

The Apostles' Creed: Second Article

[I believe] in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

The Savior in the State of Exaltation

We often don't think about Christ's descent into hell. I've never preached on it. I don't remember it being discussed during the Lent/Easter season. There we focus on His suffering, death, burial, and resurrection. So, is it really important enough to consider? Well, it is mentioned in the Bible. We have two passages listed in the ***Explanation of the Small Catechism*** that address it. God wouldn't put it in His Word if it weren't important. The descent into hell is the turning point of the life of Christ. It is His first act in the state of exaltation. At first glance, descending into hell seems more like it would be in the state of humiliation. But descending into hell wasn't part of the punishment Christ endured. When He died, He said, *"It is finished"* (**John 19:30**). The price had been paid in full by His death on the cross. That's where He won His victory over sin, death, and the devil. According to Peter: *For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison* (**1 Peter 3:18-19**). Christ had already gone through hell on the cross. When He said, *"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"* (**Matthew 27:46**), He was going through hell. Hell is total separation from God. And that's what He was experiencing when He carried our sins on the cross. According to Peter, His excursion to hell after His death and before His resurrection was to proclaim the victory He had just won on the cross. This shows us that His victory must be proclaimed everywhere, even in enemy territory. So, let us spread the Gospel throughout our city. Everyone needs to hear the Good News that Jesus saves. He has conquered sin, death, and the devil. He is alive and still on the throne.