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Jeffrey Gibbs

*Concordia Seminary, St. Louis*, gibbsj@csl.edu

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## Christ is Risen, Indeed Good News for Him, and For Us

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Jeffrey A. Gibbs

### Introduction

In 1999, I offered a symposium address, “Regaining Biblical Hope: Restoring the Prominence of the Parousia.”<sup>1</sup> I suggested that the church needs to recover from an over-emphasis on the minor biblical teaching about the interim state of the soul’s rest between death and judgment day. “Dying and going to heaven” should not be the major theme in our teaching and preaching about the future. Rather, the return of Jesus and the final victory of God should have pride of place in what we say and how we live in these days of longing.

Working backward from the future, so to speak, I would now suggest that another imbalance exists, and it has to do with the relationship of Good Friday and Easter. I have been intentionally listening for some time how Lutherans instinctively say the gospel. What I have heard, in many and various ways, is this: Jesus died for you. The rite of absolution in Divine Service, Setting One of *Lutheran Service Book* is a clear example: “Almighty God in His mercy has given His Son to die for you and for His sake forgives you all your sins.”<sup>2</sup> In formal and informal contexts, Good Friday seems to be the gospel. There is (apparently) no need to speak of Easter for Easter is not spoken of.

To be sure, Good Friday is the gospel.<sup>3</sup> It is striking, however, that since listening in this way I have never heard the gospel summarized like this: “God raised Jesus from the dead.” Of course, there is the Apostle Paul: “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Rom 10:9). Then there are the holy angels: “Why do you seek the Living One among the dead. He is not here; he was raised” (Lk 24:5–6).

Now, it is a wonderful thing that The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, along with others, has steadfastly defended the fact of the bodily resurrection of Jesus.<sup>4</sup> I am suggesting, however, that there is a need to reclaim the significance of Easter. There are promises here for our faith to claim, promises related to the lordship of Christ, the reign of God, the new creation, and the Holy Spirit.

Good Friday and Easter (along with Ascension and Pentecost) go together, one event, in a sense. Different New Testament texts invite us to emphasize now one

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*Jeffrey A. Gibbs is a professor of exegetical theology at Concordia Seminary, Saint Louis and teaches New Testament. This article is adapted from an address at the Concordia Seminary Annual Theological Symposium, September, 2013.*



aspect of that multifaceted reality, now another. Even when the focus is, for instance, on the death of Jesus, there is more than one thing to say about it: propitiation, ransom, redemption, casting out of Satan, a pattern for our discipleship, and so on. All are true. In this essay, however, my focus will be quite intentionally on the Easter side of things.

I offer this essay as a somewhat basic, beginning sort of study. We will begin with a foundational assumption that must be firmly established if our theology of the good news of Easter is going to regain its rightful place.

### **Foundational Assumption: Death is Bad**

At its most basic, fundamental level, Easter is the undoing of death, death's annihilation if you will. If, in the plan of God, something is to be annihilated, then we have to be clear about what that thing is. Only then will we be clear on the basic, fundamental meaning of the death . . . and reversal of the death . . . of Jesus.

Speaking theologically, death is an enemy, the last enemy of God and of his Christ that will be finally overcome.<sup>5</sup> Paul's declaration is well known: "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. . . . Then comes the end, when he delivers the reigning to God the Father after destroying *every* rule and *every* authority and power. For he must reign until he has put *all* his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed . . . is death." (1 Cor 15:22, 24–26; emphasis added). Death is the result of sin, the sin of the first Adam (Gn 3; Rom 5; 1 Cor 15). In terms of the grand story of God's ways with his creation, death is a profound disfigurement, a ripping apart of human creaturely existence. God put humanity into this world, and this is our home. Even though it is deeply twisted and marred by sin, this is still our home. Death smashes our relationship with our home—and with one another. Were death not an evil, a large number of the psalms would make no sense: "Turn, Lord, deliver my life; save me for the sake of your steadfast love. For in death there is no remembrance of you; in Sheol, who will give you praise?" (Ps 6:4–5). The psalmists are constantly pleading with God to save them from death.

The way that we think and speak about death will strongly affect how we think and speak about Easter, and (of course) the last day.<sup>6</sup> To be sure, death is an evil whose power is limited. It cannot separate us from God's love in Christ, and there are aspects of this present struggling existence that come to an end when we die—temptation, fear, uncertainty, one would think.

Still we die; so, death is not the doorway into eternal life. It is the breaking of our humanity; a dead Christian is at rest, but broken. Death is not so much the *end* of suffering as it is the *cause* of the suffering and then the final blow against us. There is, to be sure, the positive statement of Paul in Philippians 1:21–23 (see also Lk 23:43), and that is fine. Lest Paul's words about "departing and being with Christ, which is far better" be over-interpreted, however, I draw attention to the following statements in the same letter:

And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. (Phil 1:6)

So that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. (Phil 1:10–11)

So that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil 2:10–11)

Holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. (Phil 2:16)

These explicit statements of Paul reveal when God’s work will be complete in believers, and when all glory will again redound to the Father through the Son. It will happen on the day of Christ, on the last day.<sup>7</sup> This is the entire thrust of most of Philippians 3, citing here only 3:10–11 (emphasis added): “that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the *resurrection from the dead*.” In light of this emphasis on the last day precisely in Philippians, Philippians 1:21–23 must not be made far better than it actually is.

Accordingly, the truth that there is an interim state of rest for believers (“dying and going to heaven”) does not change the fact that death is death. If you think that the soul is unaffected by death, consider the truth that the “soul” is supposed to be united with the “body”—at least, that is what God designed. Death is an enemy of God and his Christ and his creation, and one day (along with all other enemies), death will be fully placed under the feet of Christ. But that day is not yet.

When a human being, a man or a woman or a child dies, that event of dying is evidence of sin and it testifies to the fact that God’s great story is not yet accomplished. It is utterly scriptural to insist that while you are dead, you are not fully the creation that God intended from the beginning. You are dead.

## The Death of Jesus

I beg my readers’ indulgence if I begin by speaking somewhat provocatively; I have no desire to be avant-garde, and I will attempt to explain what I mean and do not mean.

In and of itself, and by itself, the death of Jesus is not good news. To anticipate what will follow, it is not enough to assert that Jesus’s resurrection from death is the declaration or the public acknowledgement that God has accepted the sacrifice of his son as sufficient payment for sin. Rather, the biblical testimony forces us to say that *only Easter makes it possible for the death of Jesus to be not bad news, but good news*. This means that we should be careful about speaking of Good Friday as the “completion” of Christ’s saving work, the “it is finished” (τετέλεσται) of John 19:30 notwithstanding. Jesus’s words there cannot mean there is nothing left to do, for if Good Friday is the completion, then why bother with John 20?<sup>8</sup> Only Easter makes Good Friday good. Even in John’s gospel where the glory and the exaltation of Jesus are his crucifixion, still he is

the resurrection and the life, and the great sign of Lazarus's revival from death in John 11 points forward to Jesus's own resurrection in chapter 20. Even in chapter 10, the Good Shepherd does not just lay down his life for the sheep; he lays down his life for the express purpose (ἵνα) of taking up his life again (Jn 10:17).<sup>9</sup>

The death of Jesus culminates his obedience to the Father; he humbled himself unto the death of the cross, as Philippians 2:8 declares. When Jesus died, just as when you or I die, death had mastery over him. Listen to Romans 6:9: "We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has mastery over him (θανατὸς αὐτοῦ οὐκέτι κυριεύει)." The verb in the second clause is κυριεύειν, glossed in BDAG with "to exercise authority or have control, *rule . . . be master of, dominate.*"<sup>10</sup> Romans 6:9 is a strong statement with a strong implication.<sup>11</sup> When Jesus died, when he was dead, death had mastery or dominion over him.

Peter also says as much in his Pentecost sermon in Acts 2. He quotes Psalm 16, "For you will not abandon my life (τὴν ψυχὴν μου) to Hades, nor let your Holy One see corruption (διαφθορά)." Peter's hermeneutical steps are clear, and right on the surface of the text. First, Psalm 16 is a psalm of David (Acts 2:30). Second, David is dead and buried, with his tomb among them to that very day. David, then, whose flesh has definitely seen corruption, cannot have been talking about himself (Acts 2:29–30). Third, this means that Psalm 16 is about the Messiah (Acts 2:31). Had the Messiah stayed dead, he would have seen corruption, which means he would not be the Messiah. (Paul, by the way, uses Psalm 16:10 in the same way in his sermon in Antioch of Pisidia, Acts 13:35, an important text to which I will return to below.) Since Jesus is the Messiah, however, it was not possible for him to experience or "see" that corruption, as David has prophesied. In sum, had Jesus remained dead, he would have seen corruption.

On a larger scale, think back to the narrative that "sets up" Peter's sermon in Acts 2, that is, the passion narrative in Luke. Recall how the Third Evangelist depicts the death of Jesus. One of the primary emphases in Luke's narrative of Jesus's passion is the following: in agreement with the divine will and plan, the perfectly innocent Son of God allows hatred and injustice to come against him and to kill him. Two themes work together here. On the one hand, human (and satanic) evil is at work in the events that Luke narrates. Luke tells us that Satan entered Judas, who then went to arrange for Jesus's betrayal and arrest (Lk 22:3). Jesus himself tells the crowd that comes to arrest him in the garden why they are really there: "When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness" (Lk 22:53).<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, the material in Luke 23 emphasizes, repeatedly, the innocence of Jesus in the face of this evil.<sup>13</sup> The centurion climactically declares Jesus's innocence: "Surely this man was innocent (δίκαιος)" (Lk 23:47).

Jesus is innocent, and has done nothing deserving of death. Against him has come great injustice and hatred that desire nothing less than his death. It is utterly consistent with Luke's themes, then, that Jesus's final word from the cross, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit," hangs out into space, and the reader must wait to see the Father's response. What will the Father do in response to such evil, in response to his

Son's prayer? The innocent one suffers and dies at the hands of sinners, and he entrusts himself perfectly to God his Father to await . . . what?

The death of Jesus is the mystery of the reign of God, that God's Son and Israel's true King would die. Here is the humiliation of Christ, deeper than I had realized, and perhaps more deep than one could fathom or express. A quote from Richard Gaffin's important study, *The Centrality of the Resurrection: A Study in Paul's Soteriology*, captures an important truth, couched in Pauline terms:

[Christ's] death is the wages of the sin he became (cf. Rom 6:23), and the state of death he endured for a time is the nadir of his exposure to the wrath of the Father. Nothing resident in Jesus' death, as death, relaxes its severity or alleviates its grimness.<sup>14</sup>

If Christ is not risen, you are still in your sins. I do not exactly know how that works, but I believe that it is true. As God's economy of salvation works out in the world, the death of Jesus cannot be the last word. In itself, it is not good news, not yet. For death has mastery over him.

### **What does the Resurrection Mean for Jesus?**

Let me begin by saying that in a number of NT texts, the sequential historical events of the resurrection of Jesus, the ascension of Jesus, his session at the Father's right hand, and Pentecost are all sort of commingled.<sup>15</sup> Perhaps the most common way this is done is to speak of "the exaltation" of the Son.<sup>16</sup> It would be hard to draw any distinct lines between what to say about one without saying the same about the other. To take one example: In the Great Commission recorded in Matthew, which takes place in Galilee sometime *before* the ascension recorded in Acts 1, the *risen* Jesus says, "All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me." It is hard to get more exalted than that. To repeat, then, the New Testament texts do not always make explicit distinctions between Easter and the ascension.<sup>17</sup> Having said that, we proceed to the texts and ask, "What does the resurrection mean for Jesus himself?"

### **Easter Brings Something Qualitatively New**

Easter brings something new for Jesus himself. It is not sufficient to say, "He's alive again," as if Jesus were raised to the life that he had before from conception to crucifixion. This newness is reflected in the wonderful and strange new things about Jesus's body. The tomb is actually empty and it is the same Jesus. Jesus is not, however, only the same; he is also *different*. He is not always recognized; physical space and dimensions (or something like that) does not limit him. Jesus was raised to a new sort of life.

Jesus, in fact, has experienced the *resurrection* to immortality that awaits God's people on the last day. He is something new and he is a beginning, the firstfruits from 1 Corinthians 15:20 (more on that below). During his earthly ministry, Jesus humbled himself, and part of what that meant is that he was mortal, subject to death, kill-able. I suspect that this is part of what Paul means when he says that Christ came "born under the law" (Gal 4:4). With Easter, however, he is humble no longer, and he is no longer

subject to death. Rather, now has come “the appearing of our Savior, Jesus Christ, who abolished [or “nullified”] death (καταργήσαντος μὲν τὸν θάνατον) and brought life and immortality [or “incorruption” ἀφθαρσίαν] to light through the gospel” (2 Tm 1:10; emphasis added).

In Acts 4, the Jerusalem authorities understand (and object to) this claim that a new event had taken place. Luke writes that the priests and the Sadducees were greatly disturbed because Peter and the apostles were teaching and announcing to the people, “with respect to Jesus, the resurrection from the dead” (Acts 4:2). The Sadducees among them, of course, would be upset that “resurrection” is part of the message at all. The real problem for all the leaders, however, is the claim that God has done something new, something that he will do generally one day, but now—in Jesus whom they killed—already something new. The resurrection from the dead has happened in the case of Jesus. Jesus cannot die again. In his case and in his case only, for the first time in the history of the world death has been completely and in every way undone, nullified, reversed, and destroyed. That is why Jesus is firstfruits (1 Cor 15:20); the first to rise from the dead (Acts 26:23); the firstborn from the dead (Col 1:18).<sup>18</sup> So the question, again, is this: What does this new event mean for Jesus? What does it say about Jesus?

### **Easter as Christ’s Installation and Appointment to a New Reality in God’s Economy**

We begin with Romans 1:4. In the salutation of Romans Paul actually articulates the content of God’s gospel, promised beforehand in the Old Testament. This gospel, Paul says, concerns God’s Son who “became/was born (γενομένου) of David’s seed according to the flesh, who was horidzo-ed (ὀρισθέντος) Son of God in power according to the Spirit of Holiness by resurrection of/from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom 1:3–4). I have transliterated this second adjectival participle (ὀρισθέντος) because English translations of Romans 1:4 almost all agree in rendering it with something like “declared to be Son of God in power” (so ESV). The problem with this is that the commentators (following both the standard lexica and what is apparently the verb’s actual use) seem to all agree that ὀρίζω does not mean “declare.” It is stronger than that. It means “set, appoint, designate, mark out.”<sup>19</sup> This implies that at Jesus’s resurrection, something new has happened; he was appointed Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead.

I have no desire to be an adoptionist. It seems likely, however, that Paul is saying that, in connection with the Holy Spirit, when the Father raised him from the dead Jesus was appointed “Son of God with power.” He did not occupy this appointment before. Yes, he was Son of God, ontologically, by virtue of the personal union, from the moment of conception in Mary’s womb. In God’s plan and economy, however, Jesus had not yet in power become victor over death as he would become.

Obviously, there is need here to speak carefully. As a confessional Lutheran, I have spent some time pondering the Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Article VIII, wherein the two natures in Christ, the doctrine of the personal union, the communication of attributes, Christ’s state of humiliation and exaltation, and other key

topics are laid out in the Lutheran manner. FC SD 10 describes the human nature of Christ in these ways:

On the other hand, to be a bodily creature, to be flesh and blood, to be finite and circumscribed, *to suffer and die*, to ascend and descend, to move from one place to another, to suffer from hunger, thirst, cold, heat, and the like are characteristics of the human nature, which will never become characteristics of the divine nature.<sup>20</sup>

One would have to clarify the Formula here in a small but significant way. These were some key characteristics of Christ's human nature once—but no longer. For, risen from the dead, he cannot die again.

Suggestively, FC SD 26 goes on to describe Christ Jesus after Easter: "This is nothing other than that he has laid aside the form of a servant completely (without discarding his human nature, which he retains forever), *and was installed into the full possession and use of his divine majesty according to his assumed human nature.*"<sup>21</sup> Then, in paragraph 28, the Formula again declares, "Christ *has been installed* in this power [that is, session at God's right hand] according to his humanity"<sup>22</sup> (emphasis added).

To return to St. Paul, I am suggesting that Romans 1:4 is saying that Jesus was installed or appointed to an office—"Son of God with power"—when he was raised from the dead.<sup>23</sup> This was in accord with the Spirit of Holiness. Indeed, other passages in the NT say very similar things about *Easter* as Christ's installation or appointment by God.

Philippians 2 makes a striking statement. Starting at verse 8, Paul says "[Christ Jesus] humbled himself, being obedient until death, the death of the cross. Therefore, God also highly exalted him, *and gave to him the name that is above every name*" (emphasis added). The verbs "exalted" and "gave" are aorist indicatives, and they are parallel in meaning.<sup>24</sup> When God exalted Jesus, that is, when God raised Jesus from the dead, he also gave Jesus a name: the name, perhaps, as Charles Gieschen has argued, along with many others.<sup>25</sup> We would, of course, hold back from suggesting that this says anything that might diminish the fullness of deity, in the union of One Person that existed from the moment of Jesus's conception in the womb of the Virgin Mary. Nevertheless, Philippians 2:8–9 says what it says.<sup>26</sup> I am not entirely sure how to express it. If "name" entails authority and office and status, however, then what Paul is saying at the least is this: Jesus's humble obedience unto death *gave way on Easter to a new, divinely-granted reality of power and lordship and authority*. This new reality will be universally acknowledged on the last day, when every tongue confesses that Jesus is Lord.<sup>27</sup> This seems to be very close to the thought of Romans 1:4.

As an aside, I have been thinking about how we express the traditional categories of Christ's humiliation and exaltation. It is important to begin by averring that the incarnation itself is not an act of humiliation, for the *exalted* Christ is fully human and will be forever. An important element of how we describe the state of humiliation emerges from these discussions, and it needs to be explicit. Christ's state of humiliation included the truth that the human existence into which he came was a *mortal* existence. We would continue to insist on Christ's sinlessness, of course. We also must



say, however, that Jesus's ministry and life was that of a mortal man. He was subject to death (as the Formula said), and his exaltation entailed a change. It was the eschatological, victorious change from mortality—indeed, from the thralldom of death—to immortality and incorruption and resurrection life. On Easter, the man Jesus was appointed Son of God with power. On Easter, he was given the glory, the office, the name that is above every name.

The sermons in the book of Acts impart a similar significance to Easter. On Pentecost, Peter's sermon establishes the pattern that is repeated in the preaching throughout the book. Although the death of Jesus happened according to God, the blame for Jesus's death is laid squarely on the shoulders of his human enemies: "This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it" (2:23–24). Peter continues, after citing Psalm 16 and the promise that the Messiah would *not* see corruption in death, "This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing" (2:32–33). After quoting Psalm 110:1, Peter summarizes what has happened to Jesus in the single complex event of Easter, Ascension, and Pentecost: "Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified" (2:36). Romans 1:4 and Philippians 2:8–9 cohere with Peter's words. Risen from the dead, Jesus has been appointed Son of God with power and has been given the name above every name. The Father has made him both Lord and Christ. Having received the Spirit, now Jesus pours out the Spirit.<sup>28</sup>

More of this truth emerges in Paul's synagogue sermon in Pisidian Antioch in Acts 13. The death of Jesus happened in fulfillment of the prophets. Though Jesus was innocent, the leaders in Jerusalem asked Pilate to take Jesus away, and they put him into a tomb (13:26–29). Then comes the good news: "But God raised him from the dead . . . And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, this he has fulfilled *by raising Jesus*" (13:30, 32; emphasis added). Now comes immediately an OT citation that reinforces and adds meaning to what we have already mentioned: "What God promised to the fathers, this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second Psalm, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you" (13:32–33). Paul also cites Psalm 16 (as Peter did at Pentecost) and Isaiah 55:3. Notice, however, the use of Psalm 2:7. Again, we avoid and reject adoptionism, but in some meaningful way, we must let the text say what it says. On Easter, the Father did such a dramatic event in Jesus, for Jesus, that the psalm's language of sonship and begetting can apply. On Easter, God the Father said to the Son, "You are my son; today I have begotten you."

## The Contribution of Hebrews: Easter as Christ's Priestly Installation Forever

This constellation of Psalm 2, Psalm 16, and Psalm 110 as a lens through which to interpret Jesus's resurrection (and exaltation) leads also to another place in the New Testament, one where I was not, to be frank, expecting to go when I began work on this essay; "to the Hebrews." There are linguistic and theological links between the message of Hebrews and Paul's proclamation in Philippians 2:8–11. These links include but are not limited to the connection between Christ's obedient suffering and death and his subsequent exaltation and naming by God the Father. Consider the following:

The prologue reads, "Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed [ἐθιῆκεν] the heir of all things, though whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power" (Heb 1:1–3b ESV). So far, so good. It continues (with my emphasis and translation of 1:3c–4), "And after he had made cleansing of sins, he sat at the right hand of the Majesty in the highest place, becoming (γενόμενος), by so much, greater than the angels as *he has inherited* [ἡκεληρονόμηκεν] *a name more excellent than they.*" Jesus has inherited a name more excellent than the angels have.<sup>29</sup> The next thing the writer says is "For to which of the angels did (God) ever say, "You are my son; today I have begotten you" (1:5a–c). So the question is this: When did Jesus inherit the more excellent name? When did God say to Jesus, "You are my son; today I have begotten you"? Both Acts 13:33 with its citation of Psalm 2:7 and Philippians 2:9 and the giving of the highest name when God exalted his Son suggest an answer: on Easter, Jesus inherited the more excellent name. This is only a suggestion at this point, because we have not read very far into the argument of Hebrews.<sup>30</sup>

Further investigation of Hebrews, however, turns this suggestion about 1:4–5 into a virtual certainty. As we will see, Jesus inherited his more excellent name (= "authority"? = "office"?) and heard the declaration of Psalm 2:7 when God raised him from the dead. Moreover, in terms unique to Hebrews, Christ was appointed high priest according to the order of Melchizedek when God raised him from the dead, that is, when he was exalted on high.<sup>31</sup> A quick examination of the flow of the argument from Hebrews 4:14 through 5:10 will support these conclusions.

In Hebrews 4:14, the writer declares that we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens. (I suspect this means, "who has been raised from the dead and who is sitting at God's right hand," but that will emerge, so on we go.) This high priest is like us in every way, yet without sin, so he can help and sympathize. In 5:1–4, the writer emphasizes that no one takes such an honor upon himself, but is called by God, just as Aaron was. Then comes 5:5–6, "So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you"—there is Psalm 2:7—and then immediately, "as he says also in another place, "You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek" (ESV). Again, the question is when.

Listen to what the writer says next, 5:7–10 (ESV): “In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears to him who was able to save him from death.” This seems especially to be a reference to the tradition of Jesus’s agony in the garden, and notice that God the Father is described as “able to save Jesus from death.” The writer goes on—“And [Jesus] was heard because of his reverence.” Now, I presume that “he was heard” means “God the Father granted his cry to be saved from death,” not, however, in the sense that he did not die. Rather, the writer means (to borrow the language from Acts and from Paul) that his flesh did not see corruption, that death did not keep its mastery over him, and that it was not possible for death to hold him. What else could it mean? The Father heard Jesus’s cry, and he saved him from death, that is, he raised him from the dead.<sup>32</sup> Now come verses 8–9: “Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.<sup>33</sup> And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.” Just as God the Father said to Jesus on Easter, “You are my son, today I have begotten you,” so also on Easter, God said to him, “You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek.” Christ is appointed to that office in his resurrection, ascension, and session.

Hebrews continues this line of thought in chapter 7. In 7:1–10, the writer argues that Melchizedek’s priesthood was superior to the Aaronic priesthood. The argument runs generally like this: Melchizedek is superior to Abraham since the latter tithed to the former. Moreover, since when this happened Levi was still in Abraham’s loins, it follows that Melchizedek is superior also to Levi and the priestly service that derives from him. In the middle of this section are the intriguing verses 7–8, “It is beyond dispute that the inferior [Abraham] is blessed by the superior [Melchizedek]. In the one case, tithes are received by mortal men [Levitical priests], but in the other case, by one of whom it is testified *that he lives*” (ESV; emphasis added). The writer is about to argue that the Aaronic priestly service is inferior to that carried out in the order of Melchizedek because the former priests die, and cannot continue in their service. Things are different, however, with regard to the latter order of priestly service.

In 7:11–14 the writer observes that there actually *has* been a change of priesthood, and that implies that something was lacking. Then he says, in verses 15–16 (ESV), that this other priest—Jesus—has become a priest “not on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent, *but by the power of an indestructible life*.” This seems pretty clearly a reference to Jesus’s resurrection. The writer then cites Psalm 110:4 again; the certain oath that God swore with regard to Jesus. Then a few verses later, he offers the same contrast, 7:23–25 (ESV): “The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented *by death* from continuing in office, but he [Jesus] holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever.” He is risen, indeed. Why, then, can this priest, Jesus, save? “Consequently 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.” Why can Jesus save you when you come to him? He can save you because the Father raised him from the dead.

God heard Jesus's obedient and trusting cry and answered by raising him from the dead. Now, living forever, Jesus has been appointed a great high priest, and intercedes for us based upon the one-time sacrifice of his own life. Hebrews seems to be operating with an historical, sequential, almost commonsense understanding of things. At the same time, it is a very profound perspective. You cannot intercede for others if you are dead. You cannot be a great high priest forever without the power of an indestructible life. When God the Father raised his Son, he not only said to him, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you." God also swore an oath concerning Jesus: "You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek."

### Summary

What happened on Easter with regard to Jesus himself? At least the following is true.

Most obviously and most fundamentally, on Easter Jesus was saved from death. May I also state the obvious? If Christ is not risen . . . if there is no Easter . . . then death retains mastery over him, and there is no salvation and no hope. It has to do with what death is, theologically. If Christ is not risen, he is not a perfected high priest, interceding for us. If Christ is not risen, he is not the Son of God with power, and he is not Messiah, nor is he Lord of all. Apparently, you cannot be any of these things if you are dead.

In the fullest and strongest sense of the word, Jesus was vindicated on Easter. In one unthinkable stroke, God the Father authorized and filled with power and meaning all of Jesus's ministry and teaching and truth, and he transformed the darkest of days and made it possible for Jesus's death to be saving, good, gospel. As I suggested above, it is not enough to say that Easter "reveals" or "shows" that God the Father has accepted the sacrifice of his Son. Easter is not just revelation; it is divine intervention, and saving deed. If one is going to speak in terms of Christ's sacrificial death and to ask how *Easter* fits into that reality, then Easter must be something like the actual accepting of the sacrifice, or some such truth. Here is a provocative quote from Richard Gaffin's book on Paul:

A soteriology structured so that it moves directly from the death of Christ to the application to others of the benefits purchased by that death substantially short-circuits Paul's own point of view.<sup>34</sup>

On Easter and through Easter, Jesus was installed, appointed, exalted, and raised up over Israel and over the Gentiles as Messiah, and as Lord. He received and inherited a name, an authority, and an office so high as to be almost unimaginable. Exalted as Lord, he has authority to grant repentance, and forgiveness of sins to Israel and to all the nations. Raised from the dead and exalted as Lord by the power of the Spirit, Jesus now in God's economy pours out the Spirit upon all believers. What is the gospel? What can we say that is good news, indeed? We can, and should say this: God raised Jesus from the dead.

## What Does the Resurrection of Jesus Mean for Us?

### The Beginning of the New Creation in His Person

Let me begin with a broad truth that emerges from the inherent meaning of *resurrection*. On the third day, whatever that might precisely mean in terms of clock-time, God did a new thing, never before seen in the history of this troubled world. God brought the eschatological future into the present. He overturned death, permanently, in the case of Jesus. God's Son, killed by evil men who acted as Satan's partners and slaves, was raised to immortality *and in that raising there was a beginning of the new creation, the new heaven and earth that God has promised fully at the end of days*. Martin Franzmann said it eloquently:

All subsequent history is determined by this single, unparalleled, eschatological fact, the fact of the resurrection of Jesus. For this is not merely the fact that Jesus of Nazareth is alive. . . . His resurrection is the great turning point, from death to life, for all men and for all creation. . . . With the resurrection of Jesus the new life, the real and eternal life of the world to come, has become a present reality, breaking miraculously into the present world of men living under the sign of death.<sup>35</sup>

More recently, N. T. Wright offered a similar declaration:

To put it at its most basic: the resurrection of Jesus offers itself, to the student of history or science no less than the Christian or the theologian, not as an odd event within the world as it is but as the utterly characteristic, prototypical, and foundational event within the world as it has begun to be. It is not an absurd event within the old world but the symbol and starting point of the new world. The claim advanced in Christianity is of that magnitude: Jesus of Nazareth ushers in not simply a new religious possibility, not simply a new ethic or a new way of salvation, but a new creation.<sup>36</sup>

The new creation, the end of the story (or its beginning again) in fact, has begun. Of course, Jesus's entire ministry was the presence of the future, the reign of God come now ahead of time. But his ministry marched toward a goal in Israel. He willingly and powerfully became helpless and weak. His enemies killed him, and for a time, there was no hope.<sup>37</sup> Then God raised him from the dead, just as he said. Jesus's body, *Jesus*, is the new creation.

### The Lordship of Jesus

Let me work back now from this broad truth, to what is arguably the basic christological confession of the New Testament: the Lordship of Jesus. The confession, "Jesus is Lord," is unbreakably attached to Jesus's resurrection. Note these obvious examples (my translation):

Because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. (Rom 10:9)

For unto this Christ died and lived, that both of the dead and of the living he might be lord (or have mastery). (Rom 14:9)

Therefore God highly exalted him that . . . every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil 2:9–11)

Let all Israel's house assuredly know that God made him to be both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified. (Acts 2:36)

As Peter said to Cornelius (Acts 10:36), Jesus is Lord: Lord of all. This is, of course, in the first place, very good news. In the Large Catechism especially, we see that Luther knew this; he knew that we needed a Lord, and the entire second article of the Creed can be summed up in that one word. Exalted over death, sitting at the right hand and interceding, Jesus has authority to grant repentance and the forgiveness of sin (Lk 24:47; Acts 5:31). Jesus is Lord over guilt, over sin, over fear, over our time, over our money, over our suffering, over the church, over the nations, over the world. To proclaim the saving good news of Easter is also and at the same time to proclaim the Lordship of Jesus.

### **Participation in the New Creation, the New Humanity**

As Lord, Jesus gives gifts. As Acts repeatedly says, because Jesus is risen from the dead, Jesus grants repentance and faith. The giving of the Holy Spirit (to which I will return in a moment), also flows from Christ's status as risen and ascended Lord. I would like to touch briefly, on how the category of "new creation" plays out in the NT. The specific language of "new creation" is not often present, even though (as I suggested before) the very meaning of true *resurrection* brings with it the truth of the future now present. The most significant verses are well known. They also nicely show the unbreakable connection between Good Friday and Easter.

For Christ's love controls us, because we judge this, that one died for all, therefore all died. And he died for all in order that those who live no longer might live for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them. Therefore, from now on we know no one according to the flesh. Even if we have known Christ according to the flesh, now no longer do we know [him thus]. So then, *if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation*. The old things passed away; behold, the new things have come. (2 Cor 5:14–17; my emphasis and translation)

Paul here quite strongly proclaims the end of the old, and the beginning of the new. Our death to the old ways of the flesh is a past event; "therefore all died . . . the old things passed away." Christians are "those who live . . . behold, the new things

have come.”<sup>38</sup> Christ is the beginning of the new creation, and so if anyone is joined to Christ, “in Christ,” then he or she has become part of the new creation itself.

But may it not be for me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ through whom the world has been and is crucified to me, and I also to the world. For neither is circumcision anything or uncircumcision—*but a new creation*. (Gal 6:14–15)

Paul’s words here seem at first to be a non-sequitur. The apostle strongly emphasizes the cross, not the empty tomb, and upon being in a crucified, that is, dead state (the force of the perfect passive verb, ἐσταύρωται) in relation to all that sinfully opposes Christ (i.e., “the world”). There is not an obvious connection between being dead to something old and to an old way of relating, and new creation. In light of other larger truths, however, and especially in light of the unbreakable connection between Christ’s death and resurrection, it is easy enough to fill in the conceptual gap and come to a conclusion.<sup>39</sup> Through the cross, the believer’s old relationship to “the world” has been ended. Now what matters is not the application or non-application of the Law of Moses (“circumcision”); what matters now is participation in the new creation that began when Jesus was raised from the dead.

Therefore, to be “in Christ” is to participate in the new creation that has begun and will be fully present at the Parousia. Behind this promise is the reality of Jesus as the second Adam. As such, Jesus is the beginning of a new humanity so large and all-embracing that we can come to be *in him*. This is the framework in which Ephesians 2:15 finds its meaning: “in order that he might create in him[self] the two [Jews and Gentiles] into one new man by making peace.”

Christ lives now in full resurrection life; Christ is the beginning of the new creation. This also means that the more familiar categories of “new life” or “eternal life” or “new birth” belong here as aspects of the new creation that has begun already in Jesus’s resurrection. He has new life; he therefore can grant to us new life. This connection between Christ’s new life and ours is made quite explicitly in 1 Peter 1:3:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, (the Father) who according to his great mercy has given us new birth (ὁ ἀναγέννησας ἡμᾶς) unto a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

To be born again, to have new life, to have eternal life is possible only because Jesus is risen from the dead. Preeminently, of course, our baptismal union into Christ—into his *death* and into his *resurrection*—is the source of our new life in him. Union with Christ’s *death* is one side, the negative side (in a sense) of the reality. In baptism we die to sin, to the old way, to the power of the old age. There is also, however, the positive side: “If we have been united with him in a death like his, we believe that we shall also [be united with him] in a *resurrection* like his” (Rom 6:5; emphasis added). New life—new creation—is already now.

The payoff, of course, in Romans 6 and elsewhere, is the ability to live a life that is no longer mastered by sin and unrighteousness. Baptized, we no longer continue in

sin so that grace may abound. Philippians 3:10 speaks to the point: “that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformed to his death if indeed somehow I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead.” Ephesians 1:18–20 connects Christ’s new resurrection life and God’s power given to us to live in that newness:

That you may know . . . what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand.

Our baptismal life is a life lived in the power of the new creation begun in Jesus’s resurrection, even as it is at the same time a life lived having died to the old order. This promise, of course, is grasped by faith since the old evil age lingers so that we must continually strive to put off the old man—in the power of the Holy Spirit.

### **The Gift Who is the Holy Spirit**

All of this is possible through the power of the Holy Spirit. The first thing to say here is the most basic and the most important, and it reflects once again the economy of salvation, what God has actually done in history. Risen from the dead and appointed Son of God in power by the Spirit of Holiness, Jesus the Lord has also poured out the Holy Spirit upon his people. As Peter says at Pentecost, Christ bestows this new gift of the Spirit in equal measure on all believers. This giving of the Spirit to all sorts and manners of people shows that the last days have begun. As Paul says, the Holy Spirit is the down payment (2 Cor 1:22; 5:5; Eph 1:14; cf. “firstfruits” in Rom 8:23). The Spirit already given is the earnest money of our full inheritance, that is, the new heaven and new earth. Only a few observations on the Holy Spirit are possible here.

Again, we must insist that something new has happened in God’s economy. The Spirit of God, present (of course) at the creation and active (of course) during Old Testament times has been given in a new way now that Christ is risen from the dead. There is John 7:38–39, “Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’ Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believe in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.” Then we can return to Pentecost and Acts 2:

And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh. . . . Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, Jesus has poured out this that you are seeing and hearing. . . . Repent and be baptized each of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:17, 33, 38)

Presumably “of the Holy Spirit” in this last phrase is an exegetical genitive, “the gift which is the Holy Spirit.” In Romans 8, the Holy Spirit is mentioned explicitly *twenty times*. Paul’s declaration there holds true for every baptized believer:



You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him *who raised Jesus from the dead* dwells in you, then he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies, through (or perhaps, because of) his Spirit who dwells in you.” (Rom 8:9–11)

Raised in the power of the Spirit, Christ Jesus gives us his Spirit. Who knows what the Spirit will do? I suggest that two deeds of the Spirit are certainly to be wrought in us. First, we will have the ability to believe the promises of God in Jesus. Second, believers will have the strength to love: to love God, love one another, love all men, even our enemies. Though the flesh continues to war against the Spirit every day (Gal 5:17), believers are not in the flesh; believers are in the Spirit, given in God’s economy by Jesus (Rom 8:9).

In the Spirit, Christians also are baptized into one another; in the new Adam, we *together* are the new humanity, the community of the Spirit, the one body into which we all have been baptized. Here there is no Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female, but all are one—a unity—in Christ. The Spirit of God who will renew the face of the earth is present among us believers right now, right here and right now to grant faith, and to bear his multifaceted single fruit: love, joy, peace, patience, and all the rest. How do we know this is true? How can such promises be certain? They are certain because Jesus is Lord; they are true because God raised him from the dead.

## Conclusion

The Bible teaches the salvific character of the cross, and much more about the cross as well.<sup>40</sup> It does not so teach, however, in a way that jumps over Easter or fails to articulate the power of Easter. God has done a new thing, and there are Easter promises for Christians to believe. It would be a beautiful thing and a blessing to God’s people to grow in our declaring of those promises. To use only one small example that harkens back to the beginning of this essay, the pastor could declare these words after the congregation has confessed its sins:

Almighty God in His mercy has given his Son to die for you, and on the third day, Jesus rose from the dead to forgive you all your sins. As a called and ordained servant of the risen Christ, and by His authority, I therefore forgive you all your sins.

Or as I suggested in an online post some months ago, the length and eloquence of the confession could be matched to the length and eloquence of the introduction to the absolution:

In the mercy of God, Jesus Christ came into the world, pure and free from sin. In every thought, word, and deed, he loved and served the

Father—and he loved you and all people as himself. He left no good deed undone; he perfectly kept the Father’s will. With his whole heart, Jesus willingly suffered the punishment of the cross in your place. Raised from the dead, Jesus lives forever with the authority to forgive every sin. When he comes again in glory, all who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved. As a called and ordained servant of Christ, therefore, and by his authority, I forgive you all your sins.<sup>41</sup>

This essay has only scratched the surface, and I have focused on the present realities and blessings that God has created by raising his Son from the dead. There is, of course, a future for the new humanity in Christ, a future for which we are looking and longing. The harvest has begun; the firstfruits are gathered, and the fullness is drawing near. Now completed in Christ himself, the day is coming when all things will be made utterly new. When this perishable puts on the imperishable—and only then—and when this mortal puts on immortality—and only then—then shall come to pass what is written, “Death is swallowed up in victory” (1 Cor 15:54). Therefore, my beloved brothers and sisters, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord—in the LORD, in Jesus, whom God raised from the dead—your labor is not in vain. Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Originally a plenary address at the 1999 Annual Theological Symposium at Concordia Seminary, Saint Louis, it appeared in print in *Concordia Journal* 27 (October 2001): 310–322.

<sup>2</sup> *Lutheran Service Book* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 151. An examination of all of the rites of Holy Absolution in the divine services in LSB shows that the death of Jesus is referred to ten times, and Easter is never referred to at all. In noting this, please do not take this as a criticism of LSB, which is a wonderful liturgical resource. As my colleague James W. Voelz would say, “This is *only* an example.”

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Jeffrey A. Gibbs, “The Son of God and the Father’s Wrath: Atonement and Salvation in Matthew’s Gospel,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 72, no. 3 (2008): 211–227.

<sup>4</sup> The remarkable study of N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003) will serve as the standard historical apologia for the resurrection of Jesus for years to come.

<sup>5</sup> I am, of course, well aware that a Christian can come to welcome the day of his or her death, especially when there has been great suffering. In such cases, death means the end of the suffering, and the beginning of rest with Christ. Lest we think, however, that here death is a friend, it must be remembered that the suffering that preceded the day of one’s dying was, in a sense, caused by death itself; such suffering was just death on the way. So, while dying after a long period of suffering can genuinely be welcomed, in such cases death has been manifesting itself in a particularly cruel way.

<sup>6</sup> Oscar Cullmann, *Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead?: The Witness of the New Testament* (London: Epworth, 1958), 27, pointedly comments, “Whoever paints a pretty death can paint no resurrection.” Cullmann has just referred to the stark, unsentimental portrayal of Jesus’s crucifixion painted by Matthias Grünewald, as well as to the powerfully glorious portrayal of the risen Christ by the same painter. Any internet search engine can produce these images for the reader.

<sup>7</sup> There is a common speculation that one hears, to the effect that once a Christian dies, there is either some sort of entrance into a timeless existence, or that in some way the believer already is given the new, glorified resurrection body. This essay is not the place to expand on all the problems with this speculation. I can only point out two things. First, the speculation has no direct biblical support, 2 Peter 3:8 notwithstanding. God in his being is, presumably, outside of time. However, there is no support for the view that the interim state of believers between death and the resurrection is some sort of timeless existence. Revelation 6:10 speaks against it, for what it’s worth. Second, such speculations run the risk of directly contradicting Paul himself, for he tells us when we will receive our resurrection bodies, namely, at the Parousia of Jesus (1 Cor 15:22–24; 1 Thes 4:13–18). We do not know more about these matters than the Apostle Paul did.

<sup>8</sup> At the risk of sounding flippant, the women at Jesus's tomb in the various gospel accounts are not chided for failing to realize the significance of Good Friday. They should have believed the promise that Jesus would rise from the dead. Failing in that belief, they were utterly logical and correct to think that all hope had been lost when Jesus died.

<sup>9</sup> We might profit from a bit more careful attention to the image of Jesus as the good shepherd. In the first place, it is hard to imagine that Jesus's words are anything but unexpected and astonishing. No human shepherd, no matter how "good," if faced with the choice between letting attacking wolves kill his sheep or kill him, would opt for the latter. Common sense alone makes it clear that such a sacrifice would do no good, for then the wolves, having killed the shepherd, would proceed to ravage the defenseless sheep. As Jesus himself says, the reason why the Father loves the Good Shepherd is that he lays down his life for the sheep, *in order that he might take up his life again* (Jn 10:17).

<sup>10</sup> Walter Bauer and Frederick William Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 576–577. ESV renders Romans 6:9b, "death no longer has dominion over him."

<sup>11</sup> See the same verb's force a few verses later (Rom 6:14).

<sup>12</sup> A Synoptic comparison provides a striking contrast. Both Matthew 26:55–56 and Mark 14:49 (the parallels to Luke 22:53) emphasize that the crowds' action of arresting Jesus is done to fulfill the Scriptures. Both statements are, of course, true. Luke has chosen, however, to offer the darker side of the truth; Jesus's arrest is the hour that belongs to his enemies and to Satan.

<sup>13</sup> Again, synoptic comparison even more strongly highlights what Luke's own narrative reveals on its own terms. The following verses and units are unique to Luke, with no parallels in Matthew or Mark: 23:4, 6–16, 22, 40–43. Each of them emphasizes the innocence of Jesus, and the words of the "repentant thief" can serve as an apt summary of the cumulative effect of Luke's special emphasis: "This man has done nothing wrong" (23:41).

<sup>14</sup> Richard Gaffin, *The Centrality of the Resurrection: A Study in Paul's Soteriology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1978), 116.

<sup>15</sup> Acts 2:32–33 gives the explicit sequence: "This Jesus God *raised up*, and of that we all are witnesses. *Being therefore exalted* at the right hand of God and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, *he has poured out* this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing" (emphasis added).

<sup>16</sup> An example of this is the key text, Philippians 2:9–11. After declaring that Christ suffered the death of the cross (v. 8), Paul does not feel the need specifically to say, "Therefore, God raised him from the dead, and seated him at his right hand." He simply writes, "He exalted him."

<sup>17</sup> Scholars that are more liberal have argued that the view of a physical, bodily resurrection is only a later development, and that the authors who speak only of Jesus's "exaltation" do not necessarily believe in a bodily resurrection. To overturn and uproot this common scholarly claim is the primary burden of much of Wright, *Resurrection of the Son of God*. For brief mention of this issue, see Wright, *Resurrection*, 625–627.

<sup>18</sup> It seems important to underscore at this point that no one else in all human history has been raised from death in the full sense that Jesus has been raised. This is basic logic: He is "firstfruits" (*ἀπαρχή*, 1 Cor 15:20), "firstborn" (*πρωτότοκος*, Col 1:18), and "first" (*πρώτος*, Acts 26:23). All other dead people who were restored to life (e.g., Lazarus) will have died again. It is not uncommon for people to raise the issue of Moses and Elijah at the transfiguration, as if this had some bearing on these topics. But Moses died, and is still dead. Elijah apparently never died. Their presence at the transfiguration cannot prove anything about the resurrection. Any speculations about the "mode" by which Moses and Elijah were present on the mount necessarily remain just that—speculations.

<sup>19</sup> C. E. B. Cranfield, *Romans* (New York: T & T Clark, 1975), 1.61, avers that there is "no clear example" before or at the time of the NT that shows the sense of "declare" or "show to be" for the verb *ὁρίζω*; see also Thomas Schreiner, *Romans* (Ada, MI: Baker, 1998), 41–42; Joseph Fitzmyer, *Romans* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 234–235; Michael Middendorf, *Romans 1–8* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2013), 59.

<sup>20</sup> Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 617; emphasis added.

<sup>21</sup> Kolb-Wengert, 620; emphasis added.

<sup>22</sup> The German reads *eingesetzt* ist; the Latin, *evectus est*; see F. Bente ed. *Concordia Triglotta* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), 1022–1024.

<sup>23</sup> Similar uses of the verb *ὁρίζω* with regard to the risen Christ occur at Acts 10:40–42 and Acts 17:30–31.

<sup>24</sup> So Peter T. O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 237, who comments that the second clause ["he gave to him . . ."] is parallel "to the first clause, amplifying its meaning and indicating its nature."

<sup>25</sup> See Charles Gieschen, "The Divine Name in Ante-Nicene Christology," *Vigiliae Christianae* 57 (2003): 115–158. Ralph P. Martin, *A Hymn of Christ: Philippians 2:5–11 in Recent Interpretation and in the Setting of Early*

*Christian Worship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), 236, suggests that the view that the “name” is “none other than the name of God himself” is “the commonest understanding of the significance of the name.”

<sup>26</sup> Martin, *Hymn of Christ*, 230 notes the sharp change of subject that is indicated both grammatically (as God becomes the actor) and stylistically (as the clauses become short and simple). He sums up by saying about verse 9, “At this point we have to do with a new stage in the Redeemer’s way.”

<sup>27</sup> Martin, *Hymn of Christ*, 235–244, summarizes the various positions on Philippians 2:9. Peter O’Brien, *Philippians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 238 offers this gloss for 2:9: “In his exalted status Jesus has a new rank involving the exercise of universal lordship. This gain was in official, not essential glory, since Jesus did not become divine through exaltation.”

<sup>28</sup> Here I can reference the profound reflection by my colleague Leopoldo Sanchez-Merino, “Receiver, Bearer, and Giver of God’s Spirit: Jesus’ Life and Mission in the Spirit as a Ground for Understanding Christology, Trinity, and Proclamation” (PhD dissertation, Concordia Seminary, 2003).

<sup>29</sup> Part of the challenge of seeking precise answers of the Greek text involves the time sense of the participle “becoming” (γενόμενος) in verse 4. Participles in themselves, of course, have no time sense, but only derive it from the context. A typical (but not necessary) way to take the aorist participle here is as a reference to action that preceded the main verb. Perhaps more likely in this context would be the understanding that the aorist participle is contemporaneous with the main verb, so that Christ’s “becoming” and his “sitting” happen at the same time.

<sup>30</sup> Commentaries vary a bit on how to read the specifics of 1:4–5. Those who see here a specific reference to the resurrection/exaltation of Jesus include Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 17. Henry Alford, *Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Guardian Press, 1976), 14, concludes that Jesus “inherited” his superior name eternally, and not in an historical action or moment. Craig Koester, *Hebrews* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 191, noting a variety of views, nonetheless comments that “most interpreters” find a reference to “Christ’s resurrection and exaltation, since the quotation supports the exaltation of the Son mentioned in 1:2b . . . and since in 5:5 (cf 7:28) it refers to the eternal high priest in heaven.” R. C. H. Lenski, *Hebrews* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1966), 44, asserts that Jesus “inherited” his superior name at the moment of the incarnation, but that God “spoke” the words of Psalm 2:7 to him at his inauguration as king, that is, “as Paul says in Acts 13:33, in the resurrection of Jesus.”

<sup>31</sup> Recall once again that often the NT writers group together the historically discrete moments of Jesus’s resurrection and his ascension.

<sup>32</sup> Koester, *Hebrews*, 288, observes that the “main objection” to this reading of the text is that “If Jesus prayed for deliverance from death, the text seems to contradict itself: he could not have been “heard” (5:7c) since he died. Yet being heard does not mean that the prayer was granted immediately. God did not deliver Jesus from crucifixion, but he did deliver him from death by raising him to life again.”

<sup>33</sup> Note the conceptual overlap with Philippians 2:8, where Christ is obedient until death.

<sup>34</sup> Richard B. Gaffin Jr, *Centrality of the Resurrection*, 117.

<sup>35</sup> Martin Franzmann, *The Word of the Lord Grows* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1961), 15.

<sup>36</sup> N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope* (New York: HarperOne, 2008), 67.

<sup>37</sup> As has been perhaps too apparent, the focus in this essay is on the actual economy of salvation, the actual (sequential) deeds of God in Jesus. This is not the only way to speak about God’s ways. It is, however, certainly a (if not *the*) primary way of speaking, and always needs to be our joy and occupation in the church.

<sup>38</sup> The emphasis on the past act of dying with Christ and the ongoing reality of living with him as a new creation does not deny the ongoing reality of struggle with sin, the flesh, etc. It should be said, however, that our common way of speaking (from Luther) about “dying daily in baptism” is not, strictly speaking, a Pauline expression even though it reflects Paul’s teaching. Paul does not speak of Christians “dying” repeatedly. The tension between “definite change” and “repeated appropriation” comes to expression in Paul’s letters most explicitly in the language of “putting off” and “putting on” (See Col 3:9–10 and Eph 4:21–24). The former describes the change as having happened. The latter teaches the change as something that Christians have been taught to do. It is a classic “both/and.”

<sup>39</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 343, explains, “The thought, in other words, is of a piece with Paul’s eschatology in general. With Christ’s death the exclusive rule of sin and death has been broken; *with Christ’s resurrection* the new age/creation has already begun (Rom 6:9–10; see also on 1:4)” (emphasis added). Similarly, F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 273.

<sup>40</sup> In a number of passages, the cross of Christ functions as a paradigm for and a call to Christian suffering; see Philippians 3:10; 1 Thessalonians 2:14; 1 Peter 2:21, 24; 4:1.

<sup>41</sup> <http://concordiatheology.org/2012/05/letting-the-gospel-predominate-in-the-absolution>.