1 Corinthians 15, 3 and 4. Notice that both Christ's death and resurrection are in accordance with the scriptures and that the gospel includes both. Jesus' resurrection saves.

This is not common ground, so it may be more difficult for you to understand. Hence, I will take more time explaining the passages than I would need to explain how his death saved. Overview. Christ's resurrection brings justification and forgiveness.

You're probably tired of hearing me say it, but I'm going to keep saying it. Not apart from his cross, but along with his cross, Christ's resurrection brings justification and forgiveness. Number two, at least in one passage, it establishes peace with God.

It is the ground or basis of reconciliation, of course, with his death. Most importantly, Christ's resurrection, if you count noses, if you count passages, the predominant truth in answer to the question, how does Jesus' resurrection save? The answer is the crucified and now risen one saves by inaugurating the new creation of God. Both regeneration now as a result of his resurrection and our future resurrection for eternal life on the new earth.

Resurrection and transformation into resurrection bodies is a result of Jesus' resurrection. This is how his resurrection saves us. It brings justification and forgiveness and reconciliation, and it inaugurates the new creation.

Jesus' resurrection brings justification and forgiveness. When Paul gives the basis for God's declaring sinners righteous in Romans, he points primarily to the cross of Christ. We saw that in Romans 3:25-26, where God put forward Christ Jesus as a propitiation by his blood.

In Romans 5:18-19, the basis of justification is Christ's obedience unto death, his one act of righteousness on the cross. Paul focuses on the cross when he speaks of justification but does not omit Jesus' resurrection. In one passage in Romans, the apostle brings together the cross and the empty tomb.

Righteousness, quote, will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification. Romans 4:23 through 25. Here, dealing with our trespasses and our justification are not two separate blessings but one way of talking about the same thing.

Because justification can be expressed as the positive imputation of righteousness to the believing sinner, Romans 4:3 through 5, among other passages. It can also be expressed as the non-imputation of sin to the believing sinner, Romans 4:6 through 7. So when Paul says Jesus was delivered up for our trespasses, he means that his atoning death was necessary for our justification. When he says that Jesus was raised for our justification, he means that Jesus' triumphant resurrection was necessary for our justification.

Both Jesus' death and resurrection are necessary for sinners to be justified before a holy God. Jesus' death is the basis of our justification in that he, our substitute, died in our place paying the penalty we could never pay. He also serves as our resurrected Lord and representative.

He's not our substitute in his resurrection. He's not raised in place of us, but he represents us as our Lord. He's the one who lives on our behalf.

This is true in at least two senses. I might say it with candor: it's much easier to explain how Jesus' death saves us in justification than how his resurrection does. But Paul says, Romans 4, 25, and we need to try to work with it and try to understand it.

Two senses. First, Christ's resurrection testifies to the efficacy of his death, a truth that we already knew, as I said before. As C. E. B. Cranfield, the great Romans commentator, explains, "for what was necessitated by our sin was, in the first place, Christ's atoning death.

And yet, had his death not been followed by his resurrection, it would not have been God's mighty deed for our justification. Second, Jesus' resurrection saves us as he who died for us is freed from death by God. His saving death and saving resurrection are the reasons that God will free us from death too.

James Dunn clarifies in his commentary on Romans, "the link between justification and Jesus' resurrection underscores its point that the justifying grace of God is all of a peace with his creative, life-giving power. As we will see, his resurrection is the basis and guarantee of our resurrection to eternal life on the last day. Jesus' resurrection brings justification."

It also brings the forgiveness of sins. I'm going to go right to 1 Corinthians 15 again. And if Christ has not been raised, 1 Corinthians 15, 17, your faith is futile, and you are still in your sins.

1 Corinthians 15:17. Why would that be the case? Anthony Thistleton answers, "without the resurrection of Christ, Christ's death alone has no atoning, redemptive, or liberating effect in relation to human sin."

It is because Jesus, our divine human representative, not only died in our place, but also lives as victor over sin in the grave, that he saves to the end all who come to God through him. Jesus made a priestly sacrifice in heaven. A related truth is taught in Hebrews 7:23, 25.

Unlike the Old Testament priests who died and were succeeded by their descendants, Christ, quote, holds his priesthood permanently, Hebrews 7:24. Why? Quote, because he continues forever, close quote, as the risen one. Consequently, quote, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

Close quote, Hebrews 7:25. When Paul says, when the writer to the Hebrews says, save to the uttermost, it means for all time and in any other way you could conceive of it. His death is totally sufficient, temporally and in any other way you could think of it.

The intercession spoken of here is not Christ's heavenly ministry of praying for the saints. That is taught in Romans 8:34. But the intercession of Hebrews 7:25 does not exclude Christ's prayer for the saints, but its focus lies elsewhere on his priestly ministry of making atonement for sins by shedding his blood.

The writer says he is able to save the uttermost those who draw near to God through him since he always lives to make intercession for them, Hebrews 7:23. He means Jesus saves his people forever because he continually presents his priestly sacrifice in God's presence in heaven. The atonement that he made once and for all on Calvary's cross avails forever because, as a resurrected one, he holds a permanent priesthood by the power of an indestructible life.

That's a quote and he continues forever, Hebrews 7:16 and 24. F.F. Bruce underscores this truth quote, it is true that Christ did die and that his death was the essential priestly offering for man's sins, but his death was not the termination of his priesthood or the moment of his transition from him to someone else, as it was for the Levitical priests, for he rose from the grave, victor over death, and now continues as our soul and ever-living high priest. Jesus is our high priest who saves by his death and resurrection.

Christ's resurrection, in addition, establishes peace with God. In addition to bringing justification and forgiveness, Jesus' death and resurrection, which we're emphasizing now, also brings peace with God. They also bring peace with God or reconciliation.

Paul accents this saving aspect of Christ's work in Romans 5:9, and 10. Verse 10 tells us, if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. Here, Paul

attributes reconciliation to Christ's death, and he attributes final salvation to his resurrection life.

We are reconciled and finally saved by both Christ's death and his resurrection. It is not obvious, however, how Christ's resurrection saves. Tom Schreiner helps us, and I quote from his Romans commentary, how does the life of Christ save from eschatological wrath? It is instructive to recall the parallels between Romans 5:1 to 11 and 8:18 to 39 at this point.

More specifically, 8:33 and 34 pose two arguments as to why believers can be assured that they will not be condemned on the day of judgment. The first reason is that God has accomplished justification, and he will not accuse those whom he has vindicated. Second, believers are assured they will escape condemnation since, for their sake, Christ died, was raised to life and the dead, and intercedes.

So, too, in 5:10, our present passage, the life of Christ, probably designates both his resurrection and his intercessory work for believers. I'm sure it designates at least the former, his resurrection, maybe the latter two. The reference to Christ's death and resurrection, Schreiner says, also recalls 4.25, where both the death and resurrection of Christ are constitutive elements of the believer's justification.

Christ's death and resurrection are inseparable in effecting salvation. Schreiner is correct. We must not separate what God has put together, and he has put together Christ's death and resurrection inseparably.

Sometimes scripture mentions both Jesus' death and resurrection. This is the case in Romans 5:10, which ascribes reconciliation both to his death and ultimate salvation to, quote, quote, his life, close quote. How exactly does his resurrection save us in the end? The answer involves rehearsing what we have already discussed.

His resurrection assures justification and forgiveness and guarantees Christ's permanent priesthood. The answer also anticipates the next section, which highlights the chief significance of Christ's resurrection in salvation, which is this. He, in his resurrection, inaugurates the new creation and all that comes with it now and in the future.

This next section of notes, Christ's resurrection, inaugurates a new creation, which is taken from my book, *Christ's Saving Work, Salvation Through the Son, Saving Work of Christ*. My partner in crime, I call him, my writing partner, Christopher Morgan, we have lost track of the books we have done together over the years. Thank the Lord in serving the Lord in a few series and in other projects.

I'll just leave it at that. But he is a very bright fellow. Don't tell him I said this, but he's brighter than I am.



With a photographic memory, which my current writing partner, Van Lees, also has. How is the guy? Lord, put me with these guys. I don't know.

Anyway, they're good brothers, and we have good fellowship. But Morgan is a smart cookie. And once he told me this material was so fresh to him that in preparation for Easter sermons, he read this material from which I'm going to quote you major thrust, the major thrust, three times to try to get into it, to get it into his head, because it was so new.

Although we affirm Jesus' resurrection as in apologetics, we just oppose liberalism's denial of his resurrection. Although we correctly say it shows and demonstrates the efficacy of Christ's cross, Paul also presents Peter as well. Jesus' resurrection as a saving event in its own right, inseparable from his cross, of course.

One of my dicta, one of my sayings, after teaching last things for many years, is that every major aspect of last things, the study of which is called eschatology, every major aspect of eschatology is both already and not yet. That means every major aspect of last things, salvation, judgment, eternal life, the antichrist, anything you can think of, the resurrection is both realized in part now and fulfilled in a greater sense on the last day, following the return of Christ. And so it is with the new creation.

There will only be new heavens and new earth in the fullest sense, in the not yet, in the return of Christ, and the concomitant events that go with it. But the new creation was begun in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, and believers experienced its results now in regeneration. Like every other major aspect of last things, the new creation is already present, presently fulfilled, and even experienced by believers, and not yet.

That is still to be fulfilled in its fullest sense. John, Peter, and Paul sounds like a music group or an old one; John, Paul, and Peter, Peter, Paul, and Mary all teach, not Mary, all teach that Jesus' resurrection brings new life in regeneration to sinners now. Ah, excuse me.

One should not laugh at one's own attempt at bad humor. John, Paul, and Peter all teach that Jesus' resurrection brings new life in regeneration to sinners now. In John 11:25, 26, Jesus makes his famous, I am saying, he tells Martha, his haunting words to dead Lazarus' sister Martha, quote, I am the resurrection and the life.

Whoever believes in me, though he dies, yet shall he live. And everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. These verses are difficult to explain.

Surely, they present Jesus as the life-giver, a major theme of the fourth gospel. The crucified and risen savior bestows eternal life as a gift to his people and to everyone who believes in him. I've been most helped by C.H. Dodd and his commentary on the fourth gospel in regard to the interpretation of this verse.

I'm the resurrection, Jesus said. Whoever believes in me, though he dies, yet shall he live. Dodd said we should take the two parts of this verse and take the first part of 25 and put it with the first part of 26 and do the same for the second part.

It is easier to read than explain. I'm the resurrection, whoever believes in me, though he dies, yet shall he live. Jesus will raise believers in him who experience physical death.

At his voice, they'll come out of their graves, quote, to the resurrection of life, John 5, 28, 29. He is the life-giver who will give resurrection life to his people on the last day. That's the meaning of these words.

I am the resurrection, whoever believes in me, though he dies, yet shall he live. Following a similar pattern, I am the life. Taking the second part of each of John 11, 25, 26, and putting them together, I am the life.

Everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die, close quote. Persons who trust Jesus in life will not experience the second death, hell. That is because Jesus, the life-giver, gives them eternal life now as a gift.

As he said in John 10, I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish. No one shall snatch them out of my hand. My father who has given them to me is greater than all and no one is able to snatch them out of the father's hand.

I and the father are one in our ability to keep the sheep safe, John 10:28 to 30. With the words Lazarus come out, Jesus, the resurrection and the life, raises his friend from the tomb as proof that he is now the giver of eternal life and has as a token of his power to raise the dead to everlasting life, resuscitated his friend Lazarus. D. A. Carson captured these truths, quote, just as Jesus not only gives bread from heaven but is himself the bread of life, John 6:27 and 35, so also he not only raises the dead on the last day, 5:21, 5:25 and following, but is himself the resurrection and the life.

There is neither resurrection nor eternal life outside of him, according to D. A. Carson's wonderful commentary on the gospel of John, which is my own favorite theology of the fourth gospel. Ephesians 2:4 through 7, against a background of terrible human rebellion and sin, I know no better place to show the world, the flesh, and the devil as our enemies than Ephesians 2:1 to 3, but against that background Paul says, but God being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive

together with Christ. Jesus gives us spiritual life now by spiritually uniting us to his son in his resurrection.

Union with Christ is the most comprehensive way of talking about the application of salvation. God spiritually joins us to his son so that all of his saving benefits become ours. The appearance of the new heavens and the new earth awaits Christ's second coming.

It is not yet, and it awaits the resurrection of the dead, which is not yet, but because Jesus died and rose again, God has already regenerated sinners. He gives them now the eternal life characteristic of the age to come. So, believers are anomalies.

We have, according to Romans 8, eternal life in mortal bodies, eternal life in dying bodies. That's not the way it's supposed to be, but it sure beats not having eternal life in mortal bodies. In the resurrection of the dead, we'll have eternal life in immortal bodies.

When the wonderful transformation, the key word of the resurrection takes place. On the day Jesus comes again, because of Jesus' resurrection, God will transform our lowly bodies, Philippians 3:20 and 21, to be like the resurrection body of the son of God in glory, power, and immortality. That Philippians verse actually attributes that work to Jesus himself, who has the power to subdue all things to himself.

1 Peter 1:3, in the midst of praise, Peter assigns the roles in regeneration to the father and the son. Elsewhere, scripture ascribes the word and assigns the role of regeneration to the spirit. All three play a part.

First, the Father, blessed be, Peter writes, the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope. The Father in mercy plans and causes our regeneration because of his will and his mercy that we are born again. The Father plans for us to be regenerated, quote, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 1 Peter 1:3. It is Jesus' resurrection that unleashes divine power that causes our regeneration to new life.

His resurrected life is the source of the eternal life that the spirit applies to us, although Peter doesn't mention the spirit right there. The spirit applies it. The father plans regeneration.

The son's resurrection is, the son is the dynamo. His resurrection is the power of the new life. And the spirit actually applies that life to us.

He quickens us. He causes us to come alive to God, fulfilling God's plan, and we become alive to God as the spirit quickens us with the resurrection life of Jesus. Peter Davids, an expert on the general epistles, speaks on 1 Peter 1:3. He speaks precious

truth, a quote, because Jesus really shatters the gates of death and now exists as our living Lord.

Those who have committed themselves to him share in his new life and can expect to participate fully in it in the future. Jesus, Paul, and Peter, therefore, each paint to Christ, each point they might paint, but they also point to Christ's resurrection from the dead as the source of believers' present possession of eternal life. Because Jesus loved us, gave himself for us, and conquered death by rising from the dead, we are regenerated now.

That is, there's a sense that the new creation is already presently realized by the grace of God through faith in the life of his people. This is anticipation of the not yet of the new creation, that is, of the future resurrection unto final salvation, which also is the result of Jesus' resurrection. We will contemplate the fact that Jesus caused our resurrection after in our next lecture.

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