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# This I Believe

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A JOURNEY THROUGH THE APOSTLE'S CREED

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**Week 4:** I Believe that Jesus suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, buried, and rose again

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# Day One

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The crucifixion was the ultimate display of how we, as the human race, hate God's authority in our lives. Our sinful hearts rejected Christ, in spite of all His displays of love, because we hated His claim of lordship. If He's the rightful King over our lives, we must confess and repent of our rebellion and surrender our lives in submission to His rule. But instead, we demanded that Jesus be executed.

## **READ MATTHEW 27**

**How does the crucifixion highlight the ugliness of sin? What does the crucifixion tell you about what God thinks of your sin?**

**In what ways are you prone to demand what you want, resisting the idea that Jesus is Lord of everything?**

God wasn't surprised by the world's hatred and rejection of Jesus. And Jesus didn't suffer and die in a way that was out of His control. Before the crucifixion Jesus told His disciples:

*No one takes [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again.*

*John 10:18*

The Roman Empire asserted control through brutal practices like crucifixion, a form of execution reserved for people who posed a threat to Rome. Often the condemned were crucified along busy roads as reminders that Rome had power over life and death. But the apostle Paul said the rulers and authorities who crucified Him were put to shame (see Col. 2:13-15). Jesus' apparent defeat was a victory, and He triumphed over those who were trying to conquer Him. His willingness to suffer and die, before demonstrating authority over life and death in His resurrection, was the ultimate act of love for all people who put their faith in Jesus.

Therefore, because the Father accepted Jesus' payment for our sin, he now sees us as forgiven and justified.

## **READ ROMANS 3:10-26**

**How does Paul describe us apart from Christ in Romans 3:10-18?  
Why is this important to remember?**

**How do these verses address both judgment and grace?**

**READ ROMANS 5:6-11**

**List all the descriptions used for people apart from the work of  
Jesus.**

**In light of the Scriptures you've read today, emphasizing the sin  
and hopelessness of life apart from Christ, how can you rejoice?  
What does the death of Jesus make possible?**

## **Prayer**

Jesus, thank You for dying for my sins. In Your death You've reconciled me to the Father. My life is changed forever because of Your love for me. I want to be like You and live in this world in such a way that my commitment to You is evident in the way I love You and others. Please be gracious to me as I try to live to that end. Amen.

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# Day Two

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The original Apostle's Creed simply said that after Jesus was crucified, he died. But in A.D. 390, a Roman theologian name Rufinus added the phrase "He descended to hell," which became one of the most controversial phrase in church history. But what did Rufinus mean?

Rufinus didn't interpret the phrase to mean that Jesus went to a place of eternal judgment but rather that Jesus went down into the earth and was buried (the word that Rufinus used is *Hades* which simply means the "place of the dead"). Christ, in His humanity, fully experienced death on our behalf. He willingly put Himself forward to be judged in our place for our sins. Jesus descended into the grave, into the earth He created. By doing so, Jesus experienced death with us and for us. He also defeated death for us and was resurrected, as we will be someday if we know Christ as Savior and Lord.

## **READ MATTHEW 12:38-40**

**What did Jesus say would be the great sign or miracle proving that He was the only Son of God?**

**Why does it matter that Jesus fully experienced death and the grave for us and because of us?**

**How would your understanding of the gospel change if Jesus hadn't personally taken on our punishment by going to the place of death for us?**

## **READ 1 CORINTHIANS 15:12-19**

**What did Paul say about the relationship between the resurrection of Jesus and the resurrection of all people? Can you believe in one but not the other? Why or why not?**

**If there were no forgiveness of sin and eternal life, but believing in Jesus still made us better moral people, what did Paul conclude about such a faith (see v. 19)? What did he mean?**

### **READ 1 CORINTHIANS 15:20-23**

The Bible often uses agricultural terms such as *firstfruits*, a word that describes the part of the harvest that's offered in thanks to God for His provision. When wheat begins to ripen in a field, it signals that soon the whole harvest will be ready.

**What did Paul mean when He said Jesus is the firstfruits of the resurrection (see v. 20)?**

**What is Paul's conclusion, based on the fact that Jesus was resurrected?**

## **Prayer**

Father, thank You for sending Jesus to die for my sins, to descend into the grave where I deserve to be because of my sin. Thank You for raising Him from the dead, thereby proving that He's Your eternal Son; that my sins have been paid for; and that He's the righteous Messiah, sent to show me the way to eternal life. Holy Spirit, remind my heart of these truths and remind me that one day, like my Savior, Jesus Christ, I'll be bodily raised as well. I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

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# Day Three

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The resurrection truly makes the Christian faith unique. Throughout history many people have died for their beliefs-willingly and even eagerly giving their lives for their faith, refusing to compromise their convictions because they were certain the reward for faithfulness was greater than any suffering they endured. The difference between Jesus and any guru, prophet, teacher, leader, or hero is that He was the only Son of God and didn't stay dead. Jesus not only suffered and died but also rose from His burial place, left the tomb empty, and appeared before hundreds of eyewitnesses.

The resurrection of Jesus is not only miraculous but also evidence that He alone has authority over life and death and the ability to forgive sin. Because Christ isn't dead, we can be confident that all our sins have been forgiven.

**How do these truths strengthen your faith and make Christianity unique?**

## **READ 1 CORINTHIANS 15:12-19**

**Why did Paul record different witnesses to the resurrection at different times? Why is it significant that over five hundred people saw Jesus at the same time?**

Paul said some of the witnesses had fallen asleep-this was a common phrase that indicated that they had died but that death was not the end for them.

## **READ ISAIAH 26:19 & DANIEL 12:2.**

**What do these verses say about physical death? About eternity?**

One of the great but overlooked promises of the Christian faith is the fact that eternal life isn't just a spiritual reality; it's a physical reality. Believers in Christ can look forward to their resurrections and renewed bodies.

**Jesus promises us a resurrection like His: renewed, eternal bodies free from weakness, suffering, and death. What areas of your life are you most looking forward to Christ bringing new life?**

When we affirm the words of the Apostles' Creed, we embrace the difficult reality of death and the promise of resurrection. In the words "He descended into hell, the third day He rose again from the dead" we gain an eternal perspective. Let's reflect on our four points of perspective as we pray.

## Prayer

### **1. SYMMETRY**

Pray that God will help you live in the freedom of knowing that your eternal salvation has been secured through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

### **2. CLARITY**

Thank God that Jesus laid down His life for you, fully experiencing life, death, and becoming your sin so that you could be made new in His righteousness.

### **3. COMMUNITY**

Ask God for opportunities to encourage others in their faith and to invite people to join the family of God through faith in His only Son-our Savior and Lord.

### **4. COUNSEL**

Continually remind yourself of the gospel. Confess any and all sin and repent, putting off the old self and putting on the new self by the grace of Jesus Christ.

*"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek."*

*Romans 1:16*

